

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109698

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Watts

Lead inspector: Mrs G Kayembe

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 3rd February 2005

Inspection number: 268931

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	13 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	782
School address:	Tyne Crescent Bedford Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK41 7UL
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Clive Wiley
Date of previous inspection:	5th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a Catholic voluntary aided upper school in Bedford. There are 782 boys and girls on roll aged between 13 and 19. It is smaller than most secondary schools and the roll is falling. The sixth form, at 154 students, is also smaller than sixth forms nationally. About 50 per cent of the students are non-Catholics and come from a range of other religious traditions. The school serves a very mixed local community. However, the overall socio-economic backgrounds of students are less favourable than national norms, and this is supported by the above-average proportion of students eligible for a free school meal. Just over half the students are from a range of minority ethnic groups, and over a third are from visible minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest minority group is other white at 13.6 per cent, and many, if not most, of these students are of Italian origin. All the other main ethnic groups are represented with Indian, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi being amongst the largest groups. A relatively high proportion of students, 13 to 14 per cent, do not have English as their first language. Most of them are at the later stages of learning English but many tend not to speak it at home. Only one student was identified as being a beginner at the time of the inspection. There is only one traveller student and six asylum seekers/refugees. The school has five looked after children. About 11 to 12 per cent of students are on the special educational needs list and this is below average. The proportion with statements is average at 2.7 per cent. The main special educational needs include specific learning (dyslexia) and emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few students have needs ranging from moderate learning, speech and communication or hearing difficulties to autism and physical needs. The school has a learning support unit, called the Emmaus Centre, which supports vulnerable students and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The attainment on entry to the school is significantly below average overall, but there are some variations in subjects and amongst year groups. The intake of the school has changed quite considerably since the last inspection. There are greater numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language. Socio-economic backgrounds are now not as favourable and the overall attainment on entry is lower. The school has Investor in People status, Football Association charter mark and the Healthy Schools award. It is involved in Young Enterprise and in a local networked learning community.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2901	G Kayembe	Lead inspector	
9708	S Daintrey	Lay inspector	
30699	A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics
19499	B Baughan	Team inspector	English
12356	R Dickason	Team inspector	Science Physics in the sixth form
8552	W Hart	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
12331	V Grigg	Team inspector	Art and design English as an additional language
31687	H Singh	Team inspector	Citizenship Modern foreign languages
27351	M Stanton	Team inspector	Design and technology
13734	H Davies	Team inspector	Geography
30216	A Elliott	Team inspector	History
15304	R Fletcher	Team inspector	Music
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Physical education
15918	M Goodchild	Team inspector	Special educational needs
3353	A Fenton	Team inspector	Media studies
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	Health and social care in the sixth form

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	24
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	26
Work-related learning	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	55

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Thomas More is a **satisfactory school with many good features**. Students achieve well due to their good attitudes and the good quality of academic support they receive. The headteacher provides a clear direction for development and is very well supported by governors. Overall, the school provides **satisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes to learning and the good quality support they receive from teachers.
- Whilst most teaching is good, a significant minority is unsatisfactory.
- There is a very positive ethos in the school and students get on well with one another, though the behaviour of some is not managed effectively enough.
- The headteacher and governors work well in partnership for the good of the school.
- Provision for students with English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs is good.
- Though the curriculum is satisfactory overall, there are some weaknesses in provision, especially timetabling and the range of vocational courses in the sixth form.
- Students have reasonably good oral skills but their writing skills are less well developed.
- Provision for citizenship and aspects of design and technology are unsatisfactory.
- Self-evaluation and review are not rigorous enough.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Most of the key issues from the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is now much improved. Standards are similar to the last inspection, though this is against a background of a changed and more challenging intake. However, the quality of teaching is not as good as it was before.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	D	D	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	D	D	D	

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Standards are below average by Year 9 and average by Years 11 and 13. Achievement is good overall and across each key stage. The results of national test results for 14-year-olds in 2004 were average in English but below in mathematics and science, though in all three subjects, the school did well when compared to similar schools. Inspection findings reflect the 2004 test results in English, mathematics and science. Whilst achievement is good in English and science, it is only satisfactory in mathematics. Standards in ICT are average by Year 9. In other subjects, standards are below average, with the exception of art and design where they are above average. GCSE results have been below average over the last three years, but not far below. They are well above those found in schools with a similar intake. Current standards are judged to be average largely because students' oral skills are better than their writing. Hence they demonstrate their knowledge

and understanding better in discussion than through performance in written examinations. Standards in English, science and ICT are average by Year 11 but remain below average in mathematics, geography, music and citizenship. In most other subjects, standards are in line with national averages. Some of the highest standards of work are to be found in aspects of design and technology, such as food and textiles, whilst in other aspects, such as resistant materials and systems and control, standards are well below average. Standards of work in the GCSE physical education course and in the vocational subjects are high.

Students' attitudes and values, including their personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Behaviour and attendance are satisfactory, but there is scope for both to be better.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory, as are teaching and learning. Although most teaching is good or better, a small but significant proportion is unsatisfactory or only just satisfactory. This slows the progress and achievement of students, particularly in design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Provision in vocational courses, for students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs is good and promotes progress well. Citizenship is underdeveloped and there is insufficient focus on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum. The two-week timetable lacks balance in many subjects, affecting the continuity of learning. Partnerships with parents are good and students are very well looked after. Support for academic and personal development is good and students' academic progress is well tracked so that they are identified quickly if they show signs of underachievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides informed leadership and promotes a clear vision for future development. Governors have very good knowledge of the school and are astute and perceptive about its strengths and weaknesses. They are very actively involved in its work and bring considerable expertise from other walks of life to bear on their governance role. Governors have ensured that all the conditions for statutory requirements to be met are in place. However, the school does not fully meet requirements for citizenship, ensure that all subjects make use of ICT and provide attendance data in annual reports to parents. Many middle managers provide good leadership but the overall leadership of other staff is satisfactory largely because self-evaluation and review are not rigorous enough but also because senior staff are somewhat stretched in their roles.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Students and their parents are positive about the school and the quality of education it provides. Both agree that the school expects students to work hard but both also express concerns about the behaviour of some students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve behaviour.
- Develop the use of literacy, particularly writing, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Develop provision for citizenship and aspects of design and technology where it is weak.
- Improve curricular provision, including timetabling in the main school and the range of vocational courses on offer in the sixth form.
- Establish rigorous self-evaluation and review.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that provision for citizenship and the use of ICT in subjects meet statutory requirements.
- Provide attendance data in students' annual reports to parents.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

An average sized sixth form offering a range of AS and A-level subjects and a small number of vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Thomas More Catholic School has a good sixth form which is cost-effective. Standards vary according to students' prior attainment but are currently average overall. This is an improvement on standards in 2003 and 2004 based on A-level and VCE examination results which were below average in 2004. Students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. The sixth form is very well led and students receive very good support and guidance.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most teachers have good expertise in their subjects.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Sixth form students have very good attitudes to learning and the school and their involvement in the rest of the school has a very positive impact on the overall atmosphere.
- Sixth form leadership provides very clear direction and appropriate priorities for development.
- Students feel very well supported and have very good relationships with their teachers.
- The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for most students with differing needs and interests. It is limited, however, in courses at vocational levels 1 and 2.
- Students' oral skills are good but writing is weaker, and this to some extent explains the better standards seen during the inspection when compared with the most recent examination results.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is very well led and managed and students are achieving well.
Mathematics	Good in mathematics. Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, students achieve well. The use of ICT is insufficient to support students' learning.
Science	Very good in physics. Students are confident and work hard because their teacher provides encouragement and teaching is interesting and demanding. As a result, they achieve very well.
Humanities	Good in geography. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching, very good assessment and helpful guidance, together with the very good relationships which have been developed Good in history. Teaching is good and teachers have very good expertise so students achieve well. Progress is tracked well and feedback to students is good. There is, however, too much teacher direction, limiting opportunities to develop students' independent learning skills.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in media studies. Well-planned teaching and positive student attitudes lead to good achievement. Current standards are above the national average.

Health and social care **Very good in health and social care.** Students achieve very well because of very good challenging teaching and keen and positive student attitudes.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good support and guidance. Students find their teachers and tutors to be very helpful and approachable when they need extra help. In most subjects, teachers mark work regularly and provide good guidance to their students on how they can improve their work. Students regularly meet their tutors and there are very good procedures to monitor and review progress. They know their target grades and how well they are performing in relation to them. Guidance on careers and university entrance is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good as a result of very effective teamwork and collaboration between members of the senior leadership team and the head of sixth form. Leadership is committed and competent and there is a clear sense of direction. The curriculum is effectively planned to meet the needs of individual students. The quality of provision is monitored and appropriate priorities for development have been identified. Relationships are very good and there is mutual respect between tutors, teachers and students.

The sixth form runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Procedures are clear and staff and students adhere to them. Systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress are thorough and effective. Students are encouraged to participate in the management of the sixth form and the life of the school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students generally enjoy life in the sixth form. They find it friendly and relaxed and have very good relationships with their teachers, who are always available to help. Teachers are secure in their subject and provide opportunities for students to develop independent thinking and research skills. They consider that their courses suit them and contribute to their career plans. They appreciate the fact that teachers and tutors always have time to help with any problems they might have. Their views are listened to and, where possible, acted upon. Some concerns identified in the student questionnaire were not substantiated in the many student interviews carried out during the inspection or by other inspection evidence.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve well and this is reflected in the favourable comparisons of results in national tests and examinations with similar types of schools. Standards are below average by Year 9 and just about in line with national averages by Years 11 and 13. The latest National Curriculum test and GCSE examination results are below average but show that students substantially narrow the gap between their attainment on entry to the school and national averages by the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, achieve well.
- Results of national tests and examinations, such as GCSE, are below average but compare very favourably with the results in similar types of schools.
- GCSE results in English, science, food, textiles, German, history, physical education, health and social care and leisure and tourism are consistently average or above average.
- Weaknesses in students' writing hinder their progress in English and other subjects across the curriculum.
- Standards in resistant materials, systems and control and graphics products are too low.
- The achievement of students in mathematics and modern foreign languages is inconsistent, and not as good as it could be, because the quality of teaching they receive is inconsistent.

Commentary

Performance in National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds

1. Students begin at the school with attainment that is well below average. It is well below average in the foundation subjects and to some extent in science. Standards of attainment in English and mathematics are not quite as low, but are still below average.
2. Results at 14 in English are particularly good and have been at least in line with national averages over the last three years. In 2003, English results were above average and, though lower in 2004, they still match the national averages¹ for 2003. In mathematics and science, results have been below average over the last three or four years. Whilst the trend is broadly upward in English and mathematics, in science the trend over the last few years has been one of decline. The 2004 results are substantially below average and to a greater extent than in previous years. However, this was due, at least in part, to a change in the school's strategy for entering students for the higher paper. It has reverted to previous practice in the light of the 2004 results.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (35.0)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (34.4)	35.5 (35.4)
science	n/a (32.1)	33.1 (33.6)

¹ The overall results, in terms of the average points scores, in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were unavailable at the time of the inspection so comparisons for the school's 2004 results have been made with the national results for 2003. Results were available for the percentages nationally reaching Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above.

There were 216 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Comparisons with similar schools are very favourable. Results in the National Curriculum tests were very high in 2003 in English and mathematics when compared to results in schools with a similar ability intake. They were well above similar school averages in science. The 2004 results in English and mathematics are well above, and in science above, the average of similar schools.
4. Though no significant differences were noted during the inspection between the performance of boys and girls, test results show that boys perform consistently better than girls in mathematics. In science, there are fluctuating differences between boys and girls. Though girls consistently outperform boys in English, the gap between their performance and that of boys is similar to the gap nationally.
5. There are some differences based on ethnicity. The school's analysis indicates that students of Bangladeshi heritage do not perform as well as others. This is in part due to English language learning needs within this group. Students of mixed white and Black Caribbean heritage also do not perform as well as their peers. The school is addressing this issue through the use of a range of strategies. As with gender differences, there was no significant difference in achievement based on ethnicity from lesson observations.
6. The school met its targets for performance at Level 5, the expected level for 14-year-olds, in mathematics. It missed the target by only one per cent in English but exceeded it by one per cent in science.

Performance of 16-year-olds in GCSE/GNVQ examinations

7. The overall results at GCSE/GNVQ level in 2004 were below average, though not far below. Compared to schools with a similar ability intake, results were well above average, indicating high achievement. The trend of improvement is below the national trend but this reflects the increasing use of alternative accreditation. There is no sustained difference between the performance of boys and girls. Bangladeshi students, especially girls, do not perform as well at GCSE as other ethnic groups. However, the school is tackling this issue using appropriate strategies.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44 (46)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (86)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	268.5	282.8

There were 211 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Subjects which show strong performance at GCSE/GNVQ level include English, science, food, textiles, German, history, physical education, health and social care and leisure and tourism. Results in 2004 in these subjects were at least in line with national averages and, in some cases, significantly above. Results were very high in double science but a relatively small proportion of students took this course compared to schools nationally. Overall, GCSE results in science were average and in mathematics were below.

