

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Willenhall, West Midlands

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104259

Headteacher: Mr S. Flynn

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st October 2004

Inspection number: 268932

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1436
School address:	Darlaston Lane Willenhall West Midlands
Postcode:	WV14 7BL
Telephone number:	01902 368798
Fax number:	01902 630380
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R. Dalton
Date of previous inspection:	7 th December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More is a Catholic comprehensive school that is larger than average, with a larger than average sixth form. The school is very popular with parents; there are many more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The great majority of students are white British, although there are sizeable groups of students from an Asian-Indian or Black Caribbean background as well as small numbers from each of a large number of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is not English is a bit higher than other schools, but almost all are fluent in English.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are below average overall. Standards on entry to the sixth form are well below average, reflecting the school's policy of accepting students of all levels of attainment. An exceptionally high proportion of students stay on to study in the sixth form. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion with a statement. Most students with special educational needs have moderate or specific learning difficulties.

Around one third of students come from Wolverhampton, while the rest come from across Walsall. Socio-economic circumstances are well below average. The school is part of a Leading Edge Network and the Black Country Creative Partnership and is a specialist business and enterprise college. The school received awards for achievement, attendance and sports provision in 2003. In 2002, the school received awards for community work and Investors in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
30973	G. Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography; Business studies in the sixth form
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Business studies; Health and social care in the sixth form
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English in the sixth form
17278	B. Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry in the sixth form
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
11913	M. Howard	Team inspector	Psychology in the sixth form
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship; Work-related learning.

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory school that provides a **satisfactory** quality of education and satisfactory value for money. Standards are generally below average, but students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching, learning and management are all satisfactory; leadership is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students receive good guidance and pastoral care.
- The actions taken to improve areas of weakness are not rigorous enough.
- Students underachieve in science.
- The school has used its specialist status well to improve the curriculum and resources.
- There is too much inconsistency in the school's work.

Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Test and GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than the national average. The underachievement in mathematics has been rectified, but standards in science are now much worse and students are underachieving in the subject. Issues regarding attendance, accommodation and information and communication technology (ICT) have been dealt with most successfully, but some unsatisfactory teaching remains. Results at A-level have declined, reflecting the school's much more open approach to accepting students into the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	N/A	C	C	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	D	D	E	

*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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement for all groups of students is **satisfactory**. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. In all years, students perform as expected given their levels of prior attainment. Students do well in English and mathematics, but underachieve in science. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory; standards are below average. Standards at A-level are well below average, but standards on other courses are broadly average for the course. Students achieve very well in art and design, physical education and health and social care, but underachieve in chemistry.

Students' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **satisfactory**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance is average, but punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and behave well. Their attendance is satisfactory; their punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. Teaching is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory in all years, including the sixth form. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 in English, art and design and history, leading to good gains in knowledge skills and understanding, but is unsatisfactory in science where students do not learn enough. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in art and design, physical education and health and social care, but unsatisfactory in chemistry.

Teachers use resources well, but there is great variation in other aspects of teaching, both within and across subjects.

The curriculum is good; it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11 and very good in the sixth form. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The quality of guidance and support for students is good and the school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**; leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents are happy with the education their children receive; students, too, are happy. All agree that teachers are quick to offer help and give freely of their time.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take a more rigorous approach to dealing with weaknesses that are identified.
- Improve the teaching in science.
- Ensure a greater degree of consistency in the work of the school, especially in improving students' literacy skills.
- Ensure students get to lessons on time.

And in the sixth form:

- Improve the teaching in chemistry.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **satisfactory** education and its cost-effectiveness is satisfactory. Standards are below average and students' achievement is satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection as a result of satisfactory management and good leadership.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well in art and design, physical education and health and social care as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are underachieving in chemistry because the teaching is unsatisfactory.