9. The school exceeded its targets for performance in terms of the proportion of students gaining five or more grade A* to C, but missed the target for the proportion of students gaining at least one grade A* to C by one per cent. The overall average points score achieved was lower than the target set.

Standards as seen in inspection

10. By Year 9, standards of work are average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Students achieve well in English and science and satisfactorily in mathematics. Standards in most other subjects are below average by Year 9, with the exception of ICT where they are in line with the national average and in art and design where they are above average. By Year 11, students make good progress and achieve well so that standards in most subjects are in line with national averages. However, standards remain below average in mathematics and achievement is satisfactory. In contrast, students achieve well in English and very well in science.
11. In the GCSE courses in art and design and physical education, standards are above average, whilst in food and textiles they are well above. However, in resistant materials, systems and control and graphics, students make unsatisfactory progress and, therefore, do not achieve enough. Standards are below average in these areas. Achievement is also unsatisfactory in citizenship and standards low because the provision is not comprehensive enough to facilitate better learning and development. Though standards in the applied art course and in music are below average, students achieve well. From fairly low starting points, students achieve very well in the health and social care and leisure and tourism courses.
12. Across the school, students' oral skills are reasonably good and they express knowledge and ideas clearly and coherently. Writing skills are not as well developed, except amongst the most able, and in many cases let students down. Weaknesses in writing also have an adverse impact on performance in public examinations. Students' numeracy skills are below average. They are used in most subjects but to varying extents and expectations of what students are able to do. With respect to both literacy and numeracy, the school has yet to establish consistent and effective practice across subjects of the curriculum. ICT skills are mostly soundly developed, though standards of use in subjects are below average. There is some variation in the extent of opportunities for use in different subjects.
13. Students who have English as an additional language make good progress with the support of the teachers, the assistants and other students. It is also due to their own determination to succeed. Those who arrive with little or no English language skills make very rapid progress, and in little more than a year become articulate communicators.
14. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good, and they do particularly well in Years 10 and 11 as a result of the very good learning opportunities provided. Students achieve well on the ASDAN² course and in science, geography and history. They make very good progress in art and music, where teachers pay particular attention to matching work to their needs. Their achievement is at least satisfactory in other subjects and they often make as much progress as their peers in lessons. In 2004, Year 11 students attending college courses and following the ASDAN course met with a good level of success. Students with statements of special educational needs all went on to jobs or recognised training courses after leaving school.

Sixth form

15. A-level results have varied considerably between and in subjects because the numbers taking individual subjects have often been small and results are very dependent on individual

² ASDAN stands for the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. Pupils work to gain a bronze and then a silver award.

students' abilities. The average total points score was below the national average in both 2004 and 2003 for girls and boys. Boys did slightly better than girls, in line with the difference found nationally. In both years, in all female groups, standards in AVCE health and social care were high compared to national data.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.5 (90.9)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	26.7 (25.4)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	220.4 (215.7)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 75 (64) candidates. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

16. For current students on A-level courses, standards in Year 13 overall are average and students' achievement is good. Of the subjects inspected in detail, standards are above average in history and media studies. They are average in English literature, mathematics and physics and below average in geography. In most of these subjects, students achieve well because teaching is secure and well planned and students have very positive attitudes to learning. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or on the basis of ethnicity. Those with English as an additional language perform as well as others, and though their skills in writing could do with being improved further to support examination success, this is to no greater extent than for other students in general.
17. Standards in vocational advanced, AVCE health and social care course are well above average. Students studying for the Intermediate GNVQ in health and social care are also achieving very well and reaching high standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are good in Years 9 to 11. Their behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. In the sixth form, attitudes and behaviour are very good and attendance is good. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes have a major impact on their ability to achieve well in their courses.
- The school is an orderly, purposeful and harmonious community in which students from a wide range of different backgrounds respect and work well with each other.
- Despite the school's efforts to promote good behaviour, learning is disrupted in a small number of lessons in Years 9 and 10 and the incidence of fixed period exclusions is rising.
- Assemblies make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is an excellent system for monitoring students' attendance in the sixth form.

Commentary

18. The vast majority of students in Years 9 to 11 enjoy school, are willing to learn and are prepared to work hard to reach their goals. An outstanding example of this is the after-school art club attended by large numbers of enthusiastic students, some of whom are working towards a GCSE qualification in their own time. In both the formal and informal discussions with students, nearly all groups spoke positively about their experiences at the school. Attitudes were good or better in most lessons seen, and often very good in Year 11 where many students are becoming increasingly focused on doing as well as they can in their forthcoming examinations. There were excellent responses in some practical and vocational subjects such as leisure and tourism, drama and textiles. However, the attitudes of some girls

in Years 9 and 10 are occasionally unsatisfactory; this has a negative effect on their achievement in physical education, for example.

19. Outside lessons, students' behaviour is consistently good, for example at breaks and lunch-times where the atmosphere is calm and friendly. Students move around the site in a well-disciplined manner and their punctuality to lessons is good. Relationships are good throughout the school day and enable students to work particularly effectively in pairs and small groups. Although students express some concerns about bullying in surveys, in discussions they are confident that it is not a significant problem and that any incidents reported to the school are dealt with effectively. Students fully accept and value the range of ethnic and cultural groups represented in the school population and there is very little racism. Students who arrived in the country with little English are particularly appreciative of the welcome they received at the school.
20. Behaviour overall is not as good as it was at the last inspection. Parents comment that some students in Year 9 take time to adapt to the school's behaviour expectations and they were also concerned about behaviour in Year 10 last year. The school has put in place a number of strategies to tackle the difficulties which some students have in behaving well; for example, it has increased the flexibility in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 which has successfully improved behaviour and motivation among some older students. Staff have been given training in classroom management but students report that not all teachers are effective in controlling classes consistently and fairly. During the inspection, some immature and unacceptable behaviour was seen in physical education, English and mathematics, sometimes, but not always, due to the quality of teaching. The number of permanent exclusions is similar to that reported at the last inspection but the number of fixed period exclusions has doubled and continues to rise. The school had not yet analysed the exclusions which took place last term, but the inspection found that a significant proportion involved students in Year 10. The trends and patterns in the use of its support centre (Emmaus) for internal exclusions and isolation have also not been monitored in detail. As at the last inspection, the rate of exclusion amongst students of a Black or Mixed Caribbean background is higher than for other ethnic groups. The school is aware of these differences but its strategies, such as a mentoring scheme involving sixth form students, are not having a sufficient impact on reducing the inequality.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	375	49	1
White – Irish	16	0	0
White – any other White background	106	11	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	38	12	1
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	23	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	67	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	40	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	52	12	0

Black or Black British – African	17	4	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	9	3	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	15	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

21. Students with special educational needs are motivated, they usually apply themselves well and co-operate effectively with learning support staff. They collaborate well when working in groups and are developing the confidence to take an active part in whole-class discussions. In classes for lower attaining students, less experienced teachers struggle at times to maintain control. Experienced staff manage the behaviour of challenging students well, but the school's systems are not effective enough in dealing with those who repeatedly misbehave and disrupt the learning of others.

22. Students who have English as an additional language have a very positive attitude to school and to learning. This is shown by their very good attendance and their involvement in school activities. For example, although extremely reluctant to take part in work experience, one student gained a tremendous amount of self-confidence from the activity. They also take advantage of activities outside the school day, particularly those that enhance their learning, for example homework clubs and subject support sessions. They also show a remarkable determination to become fluent in English. The progress that some of them have made is exceptional, which reflects not only the support that they have received, but also their total commitment to learning English.

23. Students' spiritual, moral and social development continues to be promoted well and there has been a significant improvement in the provision for cultural development, which was a key issue at the last inspection. Students develop a good understanding and respect for the diverse range of cultures represented in the school and the wider world through subjects such as English, art and design, music, religious education and modern foreign languages. Assemblies make a particularly powerful impact on all aspects of students' personal development by combining music and visual presentations with clear spiritual, moral and social messages and time for reflection and prayer. The spiritual life of the school is supported effectively by the work of the religious education department and the commitment of individual staff, but is not developed consistently in all subjects and registration periods. There is a strong and positive Catholic ethos which permeates the school. This is not only respected and valued by the non-Catholics but also provides welcome spiritual nourishment and sustains and strengthens their own faith traditions. Students have good opportunities to work collaboratively, to engage in debates on moral issues and to raise money for local, national and international charities. There is active participation in a well-organised school council which promotes well students' understanding of democracy and consultation. Parents are rightly pleased with the way in which their children mature as they move through the school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.0	School data	0.8
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

24. Attendance is not as good as that reported at the last inspection, although it has improved significantly from a low point four years ago. Comparisons with national data should be treated with caution as most secondary schools include Years 7 and 8 where attendance is often higher than in Years 9, 10 and 11. The school's attendance rates compare favourably with

those of similar local schools. Most students attend sufficiently regularly to ensure continuity in their learning. Last term, attendance was good in Years 9 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Year 10, which means that the school is not likely to achieve its target of 92 per cent attendance for this year. Individual absences are followed up well by the administration staff and the school benefits from very close liaison with the senior education welfare officer who is based on the site.

Sixth form

25. Students have very positive attitudes to life in the sixth form. They are committed to their studies, whatever level or type of course, and keen to take them further after leaving the sixth form. In lessons, their responses range from good to excellent and are very good overall. This has a significant effect on their good achievement and progress. They develop into confident and mature young adults who take full responsibility for their conduct. They respond well to the good opportunities provided to take an active part in the life of the school, such as mentoring younger students, chairing the school council or organising a social or fund-raising event. They benefit greatly from the provision of the Bishop's Certificate course, which enables them to consider a variety of moral, social and ethical issues. Their attendance is good because they are well motivated and expectations are made clear. The sixth form team have developed an innovative system for recording attendance so that individual and group attendance can be very easily monitored and any problems swiftly identified and tackled.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. However, within this, there are some clear strengths, such as the very good attention given to the health, safety and care of students and the good support for their academic development. Though much teaching seen was good or better, there was a significant minority that was less than satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but assessment is good. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and assessment very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- About two thirds of teaching and learning seen in Years 9 to 11 were good or better.
- A significant minority of teaching, mainly in mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages, is less than satisfactory.
- Teaching is very good in art and design, leisure and tourism and health and social care and good overall in many other subjects.
- Learning support staff are very effective in their roles.
- Assessment procedures are rigorous and students have a good idea of how to improve their work.

Commentary

26. Evidence from lesson observations and the wider evidence from examination of students' work and discussions with staff indicate that the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although teaching is good in many subjects, and very good in art and design, leisure and tourism and health and social care, there are weaknesses in teaching in a number of mathematics, modern foreign languages and design and technology lessons in particular. Unsatisfactory teaching was also observed in physical education in the main school and media studies in the sixth form.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 138 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (4%)	33 (24%)	61 (44%)	28 (20%)	9 (7%)	2 (1%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

27. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are well planned and well structured so that they focus on students' learning needs well and ensure that students make effective progress. In many good or better lessons, teachers used a variety of teaching methods and ensured that there were good opportunities for students to engage actively in well developed practical or group activities. As a result, students were well motivated and worked hard and constructively to achieve the expected learning outcomes. High standards of classroom and behaviour management were evident in the good lessons and in the best lessons, behaviour was exemplary, even from students who are known to exhibit challenging behaviour.
28. Lessons where teaching and learning are less successful are so for a number of reasons. In some, weaknesses in behaviour management and class management result in too much disruption to learning while teachers try to manage, ineffectively, the behaviour of a few challenging students. However, in other lessons, teachers' expectations of learning are too low and, as a result, students fail to achieve well enough. Learning objectives are not always clearly enough identified, and this is an issue in many satisfactory lessons also. The extent to which teachers understand the methods promoted by the national teaching and learning strategy (the Key Stage 3 Strategy) is variable and is usually weaker in the unsatisfactory and satisfactory lessons. For example, many of these lessons do not make good enough use of the plenary to help students understand and consolidate what they have learned. The quality of homework is good and students are regularly provided with worthwhile work to do at home.
29. There is satisfactory teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT across many subjects of the curriculum. In some, there is very good attention to one or more of these cross-curricular skills. For example, there are very good opportunities in leisure and tourism and health and social care for developing literacy skills. In history and art and design, teachers provide good opportunities for extended writing. However, there is scope for teachers to provide greater opportunities for independent writing tasks to help students develop these skills further. Equally, with respect to numeracy and ICT, too little work is done across the curriculum to develop skills to a high enough standard.
30. Teaching pays good attention to equality of opportunity. Teachers take care to meet the specific needs of students who have English as an additional language, both in written English, and in speaking and listening. Support sessions focus on the areas in which students need assistance, whether it is their understanding, or in their written work. In lessons, students' understanding is continually checked to ensure that they make progress. Bilingual assistants are invaluable in developing students' competence in using English. They work very hard to make relevant resources, such as translations of technical terms into students' home languages. In an outstanding lesson, the language competence of these students was effectively used to teach others. This added tremendously to their self-confidence.
31. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall. Some teachers, for instance in art and design and music, make very good use of individual education plan targets in their lesson planning. In subjects such as geography, history and science, teachers are well aware of the students who need additional support and match work carefully to their prior attainment. Materials are often written especially to support the learning of these students, frequently through the work of learning support staff. In modern foreign languages, students are not consistently identified and work is not always matched to their needs, but they receive good support from subject teachers and generally progress at a similar rate to their peers. Learning support assistants provide good support to students with special educational needs, ensuring that they understand the work that has been set and providing an effective combination of challenge and support. In English, work is generally not matched to the needs

of different students, but those with special educational needs receive a good level of support and benefit from clear information about how to improve their work.

32. Assessment procedures are good overall and good across most subjects, though arrangements for assessment in citizenship are not yet in place and hence are unsatisfactory. The school produces a wide range of data on students' progress and academic development. This is satisfactorily used to inform planning, track progress and to inform students on how well they are doing. Most students have a clear idea of the target levels or grades they are aiming for and how to achieve these or how to improve their work. Marking is good overall and in some areas it is very good. In the vocational department – covering health and social care and leisure and tourism – marking and assessment are excellent. As a result, the feedback to students on how well they are doing and precisely what they need do to improve is of very high quality, and a key reason why students' learning is so successful in these areas.
33. Assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are good. Students' difficulties are identified without delay and the school makes good use of links with feeder middle schools to gather information early when students transfer at the beginning of Year 9. A range of tests is used to diagnose students' difficulties and to check their progress. Individual education plans are of good quality, with specific and measurable targets. Statutory requirements are met fully in relation to the review of statements of special educational needs, but individual education plans in Year 9 do not include mathematical learning targets, even where a statement of special educational needs indicates that a student has learning difficulties in this area. Individual education plans do include mathematical targets in Years 10 and 11. Assessment information is used appropriately in identifying which students require additional support and in curriculum planning for students with special educational needs.
34. There are very thorough procedures for assessing the English language learning needs of students who speak English as an additional language. There is very good use of assessment to inform curricular planning and provision. New arrivals are assessed with care and provided with a suitable programme based on their needs. Existing students are tracked and monitored rigorously and support provided as needed. The school analyses data well by ethnicity and by English language learning needs.

Sixth form

35. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Over four-fifths of lessons were good or better and nearly two-fifths were very good. Most sixth form teachers have very secure expertise in their subjects, which they use to give clear explanations and prepare students well for examinations. Many teachers are skilful in asking questions that encourage students to think deeply and develop their understanding. This was seen in a very good lesson in geography on global biomes. Lessons are often well planned, with activities that interest and challenge students. In physics, for example, demanding practical activities allow students to take responsibility for their learning and co-operation is very good during this work. ICT is used very well in physics, providing interesting opportunities for research that students respond to very well.
36. In most subjects, students are encouraged to work independently and contribute to discussions. In history, however, whilst teaching is good, a great amount of learning is too closely controlled by the teachers and more opportunities for independent learning would help to prepare students for employment and higher education. A strong feature of teaching and learning in many subjects is the very good relationship between students and their teachers. Students find teachers helpful and approachable and there is good mutual respect. In health and social care, for example, very positive working relationships have been established which greatly assist learning. In physics, very good student-teacher relationships based on mutual respect produce very keen students eager to learn.
37. Assessment is very good. Teachers mark work regularly and, in most cases, their comments provide good guidance to students. In health and social care, marking and monitoring of

individual students' work and progress is outstanding. In history and geography, assessment is very good and students receive detailed feedback to help them improve their work. Most subjects track students' progress carefully through regular assessments with grades circulated to tutors and the head of sixth form.

38. Overall teaching grades in the sixth form lessons seen across the sixth form were as shown below:

Summary of teaching observed in the sixth form during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	15 (38%)	18 (46%)	5 (13%)	1 (3%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is constrained in some areas by issues of timetabling, staffing and resources and does not fully meet statutory requirements. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Vocational studies provision in Years 10 to 11 is good.
- The school is highly inclusive and provides a good curriculum for students with special educational needs and English as an additional language.
- The timetable is not well organised, though to some extent this is due to the large number of part-time teachers in some areas.
- Not all subjects are making as much use of information and communication technology (ICT) as they should.
- The range of vocational courses in the sixth form is somewhat narrow.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for sports and music.

Commentary

39. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which has some significant strengths but also some weaknesses. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, though in music and some aspects of design and technology requirements for the delivery of ICT are not met due to shortages in equipment. Though there is a curriculum for citizenship, it is not fully taught or monitored. There are regular timetabled slots for personal, social and health education, which include opportunities for the delivery of citizenship. Whilst some subjects across the curriculum cover elements of citizenship as part of subject teaching, this is not made explicitly clear to students.

40. There is a reasonably broad curriculum in place for Years 9 to 11. This includes performing arts across all year groups, except Year 10 where students now follow a GCSE drama course. A strong vocational provision in Years 10 to 11, which includes applied art and design, health and social care and leisure and tourism, promotes very good learning opportunities for students of all abilities but in particular for lower attainers. GCSE courses on offer also include business economics. However, the school has had some difficulties with recruitment of staff and, in some areas, there is a high proportion of part-time staff. To some extent these issues have created an unbalanced distribution of lessons within the two-week timetable in some subjects, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages. This lack of balance has an adverse impact on students' continuity of learning. The vocational subjects in Years 10 to 11 are enhanced well with off-timetable days focusing on areas such as work-related activities. Students on the applied art course have too few timetabled sessions with the result that they

do not have sufficient time for coursework. The lack of time to complete coursework to a high enough standard accounts for the low GCSE results in art and design.

41. The school has yet to develop the use of literacy and numeracy in subjects across the curriculum, particularly with respect to writing. Most subjects make at least satisfactory use of ICT and there has been significant improvement overall in the ICT curriculum since the last inspection. All students follow an accredited ICT course in Years 10 to 11. However, science has yet to make the improvements suggested in the last report with respect to establishing a stronger focus on investigative work. The number of students taking double science at GCSE is improving with about half the current Year 10 on the double science course. In other subjects, curricular provision is satisfactory, and good in history. However, in design and technology, it is characterised by sharply contrasting quality. The resistant materials aspects of the curriculum are unsatisfactory whilst the food and textiles aspects are very good with excellent coursework which ensures very good GCSE results.
42. A wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, ensures that students have good opportunities for broadening their personal and academic development. Opportunities for sports and music outside lessons are particularly good.
43. The curriculum prepares students well for the next stage of education. Equality of opportunity is good with good access to learning for different groups, including able students, those with special educational needs or English as an additional language.
44. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Older students have very good opportunities to study for qualifications matched to their learning needs and to follow vocational courses at the local college. They have good opportunities to undertake extended work placements, reflecting the school's commitment to meeting individual needs. The ASDAN course is well planned and provides well for the needs of a significant number of lower attaining students. Additionally, effective support arrangements are in place so that students with special educational needs are able to cope with their GCSE courses. The Emmaus Centre makes good provision for students who are having difficulty coping with mainstream school and staff work closely with other specialists in meeting these students' personal needs. There is scope for the Centre to be used more intensively, however, in the management of students with challenging behaviour.
45. The curriculum is very well organised to meet the needs of students who are at an early stage of learning to communicate in English. The key skills sessions for small groups provide these students with the basic understanding of literacy and numeracy. This enables them to progress further. Students studying GCSE subjects take one less subject to allow them time in school to have additional support, which they value.
46. The staffing of special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Students would benefit from the presence of learning support assistants in some subjects where no support is timetabled, but the school makes good use of sixth formers to extend the support provided, and ensures that the students are appropriately trained. The special educational needs base is very well resourced with information and communication technology equipment. Computers in the Emmaus Centre enable students to download and complete subject-related work in the Centre, so that they have access to mainstream coursework alongside alternatively accredited courses. The special educational needs base and the Emmaus Centre provide pleasant and stimulating learning environments.
47. Staff who work with students who have English as an additional language are very well qualified but there are too few to provide the extensive support that some students need. The study centre provides adequate accommodation for those who have English as an additional language. There are very good resources to support students learning English. These include bilingual dictionaries, texts and magazines in home languages.

48. The overall accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Overall, non-teaching staff are suitably qualified and satisfactory in number to meet the requirements of the curriculum.

Sixth form

49. The sixth form curriculum offers a satisfactory range of academic AS/A-level courses as well as a small number of vocational courses at Intermediate and Advanced levels, in health and social care and business education. General studies and key skills courses are not offered. All students take a Bishop's certificate in religious education.
50. The school is rightly concerned about the limited curriculum opportunities for students at vocational level 1 and 2 as currently a significant proportion of students go elsewhere at the end of Year 11. The school is part of a strategic planning group examining the 14 to 19 curriculum. The link with another local school is no longer operative. Some courses therefore continue to have small numbers, hence the difficulties of providing appropriate interaction in lessons highlighted in the last report remain.
51. There is a good range of enrichment activities such as community service within and outside the school. Students work with younger children helping in class and providing reading support. Some students also work with middle and primary school students and with old people in the community. A community sports leader award course is available as well as a range of sporting activities. There are fieldwork opportunities and cultural visits in a number of subjects. Students attend university open days and a good link has been established with De Montfort University.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for students' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Provision of support, advice and guidance is good in Years 9 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. The involvement of students by seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong sense of care for the individual throughout the school.
- Academic guidance to students on how to achieve their best is effective in all years and particularly in the sixth form.
- Support for students with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language is strong.
- Students are involved well in making the school a healthier place to be.

Commentary

52. The school's ethos of caring for and valuing each individual has a significant impact on the way in which students are helped to achieve as well as they can, both academically and in their personal development. Year managers and form tutors stay with their groups if possible as they move up the school and this provides students with good continuity of care. Parents strongly appreciate the individual support provided for their children and pay tribute to the staff for knowing the students well and 'going the extra mile' to assist them. Particular attention is paid to ensuring that the pastoral and curriculum needs of the most vulnerable students, such as those with medical conditions or asylum seekers, are identified and met. Arrangements for child protection are good, with all staff having received recent up-to-date training from the designated teacher and appointed governor. Health and safety procedures are also good, with some very good practice in aspects such as risk assessments and the recording and evaluation of fire drills. The result is a safe and secure environment in which all groups of students can fulfil their potential.

53. Arrangements for induction to the school are generally good, although the school is hampered by problems in the transfer of information from some feeder schools. The half-yearly monitoring of academic progress, which starts in Year 9, enables underachievement to be picked up quickly and effective strategies to be put in place. These include interviewing students individually, sometimes with their parents, changing teaching groups or setting up a special support group such as in science. Students are given clear information by their subject teachers on how well they are progressing, what they need to do next and what the examination requirements are. They are also given good guidance about their options as they move through the transition points in Years 9 and 11 so that they have a clear view of the pathways available to them.
54. The school makes good use of the advice and support available through a range of external agencies in relation to students with special educational needs. Systems for monitoring the progress of these students are effective: special educational needs staff work closely with subject departments to ensure these students are progressing well. The Emmaus Centre provides a good level of care and personal support, and gives careful consideration to the needs of individual students.
55. When students who have English as an additional language arrive at the school, they are made to feel welcome and well supported, and students appreciate this. They also receive individual guidance and advice for their further study or career, related to their individual needs.
56. Students have good opportunities to make their views known through the well-established school council system. Staff and governors take the ideas of students seriously and, as a result, a number of improvements have taken place, such as the provision of more healthy food in the canteen, a covered outside area for relaxation at lunch time and the refurbishment of toilets. Students complete various questionnaires from time to time but do not always get feedback on the results.

Sixth form

57. Students receive very good support and guidance in the sixth form. Induction into the sixth form is well organised. Students meet their tutors regularly and find tutors, teachers and the head of sixth form to be approachable if they need additional help. Students have individual interviews to review progress and any problems are followed up by subject teachers, tutors or the head of sixth form.
58. Targets are set for performance in Year 12 and Year 13. These arrangements are effective and are appreciated by students; all are clear about their target grades and how well they are performing in relation to them. They are encouraged to study independently in most subjects. There is a sixth form committee that gives students the opportunity to run their own affairs. Typically, this involves managing the common room and organising social and charity events. Sixth form students take on responsibilities with younger students. Most students enjoy life in the sixth form and would recommend it to others.
59. Students are provided with appropriate guidance on education after the sixth form and on employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is good. Links with the community, other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are given good information and support the school well.
- There are some useful links with the local college and universities which support the curriculum effectively and help raise students' aspirations to further and higher education.
- Links with other schools and agencies are inconsistent: they are effective in some areas but not in others.