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	Provision in English is good . Teaching and learning are good so students achieve well.
Mathematics	Satisfactory . Lessons are planned well, but not enough account is taken of the needs of higher attainers.
Science	Provision in chemistry is unsatisfactory . Teachers do not ensure enough work is covered in lessons.
Humanities	Provision in psychology is satisfactory . Teaching is now good, but the improvement has not yet had time to impact on achievement, which is satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is good . Students learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is very good . Students learn very well because of the very good teaching and their very good attitudes.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is very good . Students achieve very well because of their very good attitudes and the very good teaching they receive.
Business	Provision in business studies is good . Teaching is very good on the A-level course, but there is some underachievement on the GNVQ course.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is very good . The needs of individual students are met very well.

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

Very good routines are in place for students' guidance. Students have good opportunities to express their views about aspects of school life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the sixth form is good; management is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are very happy at the school and have no significant complaints about their own education. They are particularly appreciative of the time and effort provided by their teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Main school

Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is satisfactory in all years. In all years, there are few differences between the achievements of different groups of students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieved very well in their GCSE examinations in 2003 given their results when they were in Year 9.
- Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were worse than 2003, mainly as a result of underachievement in science.
- Standards in Years 7 to 11 are improving in English and mathematics, but declining in science.
- Test and examination results are improving at a faster rate than the national average.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average, reflecting students' satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9. Results from the national tests in 2003 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Students did as expected in English, given their results in Year 6, but underachieved in mathematics and science. Results in 2004 improved significantly in English and mathematics, but were worse in science. Results have been rising at a faster rate than the national average, owing to the improvements in English and mathematics.
2. Students achieve well in English, art and design, geography, history and music. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects, except science where students are underachieving.
3. Standards are improving particularly quickly in mathematics, under the inspired leadership of the new head of department. Higher attaining students now sit their GCSE examination in Year 9; most passed at the higher grades in 2004.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.3 (35.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.1 (32.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	31.4 (31.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 239 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Students' achievement is also satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were average overall. These results were much better than would usually be expected from the students' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9. However, results were worse in 2004, despite these students getting better results and being higher

attainers when they were in Year 9. The achievement of those students who sat their GCSE examinations in 2004 was nothing like as good as those in 2003, mainly because of widespread underachievement in science. Results have been improving at a faster rate than that seen nationally, despite the fall in 2004.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34.0 (33.4)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 216 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Students achieve well in English, mathematics, art and design, history, physical education and business education. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects, except science where students are underachieving. The underachievement in science has a big effect on students' overall standards; it accounts for one fifth of curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 and is worth two GCSEs. Indeed, if all the students who should have passed their science examinations had done so, the school's overall GCSE results would have been above average for the first time in its history.
6. Standards in the basic skills of mathematics are average. The mathematics department has put a lot of effort into improving standards of late and has carried out training for all other departments. However, not all subjects have taken on board the advice they have been given. Standards of language, literacy and ICT are below average. The recent improvement in ICT resources mean that subjects are now making good use of ICT and students' skills are improving as they get more opportunities to practise them. The picture in the development of language and literacy skills is more inconsistent. Almost all departments encourage students to widen their vocabulary, for example, but few provide opportunities for writing longer pieces of work. In particular, the marking of work, to correct errors, is far too variable.
7. In all years, the level of achievement can be attributed to the quality of teaching that the students receive; where teaching is good, students achieve well, but where teaching is unsatisfactory, students underachieve.
8. Girls gained better results than boys in their GCSE examinations in 2003, but this was not part of a pattern. In previous years, boys had been closer to the national average for boys than the girls had to the national average for girls. The relatively small sizes of groups of students from different ethnic backgrounds make drawing conclusions about their relative achievement difficult. However, the school's data suggests that there is no group who are doing any better or worse than any other. This was borne out by what inspectors saw in the work produced by the different groups.
9. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, overall. The work set does not always suit students' capabilities, especially in mixed ability groups, and individual education plans are neglected. This results in only satisfactory, sometimes unsatisfactory, learning. Where teachers provide good support work, students do much better.

In the learning support department, students do well. Students achieve well in meeting the targets of their individual education plans. In small group work they listen well and rapidly improve reading and writing skills. This helps them to cope better in their subject work. As a result, they do well in the GCSE and Certificate of Achievement examinations.

- The proportion of students who do not speak English fluently is very small. In general, they make satisfactory progress. A particular feature commented upon by students is the extent to which teachers are prepared to find time, inside and outside the classroom, to give them help and support. Whilst the school aims to provide support for students who need help as early as possible, this is not always achieved in practice.