Commentary

60. The school has successfully maintained its positive partnership with parents and this makes an important contribution to students' good achievement. The partnership begins before the child starts at the school when parents and students are interviewed to establish contact and clarify shared expectations and values. Parents are kept informed regularly of their child's progress, through the personal organisers, for example. Year managers and form tutors involve parents well when any problems arise and also inform them when there is something to celebrate, which parents appreciate. The interim and full reports provide helpful detail about how well students are doing in individual subjects and what they need to do to improve. The reports do not, however, give consistent information about students' personal development and do not meet statutory requirements in reporting on attendance and citizenship. The half-termly newsletter provides good information about the school. There is an active Parent Teacher Association which has earmarked a considerable sum to support the school's bid for specialist status.
61. Parents and carers of students who have English as an additional language give very good support at home to assist their learning. They often bring translators to meetings, which shows the value that they place on education. A black parents' forum was maintained by the school in conjunction with a neighbouring school for a period of three years. It made a useful and positive contribution to encouraging involvement of African and Caribbean parents within the school. The school is relaunching the forum following a period of decline in attendance and is also working on developing a similar forum for Asian parents.
62. The school works closely with parents of students with statements of special educational needs and involves them appropriately in decision-making. Parents and students are suitably consulted in the setting and reviewing of individual education plan targets, and parents are active partners in the annual review of students' statements of special educational needs.
63. The school has established a very productive link with the local college which enables some groups of students in Years 10 and 11 to undertake an alternative curriculum combining school studies, college courses and work placements. Students have opportunities to visit a range of local universities as part of an 'Aim Higher' initiative. Other links with the community are not as strong as they were at the last inspection, for example in religious education and work experience, largely due to factors outside the school's control. Similarly, the school has not been as successful as it would wish in establishing links with the Black and Asian communities in the town. There are, however, good community links in English, art and music which enrich the cultural experiences of students.
64. Liaison with the middle schools from which students transfer continues to be patchy. There is good pastoral liaison, which supports the more vulnerable students in particular in the transition to Year 9. Some subjects have established useful working relationships with their colleagues in Years 7 and 8 but others have not. The headteacher is heavily involved in a range of initiatives to encourage closer collaboration between schools in the area, including a

federation of the five Catholic schools in the town. Most of these networks are at an early stage of development but some useful joint projects are emerging from one based around information and communication technology. The school works very well with a number of agencies, such as the Education Welfare Service, the school nurse and Connexions, which benefits the support and guidance provided for students. It has not, however, been able to access as much external support as it would like to help it manage the behaviour of a small number of challenging students.

Sixth form

65. The good partnership with parents continues into the sixth form where an appropriate balance is struck between keeping parents informed and giving students greater responsibility and independence in their learning. The interim and full reports provide very good information about students' progress on their courses.
66. The sixth form's links with schools, colleges and the community are satisfactory. There are very good links with local care settings which enhance the provision for the health and social care course. There is a productive link with the local university whereby staff come in to help students prepare for their transition to life and study post-18. Some links enhance students' personal development, for example students have opportunities to undertake community service in local schools, raise funds for local Catholic charities and support a couple of children in Cambodia. Other links with schools are limited. Meetings between local heads of sixth forms are just starting to be established. The curriculum no longer benefits from a consortium arrangement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and the leadership of other staff with responsibilities across the school is satisfactory. Management is satisfactory in the main school. Leadership of the sixth form is very good and the day-to-day management very effective. Governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governance is very good, though not all statutory requirements are fully met.
- The headteacher provides a clear direction for development.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and a result of strong teamwork amongst senior staff and the head of sixth form.
- The curriculum is well managed and monitored by the assistant headteacher responsible.
- Self-review and monitoring procedures are not as rigorous as they could be.

Commentary

67. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the development of the school. He is a committed leader with a clear focus on raising standards and supporting staff to achieve their best. Senior staff are very supportive of the headteacher. However, the current financial difficulties created by the falling roll has reduced the team's effectiveness because senior staff, including the headteacher, are carrying a relatively heavy teaching load and are somewhat stretched. As a result, the focus on strategic planning, monitoring the school's work and addressing weaknesses in the curriculum and in teaching and learning is not as sharp as it needs to be. For example, whilst there is detailed monitoring and support for students' personal development, there is no strategic management of data on behaviour and exclusions to tease out overall patterns and identify issues. On the other hand, there is good management of data related to academic development by the senior manager responsible for curriculum. This has ensured that heads of department have access to good quality information to help them analyse their performance and draw relevant conclusions to inform planning for improvement. Overall, though, senior staff do not have the capacity to drive the

range of developments they need to. There is some inequity also in their roles in that the two assistant heads responsible for the pastoral and curriculum areas respectively have considerably larger workloads than the deputy headteacher.

68. Most middle managers provide good leadership; however, this is not entirely consistent across the school, and self-review, monitoring and evaluation are not effectively enough embedded in the school's ongoing work. As a result some areas, such as mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages, are not improving as fast as they need to or are as good as they should be.
69. Overall, there are some tremendous strengths in the work of senior and middle managers but also some areas for development that are crucial to the overall improvement of the school.
70. The governing body is very well led and has an in-depth grasp of its role. The working partnership between the headteacher and governors is well established and ensures that there is a coherent strategic push towards common goals. For example, governors are seeking a long-term solution for resolving the issues of recruitment of both staff and students by working with other schools and the diocese to create a local Catholic federated provision for 5 to 19-year-olds. In this, and in the management of performance, governors are providing very good support to senior staff. Finance is very well managed by governors. They are very well informed about the school and its strengths and weaknesses; as a result, they are able to target finance and resources very effectively towards areas that will make a difference to students' learning and performance. Governors have made every provision to ensure that statutory requirements are met. However, despite this, the school is not fully meeting requirements for the delivery of citizenship, the use of ICT in all subjects and the provision of attendance data in students' annual reports to parents. The statutory breaches require professional expertise to be fully addressed, and are hence the responsibility of the professional educators.
71. Financial planning and management are well supported by the bursar. Non-teaching staff are effectively deployed and supported in order to maximise the benefit of their work to teaching staff. Good arrangements are in place for staff development and induction for both teaching and non-teaching staff.
72. Special educational needs is led and managed well by an experienced and competent co-ordinator. As a result, the school has built well on the good support for students with special educational needs found at the last inspection. Liaison between the special educational needs department and subject teachers is good and the specialist advice provided is valued throughout the school. There are very effective procedures for ensuring that subject teachers and support staff communicate regularly, with a representative of each attending the other's meetings. Staff have very good opportunities to undertake professional training and this contributes to the effectiveness of the team of committed learning support staff. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that provision is monitored and evaluated and uses the ensuing information well to plan future developments. The school uses its special educational needs funding appropriately.
73. At the time of the inspection, there was a change-over of a teacher responsible for English as an additional language. However, the systems in place show that there has been very good leadership and management of this area of provision. Assessment is detailed, and provides the basis for focused support. Each targeted student has an action plan, and regular progress reports and students' evaluation sheets are used to meet the changing needs of these students. Support is given to targeted students primarily for all English and science lessons, then in other lessons where talking is the main method of communication. In addition, departments are provided with specific guidance on the ways in which these students can be supported. There is regular liaison with departments, which ensures that there is very good and up-to-date communication.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,836,228	Balance from previous year	180,075
Total expenditure	2,908,566	Balance carried forward to next year	107,737
Expenditure per pupil	3,617		

Sixth form

74. Leadership and management are very good and based on very effective teamwork amongst senior staff and the head of the sixth form. Leadership is committed and competent and there is a clear sense of direction. The strategy for developing the sixth form includes broadening the curriculum to provide opportunities for a wider range of students. Relationships are very good and there is mutual respect between tutors, teachers and students. Leadership is firm and fair, with clear lines of responsibility. Leadership within subjects inspected in full is also good and in English and physics it is very good. It is excellent in health and social care.
75. The sixth form runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The quality of provision is monitored and appropriate priorities for development have been identified. Procedures are clear and staff and students adhere to them. Systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress are thorough and effective. Students are encouraged to participate in the management of the sixth form, in the life of the school and the community.

Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of vocational courses are motivating and inspiring many students.
- Teaching and learning, on vocational courses, are good and have very good features.
- There is good vision for the development of WRL but no clear allocation of responsibility.
- The absence of a co-ordinator means that opportunities are missed in the other subjects to develop good WRL skills.

Commentary

76. Overall standards, on balance, match those found nationally. Students on the vocational courses speak with confidence and enthusiasm about their achievements and plans for the future. Students on the ASDAN courses are now responding better because their concerns have been taken into account. However, basic skills development over the range of general courses is satisfactory or better only in a few subjects such as the humanities and in English and drama. ICT skills development is unsatisfactory overall. Subject departments are not yet geared up to develop appropriate WRL skills for each student.
77. Teaching and learning about work are good for about 70 per cent of the students in Years 10 and 11. They have some very good features. Very good planning in one lesson seen created a final third of the lesson in which students confidently shared their new knowledge and skills. Other vocational lesson observations show that students have a very clear view of the career routes opening up for them as individuals. In all lessons seen there was a good focus on development of work-related skills, hence improving standards and quality of students' work. Careers advice and guidance is not adequately monitored and evaluated.

78. In their learning through work, whilst on work experience and on courses at the college, individuals are highly motivated. Photographic evidence shows students enjoying working in a range of purposeful environments, repairing cars and making quality food products. Students on the vocational GCSE courses benefit from work experience that is well planned beforehand and is reviewed against clear criteria on their return.
79. The school manages the WRL effectively but the different components of the WRL are managed by a group whose activities are not well co-ordinated so inconsistencies are apparent. Nevertheless, the senior staff have a good vision and are already 'ahead of the game' in some aspects of WRL development. The school has a clear intention to establish a new post. It is already in a strong position to develop and the situation appears likely to improve quite soon.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very good, providing clear vision and a high level of consistency in effective teaching.
- Assessment is very good.
- Students work hard in lessons and make good progress.
- For a substantial number of students, the quality and range of their oral and written expression needs further development.

Commentary

80. Results of the tests for 14-year-olds have been close to national averages for the last four years; and in the most recent validated results, in 2003, they were above average.
81. Compared with schools that have similar student populations, the school's standards are very high. In English and English literature at GCSE, there has been more fluctuation in the results. Over the same period of four years, they have generally been in line with national averages – sometimes just above and sometimes just below. The most recent results, for 2004, were in line with the national average in English but below in English literature. Standards in English on entry to the school are below the national average. Substantial numbers of students speak a language other than English at home but they make good strides in their English language development. When these factors are taken into account, all these results represent good achievement. There are no significant differences in the achievement of students based on ethnicity. Higher attainers do well.
82. Work seen in class during the inspection was good in all years. Students develop good understanding of the literature they study and, by the time they reach Year 11, they have acquired good skills of critical analysis and the ability to form independent views on what they read. However, many students have difficulty with spoken and written expression, lacking the range of vocabulary and sentence structures that are needed to convey ideas clearly. This is particularly true of students in Years 10 and 11, where examination demands in language are more rigorous and sophisticated than they are at the time of the Year 9 tests.
83. Teaching and learning are good. The department follows a well-structured scheme of work that covers all requirements for Years 9 to 11, including the aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) that are appropriate to the subject. Lessons are tightly planned, with stimulating resources and good variety of task and approach. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and effort and the students respond well; they understand the objectives given for each lesson and work hard to achieve them. Students with special learning or language needs are well supported, both by extra staff from the special needs department, and by additional simplified materials. Teachers' marking and assessment of work is of very good quality, giving students realistic judgements on their performance with appropriate advice on strengths and areas for improvement. Students are also involved in assessment, of their own work and of the effectiveness of the teaching they receive.
84. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department works very hard herself and inspires her team to do the same. There is a shared ambition for school,

department and student success, and teachers are supportive to each other in working towards this aim. The regular consideration of cross-sections of students' work by the whole department, together with observation and monitoring by the head of department, ensures a professional and consistent approach. Resources are well managed. This year, unusually, there are some problems with timetabling causing a small amount of class sharing which is difficult for the staff and students concerned. In all other respects, staffing is well organised: all teachers teach the full range of age and ability; most of them have their own teaching rooms, which are clustered in one part of the building. The standard of display is very high and, with the good range of audio/visual resources and ICT equipment, provides a stimulating environment for the students.

85. The department has maintained the strengths noted in the last inspection report and has improved performance in the advised areas. Behaviour in class is better and, notably, attainment at the end of Year 9, which was below average, is now safely above.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

86. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are just about satisfactory overall, though better in speaking and listening and reading than in writing. There is clear improvement in writing from Year 9 to Year 10, although over the curriculum as a whole, standards are barely satisfactory. For many students, writing skills lack the range and depth of vocabulary and sentence structure, hence hampering their capacity to achieve better in subjects across the curriculum. In science and geography, for example, literacy skills are weak and adversely impact on students' performance. Insufficient opportunities in history for discussion and active involvement in lessons hampers students' development of literacy. Most students have the reading skills they need to cope with their subjects, and they are well supported in reading and research by an enthusiastic library staff. All departments take at least some responsibility for supporting students' development in the skills they need for reading and writing in the secondary school curriculum. For instance, the departments of history and art, as well as English, give opportunities for extended writing, and teachers of music and science ensure that the students understand the technical vocabulary needed in their subjects. However, overall, the school needs to focus more closely on improving students' writing skills.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in languages in Years 10 and 11.
- Marking does not always give sufficient guidance to help students improve.
- Students enjoy languages and get on well with their teachers.
- The practice of teaching beginners and those who have previous experience of a language in the same class has a negative impact on achievement.
- The subject leader is a consistently good practitioner; however, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

87. In 2004 GCSE French results were just below the national average; German were just above average and Italian were well below when compared with those students who study another language across the country. However, both boys and girls do much better in Italian than they do in their other subjects. Girls' standards are higher than boys' in French and Italian. Most students took a GCSE in a language in 2004 and all passed. Standards overall are average by the end of Year 11.

88. By the end of Year 9, standards are below those reported nationally, although significantly higher in French than in Italian. Girls are doing better than boys and the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is greater than that seen nationally. Although standards are higher in French than Italian at the end of Year 9, this gap is rapidly closed as students progress through the school.
89. Overall achievement is good but is better in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve better in Italian than they do in French because the teaching in most classes is highly effective. The teacher speaks Italian fluently but rightly uses English very occasionally; prepares well; ensures that all skills are covered through a range of engaging activities; and is always warm, positive and encouraging. Consequently, students feel confident to join in and are well supported in their learning. Students who have learned Italian since they came to the school achieve well. The same is true for the group who began German in Year 9: the very high quality, dynamic teaching they receive results in very high achievement. In all lessons, students' very positive attitudes and behaviour and the diverse linguistic background of many of them contribute to their success. Students of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds were seen to be achieving well in languages.
90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but good in Years 10 and 11. Whilst much of the teaching supports students' learning, and is often good in Years 10 and 11, a small, but significant, proportion is poor. In those classes where all students underachieve, the purpose of the lessons is not clear; either too much or too little English is used. Students' starting points are not taken into account and not enough checks are made to see whether the students are coping with the tasks set, consequently students struggle in these lessons. Marking is not always sufficiently informative to students and does not provide them with pointers for improvement.
91. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader is committed and dedicated and has created a positive team. However, not enough strategic leadership has been shown; national initiatives aimed at improving teaching and learning have not been fully embraced and development priorities are not sharp enough. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because teaching has deteriorated and some teaching group arrangements are not only still inappropriate but actually worse than in the previous inspection. For example, the practice of teaching beginners and those who have previous experience of a language in the same class has a negative impact on achievement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good and, by identifying and responding to developmental issues, have set the tone for change.
- Teaching and learning styles are in need of further development to drive up standards.
- Staffing issues have impeded continuity and weakened the potential for change.

Commentary

92. Students' standards, when they enter school, are below average. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average but well above results in similar schools. The performance of girls has been consistently below that of boys. GCSE results in 2004 were below the national average but average when compared to similar schools. Targets set by the school were met.
93. Standards from inspection evidence confirm the most recent results. By the end of Year 9, higher attainers use sequences with some successful attempts at generalisations. The work of

high attainers in Year 11 shows they have a sound grasp of quadratic equations but some of the work is weakened by not always showing working out. Low attaining students show evidence of solid preparation for non-calculator work with good work on directed numbers, percentages and timetables. However, the quality and quantity of work is inconsistent between teaching groups. Too many books show evidence of incomplete and insufficient work; note taking including lesson objectives and exemplar work varies considerably. Limited evidence was seen of students using mathematics as an investigative tool and there is limited evidence of significant use of ICT. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily: the support they receive in lessons is good. Students from the wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others including those whose first language is not English. No evidence was identified of differences in gender attainment.

94. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 9 to 11. It is generally good in national tests and examinations because there are good systems in the department for providing examination support to students. Key members of staff run additional revision classes after school and during holidays. These strategies are a direct consequence of the critical staff issues the department faced which adversely influenced continuity and quality of work.
95. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. When teaching is good, it reflects considerable recognition of students' needs. Good teaching is well planned, imaginatively presented and invariably reflects good student involvement in open debate. As a result, students in a middle ability Year 10 lesson were confident in manipulating negative numbers and graphing linear equations. In some lessons, teachers do not strike the right balance between explanation and student involvement in open discussion or collaborative work. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, behaviour management strategies are ineffective and the learning of all is slowed. The shape of the timetable and split teaching groups has an adverse impact on the continuity of teaching and learning.
96. Leadership and management are good, representing an improving position. The head of department since being appointed has put into place strategies to support the work in classrooms. These include schemes of work, assessment procedures, a rigorous analysis of examination results and strategies for improving standards. This clarity of vision and sense of purpose set a good tone for other staff. However, the lack of a designated second in department to support change means that it is taking longer for the impact of initiatives to be fully realised.

Mathematics across the curriculum

97. Students' competence in mathematics is overall below average. Students' numeracy skills are used in most subjects but to varying extents and expectations of what students are able to do. In science, students used calculations related to balanced forces and speed. Evidence of graphical work was seen in geography linked to climate graphs. Statistical analysis was seen in history relating to employment trends in Northern Ireland to identify discrimination. In design and technology, measuring connected to drawing plane shapes, estimating food ingredients, temperature conversions and calculating area is a regular feature of lessons. The use of dates, times and prices were used in modern foreign languages. In physical education numeracy supports the work in health-related fitness and the use of data display in GCSE files. Whilst these examples of use of numeracy are positive, there is no co-ordinated approach and the ad hoc nature of delivery of numeracy skills means that they are not as systematically taught or developed across the curriculum as they should be. Numeracy is mentioned in some schemes of work and staff have benefited from whole-school training, but a policy is yet to emerge.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements in GCSE examinations are very good.
- The best teaching is excellent; it is demanding and leads to excellent learning.
- Records of students are very thorough and ensure that students are well informed and supported.
- In Year 9, standards are falling and the national strategy is not used enough to raise them.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT because there are not enough computer resources.

Commentary

98. Results in Year 9 tests in 2003 were below the national average but, compared with students' earlier results, they were well above average. They declined in 2004 but were still above average in comparison with earlier results. In both 2003 and 2004 students took GCSE examinations in both single and double award courses and their results overall were about average compared with national results. The proportion who took single science was significantly larger than that nationally or the proportion who took double science, though the numbers taking double science are now increasing with about 50 per cent in current Year 10 who are doing so. Students did better in science than in their other subjects and in comparison with prior attainment, their results were well above average. Achievement in examinations is very good and boys and girls do equally well.
99. Standards are below average by Year 9 and about average by Year 11. In Year 9, students' understanding of ideas about variation is about average and a significant number do better. In Year 10, many students can explain how atoms are made up and their knowledge is good, for the majority it is satisfactory. Standards of literacy are below average and numeracy skills are about average.
100. Achievement is good in all years. Many students achieve well because lessons are demanding. However, sometimes the achievement of more able students is only satisfactory because work is not well matched to their capabilities and, in Year 9, there are not enough opportunities to learn the skills of investigation. In Years 10 and 11, lessons proceed at a good pace so that students learn difficult ideas quickly. Boys and girls and students from the ethnic minorities do equally well and students with special educational needs achieve well because they are well supported. Clear explanations of scientific terms and the English language used ensure that achievement is equally good for students who speak English as an additional language.
101. Teaching and learning are good in all years; some teaching is excellent. Teachers make good use of students' ideas, teaching is interesting and students are encouraged for their efforts; as a result, they are interested in science and work hard. Sometimes in Year 9 students have to listen for too long and they do not work independently. Interesting use of ICT and video clips, with clear explanations, ensure that students learn well and grow in confidence. Sometimes, inattention slows lessons and, although planning is good, learning is only satisfactory. In the best teaching planning is excellent and expectations are very high. Excellent support is provided for students who are underachieving, skilful teaching gives them opportunities to learn difficult ideas and to learn how to learn. As a result, they work hard, co-operation is good and learning is excellent.
102. Leadership and management are good. Standards in GCSE examinations are rising. Records of marks are very thorough; they are used to set targets and support students. Resources for ICT are unsatisfactory so that students have fewer opportunities to learn independently.

Staffing difficulties have caused frequent changes to the post of Year 9 co-ordinator; consequently, the national strategy is not used sufficiently and standards in tests are falling.

103. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have risen in Years 10 and 11; teaching has improved, it is more demanding, better matched to students' capabilities and expectations are higher. Marking is better and the accommodation has improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teachers engage the students confidently.
- Careful probing questioning in an atmosphere of respect ensures thoughtful progress.
- New systems to encourage students to improve more independently are beginning to have a good effect.
- ICT resources are very good and have significantly improved since the last inspection.
- Not all subjects make enough use of ICT and in some cases this is due to shortages in resources.

Commentary

104. Standards in ICT on entry to the school are below average. Student scores in tests set by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average. In the work seen for the current year, Year 9 students are on course to attain average standards by the end of the year. Year 9 students enter data with precision and prepare presentations for specific audiences but, even with good intranet access, they are less confident when comparing different ways of solving the same problem. By the end of Year 11 in 2004, results in GCSE examinations were average. Currently, all Year 11 do a GCSE short course and are mostly on course to achieve their targets. Standards are average. Students confidently compare electronic with other methods. They are beginning to compare types of software when solving problems.
105. During the inspection, students mostly worked hard and at a good pace. The new courses contain interesting and relevant activities. Students with relatively low prior attainments made good progress with their chosen projects. Students aiming for top grades are assessing their own work and that of others, but lack confidence. Boys and girls and those of different ethnic backgrounds benefit equally from very good equipment, individual guidance and technical back-up. As a result, they all achieve equally well. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good.
106. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9. Confident and interactive demonstration by teachers ensures learning is at a good pace. Through good questioning, the teachers effectively encourage students to assess their own work as they progress. Teaching and learning in Year 10 and Year 11 are good. Teachers and learning support staff are confident enough to take risks to motivate and challenge individuals and to focus their learning on well thought-through objectives. In a well-organised Year 10 ASDAN lesson, the teacher and learning support assistant organised group work well, thus enabling students to make effective decisions about their work. The teachers plan lessons to make good any gaps in standards that have shown up on marked mock examination texts. However, celebrations of achievement are not yet a regular feature of the teaching repertoire so display is disappointing and students are not confident as independent learners. However, new systems to encourage independence and hence enable students to improve their skills are beginning to have a good impact.
107. Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All students progress well to cover the nationally required programme of study. Good action is

being taken to ensure that targets are realistic and achievable. The team has the confidence and capability to maintain the improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

108. Standards across subjects are below average. ICT competence develops well in the humanities and in science and matches the good achievement of the core ICT in English. In many other subjects, attainment is below average because too little work is done with computers so skills development is not maintained.
109. The last inspection noted that the students had a lack of opportunity to use the computers. Currently the specialist rooms are booked for approximately 60 per cent of the available time. Subjects that have used the rooms most frequently, in the past four weeks, include English, health and social care and business studies. The rooms were well used to boost student achievement on at least two occasions during the inspection.
110. The quality of the ICT resources is mostly very good. Equipment is reliable and access to a wide range of sources is good. In expressive arts, students use cameras to excellent effect when evaluating their work. In contrast, there are insufficient computers in music and not enough resources in science to enable students to develop independent use of tools such as data logging to record and analyse results of experiments. These inconsistencies are of concern to the current management. Insufficient attention is currently given to the monitoring and evaluation of ICT skills development outside the specialist rooms.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school.
- Examination results have been below average but there is evidence of an upward trend.
- Assessment is very thorough and is having a positive effect on learning.
- The subject is well led and appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified.
- There are too few opportunities for field study in Year 9.

Commentary

111. GCSE results were well below average in 2004, but close to the national average in 2003. In 2004, students did not do as well as in their other subjects but results were close to predicted grades. In 2003, boys performed better than girls.
112. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Students, however, achieve well in relation to their knowledge on entry to the school. Most work well in lessons which, combined with good teaching, helps learning. Students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language also achieve well. Class teachers know their needs and provide good in-class support and plan work to meet those needs. Students acquire skills in map work and gain knowledge of ideas in human and physical geography. Their written work often suffers from weak literacy skills. They have difficulty understanding links in data provided, for example the relationships between climate and vegetation in an ecosystem.
113. Current standards in Year 11 are also below average. Students achieve well however, including those who have special educational needs or English as a second language. Students gain an understanding of geographical concepts. In urban geography, for example,

higher attaining students in Year 11 display a good understanding of locational factors influencing settlement. They are able to analyse theoretical models of city structures effectively and identify reasons for different types of land use. The work of students, other than the most able, is adversely affected by weak literacy and evaluative skills. Students use computers satisfactorily to analyse and present information and data.