Sixth form

Standards are below average and students' achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in art and design, physical education and health and social care.
- Students are underachieving in chemistry.

Commentary

- Results in the 2003 Advanced level examinations were well below average and were similar in 2004. Results for males were below average in 2003, while those for females were well below average. The situation was reversed in 2004, with females' results being better than males'. The results show that students do as expected in the sixth form given their GCSE results. Standards are now much lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection because the school now admits students with much lower levels of attainment. Standards on non-advanced level courses are broadly as expected for students following these courses.
- Standards are currently above average in art and design, physical education and health and social care. Standards are average in English, ICT, business education and psychology; they are well below average in chemistry and mathematics. However, standards vary considerably from year to year in the subjects as the attainment of the students joining the courses changes.
- Standards in the basic skills of literacy and ICT are below average; mathematical skills are well below average.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	79.8 (89.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	10.7 (22.2)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per student	190.8 (201.9)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 72 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Nine subjects were inspected in detail. Of these, achievement is very good in art and design, physical education and health and social care, and good in English, ICT and business education. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and psychology, but unsatisfactory in chemistry.

15. The school's data shows that, in 2004, students did better than expected in art and design, physical education and health and social care, English, sociology and business education. However, students underachieved in chemistry, physics, biology, French and psychology. These are, however, only indicators as the school has not been able to include any national data in their calculations as such data is not yet available.
16. Relatively large numbers of students stay on to the sixth form to re-take their GCSEs in English and mathematics. These students' achievement is satisfactory and most manage to improve their results by one grade. Students of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are helped to achieve by the care that is taken in placing them on appropriate courses, a very wide range of which is available.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Main school

Students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. Their personal development is satisfactory overall, with good spiritual development and with social, moral and cultural aspects satisfactory. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work with enthusiasm when tasks are presented in an interesting way and teachers' expectations are high.
- Attitudes and behaviour deteriorate where teaching is weak.
- Spiritual development is good because, helped by the Catholic ethos of the school, students learn to consider others' feelings and beliefs.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection because of the school's good efforts; punctuality remains a problem.

Commentary

17. Students are mostly happy with their school. They like the facilities in the new building. They value the helpfulness of many teachers and the extra activities offered outside lessons in physical education and in a wide range of other subjects.
18. In lessons, students' attitudes and behaviour vary widely. Occasionally their concentration becomes total because the teacher establishes high aims for their behaviour and achievement and uses well-judged strategies to help them meet these aims. At other times, many, at all attainment levels, are usually co-operative and make at least satisfactory efforts. However, occasional lessons occur where students show well-established attitudes of boredom, because they know from experience that the presentation of the work will be flat and uninteresting. A small minority at times lapse into really poor behaviour either in lessons or around the school. Parents and students recognise that behaviour tends to deteriorate in particular lessons, in science for instance. Although teachers have had training in behaviour management, lack of skill in strategies to defuse situations is still often a factor in lessons where misbehaviour becomes a problem. This has a knock-on effect in the number of sanctions that is used.
19. Fixed term exclusions have risen considerably since the previous inspection. Last year around one in every ten students was excluded at least once. The school did not reach the target it set itself for reducing the number of exclusions. The school plans to give more training in

behaviour management skills where this is needed. Permanent exclusion is rare because of the caring perseverance to support individuals with behavioural difficulties.

Ethnic background of students***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1159	240	1
White – Irish	7	2	
White – any other White background	14	4	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	27	6	
Mixed – White and Asian	8	4	
Mixed – any other mixed background	9		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	135	13	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	52	9	
Black or Black British – African	3	1	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6	1	
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	2		
No ethnic group recorded	10		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

20. Some students from minority ethnic backgrounds have lessons with a member of the local education authority's support staff. This provides opportunities for students to discuss a wide range of social and cultural issues. Students greatly value the opportunity to attend these sessions and feel it helps them to be more effective members of the community.