114. Teaching overall is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge; they are enthusiastic and committed and use a range of appropriate methods that stimulate students' interest and assist learning. Lessons are well structured in three parts and students have opportunities to learn independently and develop their thinking skills. High expectations, good pace and challenge lead students to make good progress. This was seen in a very good lesson in Year 11, where students were exploring the impact on different stakeholders of development within the tropical rainforest. Progress is helped by most students' positive attitudes to work. Case studies and geographical investigations are used well to consolidate understanding of geographical ideas. Assessment is very good and students are informed of what they need to do to raise their standards and reach their target grades.
115. The subject is well led and effectively managed. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well thought out to meet needs. Computers are used well to gather and present information. Departmental work is monitored carefully through lesson observations and by detailed analysis of assessment and examination data. The department has just initiated a well-planned mentoring process to raise examination grades, particularly on the D/C borderline. Opportunities for practical work in Year 9 are too limited. Since the previous inspection, results have fallen but current performance indicates an upward trend. Overall improvement has been satisfactory and the department has good capacity for further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is characterised by effective planning and a clear focus on student improvement.
- GCSE results are improving.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There is insufficient opportunity for students to work collaboratively.

Commentary

116. Standards at the end of Year 9 are a little below the national average as a result of weak literacy skills amongst students when they enter the school. According to National Curriculum teacher assessments, the standards of students of Caribbean, Indian and Italian heritage are lower than those of other students and the standards of boys lower than girls'. This was supported by observation in the inspection. To a large extent, the differences based on ethnicity are due to some students having English as an additional language and are effectively tackled as students move through the school.
117. Standards at the end of Year 11 rose significantly between 2003 and 2004, with the percentage of students achieving a higher grade GCSE in the subject rising from 46 to 58 per cent, close to the national average. There was a wide gap in the performance of boys and girls, with 75 per cent of girls gaining a grade C or above compared with 41 per cent of boys.
118. Achievement is good in Year 9, with nearly all students making good progress, including those from minority ethnic groups and both genders. Students learn to evaluate evidence, give both sides of an argument and improve their literacy skills. Those with special educational needs

achieve as well as other students. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve well and by the end of Year 11 write extensively on historical questions and life in the past. As in Year 9, boys and girls and students with special educational needs progress well as do students from minority ethnic groups including those with English as an additional language.

119. Good achievement results from teaching which is never less than satisfactory and is normally good or very good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure all students progress. Good subject knowledge enables them to explain historical change accurately and clearly and ask challenging questions to which students respond well. Students' social and verbal skills could be further developed by more opportunity to discuss issues at length and to work independently, including in pairs or small groups. Assessment of students' work is good with helpful and constructive comments on how they can improve and data on their performance is used very effectively to influence planning. However, students' involvement in assessing their own work is limited and, even in Year 11, many are not clear enough about what grade they are targeting at GCSE. Students with special education needs are supported by a clear focus on their individual needs and with differentiated materials. Good relationships in class, fostered by teachers, ensure students from different ethnic background work well together and make good progress.
120. Provision for ICT is satisfactory. Students make good use of the Internet for research, prepare PowerPpoint presentations and successfully word process written work on topics such as the Holocaust. Limited access to facilities means there is room for further development.
121. Good teaching owes much to the effective leadership and management of the head of department. Good use of data on student performance leads to well researched and effective strategies for improvement in boys' performance, for example. Schemes of work are thorough and detailed but attention should now be paid to the role of the department in cross-curricular areas such as citizenship.
122. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Students' achievement is good throughout and the use of ICT has improved.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Whilst GCSE results in textiles and food technology are well above average, those in resistant materials, systems and control and graphic products are well below.
- Students' achievement in food and textiles is very good but it is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and systems and control.
- Teaching in the food and textiles areas is very good with some excellent practice. However, in the resistant materials and systems and control areas it is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory.
- The management of the food and textiles curriculum is very good, ensuring that students gain much from these subject areas. That in resistant materials, systems and control and graphics is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient use of computer aided design and manufacturing.

Commentary

123. Standards are just below average by the end of Year 9. Overall, standards in the range of GCSE courses offered in 2004 were average. However, whilst standards in food and textiles

courses were well above average, standards in resistant materials, graphics and systems and control were well below.

124. Achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory because standards on entry are below average and, by the end of Year 9, they are just below average. In resistant materials and graphics, achievement is satisfactory. In food and textiles achievement is good. The girls do better than the boys but there is no discernible difference based on ethnicity. The higher attaining students achieve higher standards because they can express their ideas through high quality annotated sketches in food and textiles and are perceptive when evaluating and assessing finished products. For example, when students begin to develop their knowledge and understanding of food products, they are beginning to identify nutritional requirements needed for a balanced diet. Students' making skills in resistant materials are slowly developing, but are not supported with enough design work. For example, when students make air powered vehicles they have not used design work to anticipate or solve potential problems likely to arise when making. The progress made by lower attaining students is satisfactory because of the support they receive from their teachers.
125. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The systems and control course has now been discontinued, with the current Year 11 being the last group taking it. Inspection evidence indicates that standards have improved in food and textiles courses since the last inspection, but have declined significantly in other areas. There are some stunning pieces of students' coursework, for example in textiles where a range of garments are made to exacting standards and in food technology where students design a wide range of food products to meet specific consumer needs. Overall, students perform slightly better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects but this disguises the fact that students do far better in food and textiles courses and far worse in resistant materials and systems and control courses than they do in their other subjects.
126. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some lessons being very good or excellent in textiles technology. The quality of teaching in resistant materials and systems and control is unsatisfactory. There is an improving situation in graphics. In the most effective textiles lessons, teachers' preparation and classroom management are excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject and these features are used to motivate their students very effectively. They use skilful, well-targeted question and answer sessions, keeping the pace of lessons brisk with no time wasted. Students' learning is supported well with good quality worksheets. Students receive constructive comments on their work from teachers and therefore know what they have to do to improve, particularly in GCSE course work. In these lessons, the needs of those with special educational needs or English as an additional language are well met so that they achieve very well. The unsatisfactory teaching lacks rigour and pace and teacher expectation is not high enough. These impact adversely on the learning needs of all groups of students.
127. Leadership is unsatisfactory because there is no one teacher who has been given responsibility to co-ordinate provision and monitor standards across all material areas. The teacher in charge of food and textiles has developed an effective team with her colleagues, which contributes well to further development in these areas. She is aware of elements in need of improvement and plans are in place to raise students' attainment further. There has been good improvement made since the last inspection and the food and textiles areas are stimulating environments in which to work, with high quality displays everywhere. However, there are difficulties in managing an effective team in resistant materials and systems and control because of staffing, resulting in unsatisfactory provision and therefore unsatisfactory improvement in these areas of study. Marking of students' work is inconsistent with the best practice seen in food and textiles. There is insufficient computer-aided design and manufacturing. A committed technician team provides support that has a positive impact on standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Expressive arts and drama were sampled and two lessons were observed. GCSE results in expressive arts in 2004 were low. The school is in the process of changing syllabuses from the GCSE expressive arts course, with the current Year 11 being the last group to take it, to a drama course. Current Year 10 students are the first group to be taking this course. A drama lesson observed in Year 10 was excellent. Students explored oppression intently, producing very creative and wide-ranging interpretations of the emotions and viewpoints of the oppressor and the oppressed. Standards of work were high. In a Year 11 expressive arts lesson, though standards were below average, the quality of teaching and learning were good due to the teacher's very effective planning and preparation. Students made good progress in learning how to use spidergrams and flowcharts to capture and organise ideas.

Art and design

The quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, with very high expectations. Students are motivated to succeed and achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good and teamwork is strong.
- Assessment is very good.
- The double award applied art has the time allocated for a single subject, which adversely affects standards.
- Computer resources are inadequate.
- Single and poorly spread lessons affects standards.

Commentary

128. The 2004 GCSE examination results were below the national averages, but had improved. Standards in the applied art examination were very low, which was due to the impossible task of students trying to achieve the required range of artwork in half the expected time. Standards seen have improved overall. Standards seen in Year 11 GCSE students are above national expectations, though they are below in Year 11 applied art. The 2004 teacher assessments of Year 9 students show standards that are well above the national averages. Inspection evidence indicates above average standards by Year 9, highlighting significant improvement since the last inspection. The improvement is due to the very good teaching, and the revised assessment procedures. All students achieve very well, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Students enter the school with standards that are below national expectations. All students make rapid leaps in their skills in drawing, painting and using other media in Year 9, providing the basis for the good artwork seen. Achievement is very good. Those students who take the applied art achieve very well to gain the standards seen, despite the reduced time that they experience.
129. The quality of teaching is consistently very good, underpinned by secure subject knowledge. The two teachers have very high expectations, contributing to the very good achievement that students make. Lessons are very well planned, and no time is wasted, enabling the very good progress that students make in their learning. Questioning is very good. Students are asked to explain, and then explain further, so that they think and therefore learn. Tasks are challenging but achievable, and with good relationships, students learn quickly and consequently are highly motivated to learn more. Their desire to improve is seen in the exceptionally high numbers of students who attend the after-school art club, where there are students who are taking GCSE art in their own time.
130. Leadership and management are very good, and the two teachers work very well together. Following thorough evaluation of results, changes were made to the assessment procedures.

These now provide the impetus for students to improve, as there is instant and regular feedback. This has led to an improvement in standards in all years. The effect of the very high standards in Year 9 has led to vastly improved standards in Year 10, which are likely to follow through. The standards seen in the applied art course in Years 10 and 11 have improved, but only because students and teachers are willing to put in extra time after school to make up much of the shortfall. The allocation of time to art and design across the two weeks makes continuity in the subject difficult for some classes. Also, the single lessons hamper progress in this practical subject. There is only one computer in the two rooms, which is inadequate for all students to use to develop ideas. The teachers give their time willingly and the after-school art club buzzes with activity. Improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly in the quality of teaching.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory** and rapidly improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The appointment of two very well qualified music teachers has brought stability and led to increasingly rapid improvement.
- Standards that have been poor in Year 9 and in GCSE music examinations are now significantly better, though still below average.
- The good performance skills of the two teachers in music have a very positive impact on students' learning, though more attention needs to be given to composition work.
- The very good quality of instrumental tuition has sustained the music department in difficult times.
- Extra-curricular opportunities, together with public performances, are well in place, earning the school a reputation that is valued in the community.
- Although the music curriculum currently fails to meet statutory requirements in respect of ICT, planned developments to address this weakness are already in place.

Commentary

131. Examination results in GCSE music in recent years were well below average and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 inaccurately inflated low standards and achievement. However, in 2004, GCSE results improved significantly as a result of good teaching. The proportion of students gaining a grade A* to C in 2004, though still below the national average, was closer to it. Given students' prior levels of attainment in music, these achievements are very good. Several students learning to play instruments take graded examinations in music but their results have not been regularly logged by the department and therefore not recorded in governors' reports to parents. This needs to be rectified.
132. On entry, students' standards in music are poor. Standards are now improving rapidly but remain below average by the end of Year 9. However, achievement is good. All students, especially those receiving individual music tuition, have greater confidence in singing and playing, both as individuals and in groups, by the end of Year 9 than when they began at the school. Some students are able to focus their attention with precision and discrimination, especially when performing and listening to music. This deepens their understanding of what they hear and contributes to their very good standards. Standards of work in the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 are below average but the achievement of students is good. Students demonstrate good performance skills by Year 11. No composition lessons were observed, though work in this aspect is covered.
133. Teaching and learning in music are good and are well supported by very good schemes of work and excellent lesson-planning which makes provision for all capabilities. Teachers know their students well and work in lessons is well matched to individual needs, by outcome and by task. There are well-targeted inclines of difficulty, both within lessons and over time, to

enable students to build new skills and knowledge progressively. The visiting instrumental staff provide very good tuition. Their students (6.1 per cent of the school's population) demonstrate their enjoyment of music-making and their commitment to the life of the whole school by their involvement in a range of ensembles and performances, both in school concerts and in the local community. Some students have formed their own bands. These include a small group of A-level students in Year 12 who are anticipated to do well in examination.

134. The department now enjoys secure and good leadership. The personal vision, convictions and commitment of the staff have encouraged the school governors to support music with the refurbishment of the accommodation and its resources. This includes improving the acoustics of individual rooms and their soundproofing, and the planned acquisition of more computers and classroom instruments. Currently, there are too few computers and electronic keyboards are not of sufficient quality to promote development of composition and performance work. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory, though much of the improvement has taken place recently and at a rapid pace.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work well together as a team and are committed to improvement.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of students adversely affects achievement and standards.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and students' work.
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students, especially the talented, to improve their learning.