21. Students' personal development is satisfactory overall but spiritual aspects are stronger because of the efforts made by the school to promote them. All students study religious education to GCSE level. This makes good provision for all aspects of personal development, but especially for spiritual elements of Christianity and also of other world religions, so that students learn to respect others' beliefs. Students experience a daily act of collective worship and can join in celebrating the main Christian festivals through the year. They have occasional opportunities for prayer in lessons as well. Development of spiritual aspects is less consistent in other areas. In English and drama there are opportunities for sharing ideas and reflecting on the meaning of effort and persistence for instance. In art students respond well when asked to consider the emotional aspects that inspire artists. However, in most subjects there are missed opportunities for such exploration of feelings and ideas.

22. Provision for moral and social development is satisfactory overall. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They understand the code of conduct and mostly live up to it although a few find it particularly hard to behave themselves. Helped by the expectations and example of staff, they are usually friendly and supportive towards each other around the school, though occasionally thoughtless of others in congested areas. However, the otherwise good

relationships seen between most staff and students tend to diminish when behaviour in lessons is not managed successfully.

23. Cultural development is satisfactory. Black and other minority ethnic students in the school are well integrated, while also being encouraged to value their own cultures. There are good opportunities for foreign trips that raise students' awareness of other European cultures. There are no overt displays of multicultural aspects to our society. Displays are limited because of the restrictions on how these can be mounted in the new private finance initiative building.
24. The learning support department makes a very good contribution to the personal development of students with special educational needs. Staff know students well and listen to their concerns. The Bookworm Club at lunchtimes is a very good provision for students who wish to talk quietly, use computers or seek help with homework. Individual education plans help students to focus on what they should do to improve.
25. Attendance is in line with that usually seen in other schools. It has improved from being below average at the previous inspection. Holiday absence is disruptive at some seasons; it reduced attendance by around two per cent in the month preceding the inspection. Good attendance is positively encouraged; frequent absentees have to miss a popular end of year trip to a theme park. The school identifies those with poor attendance and works hard to improve matters. The move to the new building has helped with improvements; the facilities have a motivating effect and also it is easier now to check that students do not leave the site without permission. In addition the recently appointed home/school liaison worker is building effective relationships with students and parents so as to help overcome the disadvantageous personal circumstances that underlie some repeated absence. She is also improving punctuality. Liaison is maintained with the education welfare service to tackle habitual poor attendance. The school finds that a greater proportion of white students than of other ethnic groups is involved in serious attendance issues.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.9	School data	0.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

26. A relatively high proportion of students, of all ages, show no inclination to get to their lessons on time. Many have to be 'chased' to lessons by staff on the corridors. Lessons are frequently disrupted by students arriving late, forcing the teacher to stop what they are doing to deal with the late arrivals.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Other aspects of their personal development are good. Students' attendance is satisfactory but their punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value the opportunities provided for them and the support of their teachers.

- Students develop as mature, thoughtful individuals and make a good contribution to the life of the school.
- Although students' attendance in lessons is satisfactory, many arrive late and do not bother to attend tutor periods at all.

Commentary

27. Students like the way the school provides for them. They value the support they get from teachers and respond with maturity. Good relationships are apparent, both with teachers and between students. In lessons, students of all levels of attainment mostly apply themselves willingly. At times they become completely absorbed because tasks are so well planned and presented to meet their needs and abilities. Where the presentation is more mundane, however, although students remain willing to co-operate, their interest sometimes flags. They show a good capacity to work independently when this is encouraged; this is very apparent among health and social care students, for example.
28. Support for students' personal development is good and their good response is clear, for instance when they mention ethical issues covered in their religious education lessons. They are good role models for younger students. The volunteers who are selected as prefects carry out their duties responsibly. Sixth formers also assist in the running of a range of activities and clubs. For instance, they run a 'listening ear' service at lunchtimes, providing an opportunity for younger students to gain advice about any difficulties or problems. They also organise a popular selection of games and activities.
29. Attendance in sixth form lessons is satisfactory, though students tend to arrive late. Attendance is encouraged by teachers' expectations. However, attendance in tutor periods is often low, because staff are too relaxed about expectations at the start of the day. Those who do attend tutor periods experience a daily act of collective worship.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education; teaching and the school's partnership with parents are satisfactory. The curriculum is good, as is the quality of guidance and support.

Teaching and learning

Main school

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of the resources available to them, especially ICT.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in science.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 181 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (3%)	27 (15%)	74 (41%)	60 (33%)	13 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)

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.

Commentary

30. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in English, art and design, geography, history and music. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects, except science where teaching is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in English, mathematics, art and design, history, physical education and business education. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects, except science where teaching is unsatisfactory.
31. One feature of the teaching stands out as being consistently good across the school: the way that teachers use the resources available to them. The school has improved its resources considerably since the new buildings were opened; this is especially true of ICT resources. Teachers have been quick to take advantage of these resources and have changed the way they plan lessons in order to make best use of the new resources. This has been particularly successful in French and German, where the language laboratory has added a new dimension to the teaching. Students speak of the language laboratory with enthusiasm, saying how they enjoy learning there. They also say that they learn more when they get to use the computer, an opinion supported by the inspection findings.
32. Other aspects of teaching are, on the whole, neither strengths nor weaknesses, because of the variation that exists both across and within subjects. Take management of behaviour for example. In French and German, misbehaviour is never a problem, while in science it is one of the main reasons for unsatisfactory teaching, leading to students failing to learn and achieve enough in lessons. It also means that teachers stop students from doing practical work, because there is more scope for them to misbehave, so their practical skills suffer. Similarly, teachers in ICT do not do enough to improve basic skills of literacy, while those in history go to great efforts to improve the students' writing.
33. The variation in aspects of teaching also shows up within subjects. There were, for example, both outstanding and very poor lessons in ICT, so it is very difficult for the school to ensure that an individual student will get a good education.
34. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good in the learning support department. Staff here know how best to present work so that students learn quickly. They vary activities and make effective use of different resources, such as computers, word blocks and letter games, to make the lesson interesting. Relationships are very good so students come to the lessons ready to learn. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and what students can do. As a result, students gain confidence in their abilities. In lessons outside of the department, however, they experience the same variation as other students. Some teachers use individual education plans well to support students in lessons, but others have no idea of their needs and set work that is not appropriate for them.

Assessment

35. At the start of this term the school introduced a revised policy that places much greater emphasis upon the purpose, clarity and quality required of teachers' assessment and marking of students' work. It is too soon, however, to judge how much improvement this will achieve. The school's central records of students' prior attainment are used to determine their target grades and these are issued to all teachers. The tracking of how students are performing, though, depends heavily upon individual subjects, and the monitoring and evaluation of students'

progress by senior managers lack sufficient rigour to remedy variations in the quality with which subjects do this. In music, for example, grades are vastly over-inflated, while in vocational subjects marking tends to be much more accurate.

36. The use of assessment information by teachers to ensure that their planning is accurate and that students understand how they can improve is satisfactory overall. In modern foreign languages and special educational needs, teachers assess work thoroughly and provide very good detailed feedback to students. Assessment is good or satisfactory in most other subjects, but it is unsatisfactory in science, design and technology, citizenship and music. In these subjects the marking of work is too inconsistent in quality to make it effective in informing students of how their work might be improved, and planning does not benefit from informed analysis that would better meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.
37. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good. Staff use data from primary schools to plan work for Year 7 students. Achievement is well documented and areas for improvement are reflected in the targets of individual education plans. Careful tracking of students' performance in their various subjects helps staff to see how well students are doing and to plan further work.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and brings about satisfactory learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in art and design, physical education and health and social care.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in chemistry.

Commentary

38. The same strength in the teaching found in the main school is also apparent in the sixth form: teachers use the resources well. However, the same variation in other aspects of teaching is also evident.
39. In the subjects inspected, teaching is very good in art and design, physical education and health and social care. Teaching is good in English A-level classes, ICT, business education and psychology. The good teaching in psychology is a recent improvement brought about by the actions of the new head of department, so that, although students learn well in lessons, their achievement has not yet had time to get to the good level that the teaching would usually merit. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics and on the GCSE re-take course in English. In chemistry, the teaching is unsatisfactory because students are not expected to do enough work in lessons; instead they answer questions which they could complete for homework.