Commentary

135. Patterns at GCSE in recent years have shown above to well above average results. In 2003, the latest year for which validated national data are available, results were above average. A small group of students in the 2004 GCSE examinations gained well above average results, which represents very good achievement for this small sample. However, any statistical comparisons are invalid in 2004 as the cohort is too small.
136. Students arrive at school with a wide range of experiences of physical education and demonstrating standards that are below average overall. By Year 9, standards remain below average, representing satisfactory achievement. Year 9 teacher assessments of standards in 2004 were below average, with girls being well below average. Inspection evidence did not show that girls' standards are lower. However, unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are constraining both standards and achievement. By Year 11, standards in the core physical education programme are average and students are achieving satisfactorily. The improving standards are a result of teachers beginning to address the behavioural and attitudinal problems. The majority of students know the reasons for warming up prior to physical activity; they lead simple warm ups but do not always challenge themselves sufficiently. In football and netball, students appreciate the need to work as a team jointly using individual attacking skills to overload and outwit opposition. They are just beginning to use the concepts of width and depth. Students following the GCSE course are well motivated. Scrutiny of students' GCSE files and classroom work shows standards to be above average, a consequence of thorough examination preparation where theory and practical work are successfully linked. GCSE students are achieving well.
137. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory from Years 9 to 11. However, there are shortcomings where learning is constrained by a significant minority of students whose

attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Teachers do not always insist upon acceptable standards of both behaviour and work. In a small minority of lessons, expectations, challenge and pace are not sufficiently demanding. However, in a Year 11 netball lesson on spatial awareness in attack, teaching was dynamic, there was brisk pace and challenge leading to good learning and achievement. Teachers have good subject knowledge and apply it well to plan lessons. Long-term planning is good and successfully supports lesson planning. However, not enough time in games lessons is spent on skill acquisition and development where skills are improved in a progressive way before being used in a small game situation. Teachers know their students well. They are very aware of the wide range of students' abilities and needs. They give good support to students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue, and as a result, these students achieve as well as their peers. For instance, a Year 9 student with visual impairment was very skilfully integrated into a health-related fitness lesson. Good facilities have enabled the development of a good and varied programme. About a quarter of the school's students take part in a wide extra-curricular programme; this provides good opportunities to extend their learning.

138. Curriculum leadership and management of physical education are satisfactory. Unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of students have constrained standards and achievement for a large number. These issues are a consequence of absence and staff changes, and insufficient routines and procedures have been adopted to resolve the problems. These issues now have to be addressed. Theory lessons do not have a regular base and this constrains use of resources and ICT. However, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection as many of the issues identified have been resolved and the GCSE results have improved. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently developed to promote sharing of good practice. The department members work well together and are committed to improving standards.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

139. No business or vocational courses were covered in depth but business economics, leisure and tourism and health and social care were sampled. Provision in health and social care and leisure and tourism is very good. These courses are amongst the most successful taught by the school and teaching is consistently good or better. A high proportion of students gained a grade A* to C in leisure and tourism in 2004. Though the proportion was lower in health and social care, the students taking the course achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment. Expectations of work and behaviour are very high and students are well challenged to reach high standards in both leisure and tourism and health and social care. As a result, they achieve very well. The very good focus on literacy and opportunities for group and pair work in leisure and tourism and health and social care support students' development of literacy skills well but are particularly helpful for those who are learning English as an additional language.
140. The two business studies lessons observed provided a sound foundation for students' learning. Effective use was made of ICT to promote standards and achievement. In one lesson, where teaching and learning were good, there was good challenge and pace. These ensured that the needs of all students were well met and subject knowledge was effectively conveyed to them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

141. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **satisfactory** but there are some weaknesses. A well-planned pastoral programme is delivered by form tutors and covers appropriate PSHE topics as well as elements of citizenship. It meets the statutory requirements for sex and relationship education, drug education, and careers education and guidance. A suitable variety of teaching and learning styles is employed. Good use is made of the school nurse, the Connexions service and industrial tutors to support the programme. In one Year 10 tutor period, the tutor and support assistant worked effectively together to ensure that students made good progress in assessing their own and each other's personal qualities

and skills. Students of a wide range of capabilities were supported well in completing the appropriate page in their new progress file. Students' work in other PSHE topics is stored in a loose-leaf fashion with their citizenship work so that it is not easy for students or staff to track their progress and take pride in any achievement. There is no assessment in PSHE and the reporting of students' personal development to parents is limited. However, students are clear about what they are learning in PSHE and value the opportunities for discussion on a wide range of moral and social issues. Year managers monitor PSHE lessons and coverage. However, this needs to be more rigorous and to be drawn together to provide a clear picture of the results of whole-school monitoring and evaluation, and hence the areas for improvement.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The citizenship co-ordinator is enthusiastic and committed to ensuring high quality provision and understands how the subject should develop.
- The reporting arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.
- Students are able to participate in a well-organised school council.
- Too much teaching and learning is worksheet based.

Commentary

142. Citizenship is taught alongside other strands of the personal, social and health education programme by all form tutors. Subject areas undertook a comprehensive audit and some identified departments are expected to teach some knowledge units. However, although the links are made, these are not taught as citizenship lessons as is statutorily required. Standards are low. Work seen in folders was not co-ordinated in any way and was all based on worksheets. There was no evidence of students writing in depth or at length, with limited opportunities to develop their skills of enquiry and communication. Some of the presentation indicated a lack of pride or interest.
143. The school makes no attempt to assess students' standards. The students themselves undertake all assessment through reflection sheets. This is not satisfactory. In some lessons, for example in a Year 9 food technology lesson on environmental issues, citizenship assessment was done hastily at the end with the teacher telling the students what they should write.
144. Achievement is unsatisfactory. In some lessons, students are given the opportunity to discuss freely and share views and opinions as a result of sessions that are well prepared and have pace and challenge. However, the teaching too often does not take into account the wide range of students' starting points and ideas are not developed securely enough. Some students find the worksheets undemanding and this leads to their behaviour deteriorating. Some older students would prefer to be following an accredited course.
145. Outside of formal lessons, there are some good opportunities for students to develop skills of participation and responsible action. The school council is democratically elected and all students have the opportunity to have their views heard. Assemblies are used very well to promote citizenship themes.
146. Leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has the strategic vision required to develop the subject. He has tried hard to develop the programmes of study, including arranging for guest speakers to enhance the programme and has introduced comprehensive paperwork. However, he is not able to ensure that the systems work as planned. This, together with shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation and assessment, means that management of the

subject is unsatisfactory though the co-ordinator is aware of the inadequacies of the current assessment arrangements.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100.0	78.3	100.0	21.6	60.0	28.5
Biology	3	100.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	20.0	19.8
Chemistry	1	100.0	70.3	0.0	13.2	20.0	23.0
Economics	3	33.3	71.6	0.0	18.6	6.7	25.8
English literature	9	88.9	86.2	11.1	17.4	24.4	29.7
French	3	100.0	79.8	0.0	19.4	26.7	28.2
Design and technology	4	75.0	72.6	0.0	13.9	15.0	24.3
Geography	1	0.0	75.5	0.0	20.4	0.0	27.0
History	3	100.0	82.2	33.3	20.8	43.3	29.2
Information technology	5	60.0	66.6	0.0	8.8	18.0	20.6
Mathematics	5	40.0	59.9	0.0	14.1	14.0	20.5
Media studies	7	71.4	87.2	28.6	24.9	31.4	32.8
Other social studies	2	50.0	67.8	0.0	15.1	10.0	23.2
Physics	1	100.0	66.4	0.0	14.8	30.0	22.4
Sports/PE studies	4	0.0	72.2	0.0	11.8	0.0	22.8

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100.0	98.3	0.0	50.2	80.0	87.1
Biology	8	100.0	96.6	12.5	40.0	62.5	79.3
Chemistry	4	100.0	97.7	25.0	50.0	85.0	85.7
Drama	1	100.0	99.6	0.0	42.8	80.0	85.1
Economics	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	54.3	50.0	89.08
English literature	24	100.0	99.4	20.8	44.9	72.5	85.5
French	2	100.0	99.0	0.0	53.1	70.0	88.9
Design and technology	4	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	55.0	77.9
Geography	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	46.4	40.0	85.2
History	14	100.0	99.0	50.0	45.6	84.3	85.1
Information technology	4	100.0	96.3	0.0	25.7	45.0	71.1
Mathematics	6	100.0	96.8	66.7	56.6	83.3	89.5
Media studies	12	100.0	99.2	33.3	40.4	85.0	83.5

Other languages	2	100.0	97.3	0.0	66.7	70.0	95.6
Other social studies	3	100.0	97.4	33.3	42.5	86.7	81.6
Physics	3	100.0	96.7	66.7	45.3	93.3	82.6
Religious studies	11	100.0	99.1	72.7	49.5	98.2	87.4
Sports/PE studies	6	100.0	97.8	33.3	30.9	73.3	75.4
Health and social care	14	100.0	93.5	35.7	24.9	85.7	70.0
Business education	14	96.4	91.6	7.1	24.1	58.6	67.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in full and modern foreign languages sampled. One lesson of Italian was observed in Year 13 and teaching and learning were both very good. Standards seen were above average and achievement was very good as a result of very good subject knowledge, including fluency in the languages taught; enthusiastic teaching and very positive student/teacher relationships. Very good opportunities were provided for students to be adventurous and take risks in their own use of language. Teaching and learning in a Year 12 French lesson were satisfactory. Only two students took A-level French and two A-level Italian in 2004. All gained a grade, but none a grade A or B.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work very hard in the attention they give to individual students to enable all of them to reach their potential.
- Students work hard and develop well as individual learners and thinkers.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The writing skills of some students do not do justice to the views they wish to express.
- Some of the teaching groups are too large for fully effective discussion.

Commentary

147. There is a large uptake for the English literature GCE A/AS level course – currently, three groups in Year 12 and two in Year 13. Some of these groups, such as one in Year 13 with 24 students, are unsuitably large for work at this level. The school's entry requirement for an advanced level course is normally a GCSE pass at grade B in the subject, but not all the students have reached this level and consequently, standards on entry to the course are below average.
148. Results at A-level in 2004 were well below the national average, with a relatively small number reaching the higher grades A and B. Passes at grades A to E, however, are regularly above the national average. Boys performed better than girls.
149. Current standards are in line with the national average. Achievement on the course is good. Students work hard and make good progress in critical analysis, building on their studies from the GCSE course. They read widely and, by Year 13, are able to sift information and opinion in order to test hypotheses and draw conclusions that they can support by argument. Debate in lessons seen was lively. Students worked efficiently and collaboratively in groups and were very confident in presenting ideas to the class. The highest attainers write fluently and at length, in well-constructed essays, showing skilful use of appropriate vocabulary and style. Other students are less confident in their expression and, although they convey personal and independent judgements, their lack of fluency in language at the level required hinders their chances of reaching the higher grades.
150. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject. They present very well planned lessons that are lively and stimulating, organising time and space to enable maximum active participation by the students. Expectations are high and in most of the lessons seen these are met. As a result, learning is good. This was seen in one lesson where students working on 'A Streetcar Named Desire' were given the opportunity to analyse the text and interrogate each other productively. Written work is marked meticulously, with great emphasis on the power of individual response to literature.

151. Leadership and management are both very good. The head of department shares the sixth form teaching with five of her team, each student group having two teachers. There is a good deal of collaboration within the pairs of teachers and across all those involved, maximising collective strengths and providing good staff development for all concerned. Texts from the syllabus are carefully chosen to suit the needs of the students and to extend their experience. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

152. Students in the sixth form are confident speakers and attentive listeners, in their own lessons and in the contribution they make in the main school curriculum. They discuss confidently in lessons such as English, history, geography and business education and are good at working in groups and giving presentations on topics they have researched. During the inspection, two students from the media studies A-level group gave an excellent PowerPoint demonstration on advertising to a class in Year 10, encouraging the younger students to ask questions and contribute. Some sixth formers join classes in other years to support younger students who need more individual attention. Students' writing is less strong, and the general standard is below expectations for A-level study.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

- Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, students achieve well.
- Teachers' command of the subject inspires students' confidence.
- The use of ICT is insufficient to support students' learning.

Commentary

153. Results in A-level examinations for 2004 exceeded individual expectations. The numbers of students were low so no meaningful trends can be detected, but results were in line with the national average. All six students passed and four secured grades A-B.
154. Standards of work seen and the current results for AS modules suggest that students are at least working towards predicted outcomes and in line with the national average. Competent students achieve well and those wishing to proceed to further education have received provisional offers at high status universities. Achievement is good; the school has an inclusive recruitment policy, with some students having gained modest GCSE grades.
155. Teaching is good, with teachers displaying good subject knowledge. Work is well explained from first principles, rapport is effective and lessons involve students fully. Students speak well of the overall quality of teaching and all welcome the support given outside of lessons. Learning is similarly good and all lessons are a shared experience with ample opportunities for exchange of ideas, enabling students to justify and refine their thinking. Students demonstrate competent understanding of complex concepts and recall prior learning well. Students worked well on index notation and understand parametric and Cartesian equations. Mechanics is well understood, assisted by the fact that many students also study physics. Note taking is a weakness, which impairs the potential for revising from their books. The use of ICT to enhance their understanding of mathematics was not obviously evident. The subject is an increasingly popular choice with a large group in Year 12. They are a mature, articulate and hard-working group of students, having a wide range of ability but working well together to their mutual advantage.
156. Leadership and management are good and effectively driven by the head of department. Examination requirements are clearly understood. In recent years, the constantly changing issues surrounding A-level and AS provision have been appropriately catered for. Recruitment

is improving. Students are very secure about the wisdom of their choice and recognise the potential that higher qualifications have for employment opportunities. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

157. At A-level, students have a sufficient grasp of mathematics required for the study of their subjects. For example, in physics, chemistry, biology and computer studies, students competently identify the commonality within and between the subjects. Their mathematics capabilities are satisfactory.

SCIENCE

The A-level physics course was inspected in depth and chemistry and biology were sampled. In both 2003 and 2004 in chemistry and biology, all students passed and some gained the highest grades. These results were above average. One lesson was seen in each of chemistry and biology. Teaching is good in both subjects, explanations are clear and relationships are very good. As a result, students work hard, they are self-reliant and their achievement is good.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in A-level examinations are very good.
- Teaching is very good because it is interesting and demanding.
- Students are confident and work hard because their teacher provides encouragement and very good support.
- Records of marks are thorough and students are well informed about their progress.

Commentary

158. In both 2003 and 2004, all students passed their A-level physics examinations and a large majority gained grades A or B, and these results are above the national average. In the AS examination, all passed. Current standards in lessons seen are average overall but there is a significant number of students whose work is well above average. Students have very good practical skills and a well-developed understanding of difficult ideas in physics. Numeracy skills are good and students cope well with the mathematical demands of the course.

159. Achievement is very good because the teacher provides demanding, well-organised work that is expected to be completed quickly and carefully. The Internet is used very effectively to provide quick access to detailed information so that students work efficiently and achieve very well. Boys and girls and students from all ethnic groups, including those who have English as an additional language, have very good attitudes to study and do equally well because the teacher takes great care to ensure that scientific terms are well understood.

160. Teaching and learning are very good; lessons start quickly with challenging tasks that require explanatory answers. Activities for students are very well planned and clearly explained so that students know exactly what to do and learn very well. The teacher has a very good knowledge of the subject and of the means of teaching it. Students are well prepared for examinations and there are high expectations of their ability to understand a numerical approach. Demanding practical activities allow students to take responsibility for their learning and co-operation is very good during this work. ICT is used very well to provide interesting opportunities for research that students respond to very well. Relationships are based on

mutual respect and, as a consequence, students are very keen to learn and have great confidence in their teacher.

161. Leadership and management are very good. The number of students studying physics has risen very quickly and a very large majority complete the course. Students feel that they are very well informed about the requirements of their course, about university and career opportunities, and that they are very well supported. Records of marks are very good and are used well to inform students about their targets. Marking is thorough and provides very good advice about how to do better.
162. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Results are now very good, students achieve very well and recruitment is much better.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology was not a focus subject in this inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

163. Post-16 students have very good access to a wide range of electronic sources and make very good use of computers to support their coursework and homework. Their overall skill levels are good and are above average. However, in lessons the use of ICT is more variable. Effective use is made of computers in physics, design and technology and geography. However, mathematics and media studies teachers make insufficient use of ICT. In health and social care, ICT is not readily available in lessons. In English and history, there is satisfactory use.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Currently, there is a group of 14 A-level students in Year 13. No AS level course is running this academic year.

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Results in 2003 and 2004 were well below average.
- Current students are achieving well in relation to their average GCSE points scores.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well.
- Relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Higher order analytical and evaluative and literacy skills are weak and need to be developed.

Commentary

164. A-level results have been well below average in the last two years. However, in both years, all students entered gained a grade. Numbers entered in 2003 were very small and this makes national comparisons difficult. In 2003, with a group of eight students, girls achieved better than the boys.
165. For current students, standards are below average, but not well below, and a majority are achieving well in relation to their average GCSE points score. Students produce full notes and they have a sound knowledge of glacial, fluvio and peri-glacial processes and landforms.

Students have a satisfactory knowledge of most aspects of physical and human geography. The major weaknesses impacting on standards are limited evaluative and analytical skills and weaknesses in extended writing skills. Oral work is good. They can, for example, explain the major factors that influence the interaction between rural and urban areas. They use technical language and case studies satisfactorily to illustrate their views. Many students use ICT well in their work.

166. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Teachers have very a good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well, with a good range of methods and resources. They give good quality explanations and ask challenging questions. Students are given many opportunities to develop thinking and research skills. This was seen in a very good lesson researching global biomes. Students' work is assessed very carefully and they receive good feedback. Relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive and work well, both independently and collaboratively.
167. Leadership and management are good, with strong teamwork. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by appropriate fieldwork in Year 12. Teachers' expertise is very well matched to the curriculum. Subject planning is good and departmental work is effectively monitored. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. While results have fallen, with its good leadership and committed staff the department has good capacity for improvement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are improving, particularly for girls.
- Students respond well to very well planned teaching and high expectations.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- Existing opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively should be extended.

Commentary

168. Results at A-level in 2004 were in line with the national average. Half the students gained a higher A/B grade. As in 2003, boys out-performed girls, but the difference was much slighter in 2004.
169. The 2004 AS examination results for students currently in Year 13, teacher predictions for AS and A-level examinations in 2005 and classroom observation and examination of work during the inspection all indicate that present standards are above average. Students make good progress. Many start the history course with a grade B or less in GCSE yet in Year 12 are able to analyse complex historical questions intelligently. Boys achieve at least as well as girls and students from ethnic minorities also progress well.
170. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well as a result of teachers' good knowledge and high expectations. Year 12 students speak with confidence about their university aspirations. Teachers give clear explanations, ask searching questions and introduce students to the views of different historians: they give very useful guidance on the best approach to examination questions. As a result, students produce well-constructed essays, effectively supported by evidence. Students enjoy history and their organised files indicate a pride in their work. They work well in pairs and small groups on the preparation of essays and debate historical issues intelligently, although the contribution of a few is too limited. A good deal of learning, however, is still closely controlled by teachers and more

opportunities for independent learning would help prepare students even better for work and education after school.

171. Assessment is used very effectively, including very good verbal feedback in class. A particular feature of assessment, which is very effective, is the use of feedback sheets on essays covering the key features of the work, including areas for improvement.
172. Effective teaching and learning are supported by good leadership and management. The head of department is a good role model who makes excellent use of student performance data to develop well-targeted strategies to raise standards. The department has built up a very good bank of original sources and extracts from academic texts for use with students.
173. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Examinations results are improving, students achieve well and the department clearly has the will and the capacity to progress further.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected in full. A-level design technology was sampled. Teaching and learning were good and students achieved well. A-level results in 2004 were well below the national average although all four candidates gained a grade.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Media studies was inspected in full and art and design and music were sampled.

In art and design there have been too few students for results to be significant, compared to national data, but standards seen are in line with national expectations, and students achieve well. The quality of teaching is very good, and this has contributed to the high degree of independent learning. Facilities for independent study are good, and students are positive about the support that they receive. Some continue into higher education in some aspect of art. Retention is good.

One music lesson was sampled in Year 12 and teaching and learning were good. Students are achieving well. No students were entered for A-level in 2004.

The school offers GCE AS/A-level media studies and the number of students has increased steadily over the past two years. There are currently 26 students in Year 12 and 19 in Year 13. Some students drop the subject at the end of the first year to focus on their other courses.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCE A-level media studies are above national average and students of all capabilities achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good; teaching is well planned and teacher expertise and knowledge is good.
- There is good support and advice for students pursuing media at higher education institutions.
- Resources and accommodation are inadequate for the teaching of the moving image.
- Currently, there is inadequate monitoring of teaching and learning.

Commentary

174. Results at A-level in 2004 were above the national average. Students achieve higher grades than those predicted, based on their GCSE performance. There are no significant variations in standards by gender or ethnicity.
175. Current standards are above average and students are achieving well. Much of the work currently produced by students is of a high standard. Year 13 students use specialist vocabulary confidently in discussion and in their writing. Students are self-motivated and work well on their own on their coursework; they attend well and participate in lessons. Students enjoy their work and some talk confidently and passionately about the work they do and the open discussions they have with their teachers. Students are given the opportunity to develop their own particular specialism.
176. Teaching is good overall and course work indicates that some teaching is excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable. In a lesson where students were clarifying their coursework, the teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate the uses of imagery in Film Noir, linking students' work with well-chosen examples of contemporary media, film, television and music. In one lesson, excellent background knowledge, awareness of a variety of learning styles, good planning, fast pace and skilful focused questioning motivated and challenged the students and deepened their understanding of the social context of promotional media. Students' coursework is accurately marked with constructive comments and feedback throughout their preparation. Completed coursework projects demonstrate a great deal of comprehensive work and independent study. One excellent cross-media package demonstrated a range of skills in photography, filming and marketing; much of this work was completed independently using the student's own computer. Students learn well and demonstrate their increasing knowledge of the historical and political context of the growth of television, and the theory of audience uses and gratifications. There is very good progression to higher education from the media course and students feel well advised and supported in their applications to related courses.
177. Media studies is well led and managed. All five media teachers are members of the English department and they meet on a regular basis to discuss the development of the course, they observe each other's teaching and have been observed by an external consultant. But neither of the managers of the department is able to monitor the ongoing quality of teaching personally. Good use is made of data to target improvement in students' achievement. The image and moving image aspects of the course are reliant on students' own resources and the department is inadequately equipped. The library has good provision of books for media studies; however, there are insufficient up-to-date film and media publications.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One Year 12 theory lesson of physical education was sampled. Standards seen were average. Teaching, learning and achievement are good, which is a consequence of good knowledge being effectively applied with well-motivated students. Six students took GCE A-level in 2004 with average results.

BUSINESS

No subjects were inspected in full in this curriculum area. A-level economics and AVCE business studies were sampled.

Teaching and learning are good in economics and students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching, learning and achievement have improved well since the last inspection. Standards are currently below average. Results in 2004 were well below average. In AVCE business education, progress in Year 13 is satisfactory and standards are in line with national

expectations. Year 12 students are achieving very well. Results in 2003 and 2004 were below the national average.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care courses are very popular, with increasing numbers opting for the subject.

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement by students.
- Students have excellent attitudes to their work.
- Students use local care settings very well to enrich work.
- Resources, including ICT, are not readily available in lessons.

Commentary

178. In 2004, Advanced (AVCE) results were well above the national average and in 2003, they were significantly above national standards. Similar high standards were achieved at Intermediate level. Students enter GNVQ courses with well below average GCSE results and achieve very well.
179. Nearly three quarters of AVCE students gained A and B grades in 2004, well above the national average, and maintaining the high trend. All passed the external tests in 2004, well above average. Students achieved very well from below average GCSE results on entry.
180. Current standards are well above the national average for Intermediate GNVQ and advanced (AVCE) courses. In lessons and work seen, students on are achieving very well, and standards are above average for GNVQ and AVCE. In well-presented coursework assignments, Year 12 students independently used the Internet effectively to research and analyse data on communicable diseases worldwide, developing good numeracy skills. Year 13 students showed a very good understanding of the risks of smoking, highlighted by attractive posters designed for a local competition, in which they won the £100 prize. Students gain very good communication and teamwork skills. In interactions with young children on weekly work placements, they record their intellectual and social development accurately and respect confidentiality. GNVQ students show above-average knowledge of the energy value of foods. They develop good literacy skills when compiling weekly menus for their selected clients.
181. Teaching and learning are very good, with some excellent features. Students of all levels of attainment make very good progress, stimulated by teachers' well-focused discussion and challenging tasks. The relationship between teachers and students is very close, helping students gain excellent work attitudes. Students of all ethnic groups, male and female, work enthusiastically, and support each other very positively in group work. Teachers' lesson plans are detailed, and marking and monitoring of individual students' progress is outstanding. The examination board uses the school as an example nationally. Higher-attaining students are encouraged to develop analytical skills through extra tasks. Students help in lessons in local primary schools, during half or one day a week placements, in which they gain good knowledge about children's developmental stages and acquire very good team working skills.
182. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Schemes of work are good, although potential learning in lessons is reduced because of the variety of rooms used and lack of available resources, including ICT. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and the subject could improve further through greater availability and use of ICT in lessons to develop students' presentational and analytical skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	2	4

The effectiveness of management	2	4
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Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).