Assessment

40. Assessment of the work and progress of students is satisfactory overall. The school's central records of students' prior attainment are used to determine their target grades and these are issued to all teachers. In the subjects inspected assessment is very good in art and design and good in others, apart from psychology where it is satisfactory, and chemistry where it is poor. The tracking by senior managers of how students are performing lacks sufficient rigour, and has not resulted in effective measures to remedy the underachievement in chemistry.

The curriculum

Main school

The curriculum is good. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its needs; accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Participation in sport and most other activities is very good.
- The school has used its specialist status well to enrich the curriculum.
- There is too much variation in the way form time is used.

Commentary

41. The school meets the demands of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and makes a second language available to students from Year 9 onwards. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is broader than that usually seen, with a particularly good range of vocational subjects on offer. The school has used its specialist status well to improve the curriculum, offering in particular a large number of business and ICT related courses. Many other subjects also enrich their curriculum by making use of the links they have forged with business and industry.
42. One area for improvement in the curriculum is the way that form time is used. There is a programme for teaching personal and social education, as well as aspects of citizenship, during form time, but the extent to which it is delivered is variable. Some teachers make maximum use of the time available to them, while others do not get the students down to work at all. Overall, the provision for personal and social education is satisfactory. Careers education, on the other hand, is good. Careers education builds systematically on previous work as students move through the school.
43. The school provides more clubs and other activities than is usually seen. Participation in sport and other subject clubs, most notably mathematics, is very good. Support for students outside of the school day is very good. Teachers are always available for help and many students either arrive early or stay late to continue their studies. The library is particularly effective in this respect; students feel welcome and enjoy using the library because of the little treats they receive.
44. Overall, the provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. In lessons where teaching support assistants are present, students usually learn well. Assistants help students understand the task and organise their writing. However, where assistants are not available or where teachers do not provide suitable work, students do not learn as much. The learning support options in Years 10 and 11 are well planned to help lower attaining students and those with special educational needs prepare for life after school. In the learning support department provision is good. The small group work is very well organised so that students receive 15 or 20 minutes individual teaching and do not miss all of a mainstream lesson. Support assistants teach the English progress units and this helps students to achieve well in the national tests at the end of Year 9.
45. The school uses its staffing very cleverly. It has appointed permanent supply staff who are always available to cover for absent teachers. This means that the school does not have to search for temporary staff at short notice, and that students are taught by staff they already know. When there are no absent teachers, the permanent supply teachers provide valuable extra support in lessons. The school has very good support staff in general. In ICT, for example, the technicians are very experienced; they keep the school's vast network of computers running very smoothly, so teachers have no fears about computers breaking down in the middle of a lesson.

46. The new accommodation is very good, with ample rooms, all of which have access to computers or data projectors. The clean, bright and attractive buildings are the first things spoken about by students when asked what they liked most about the school.

Sixth form

The curriculum is very good. The sixth form has sufficient teachers to meet its needs; accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of courses available is very good.
- The curriculum has been very well planned to build on students' studies lower down the school.

Commentary

47. The school is successful in encouraging students to stay on to the sixth form because it provides such a wide range of courses that there is something for everyone. The school provides many more courses at levels 1 and 2 than are usually seen, so large groups of students stay on either to improve their existing qualifications or to study new subjects. Students are confident in their choices because of the very good way that the school has organised the curriculum for students from the ages of 14 to 19. There are clear routes for students to follow that start at the end of Year 9 and go right through until the end of the sixth form. Whilst still maintaining the more academic routes, the school has expanded its vocational curriculum considerably, allowing students to study subjects such as health and social care from the age of 14 through to the age of 19.
48. Many different options are available within subjects, such as ICT and business education, where students can study courses at many different levels or even move between courses as they progress.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Personal and academic support and guidance are good. Good account is taken of students' views. Satisfactory health and safety arrangements are in place.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students benefit from well-organised and caring support.
- The headteacher and staff listen to students and take good account of their views.

Commentary

49. Staff know that students' emotional well-being is central to their ability to make progress in school and in life. They ensure the school is a welcoming and caring environment. Parents are happy with the quality of support and guidance, starting with the way students are looked after when they first join the school. The new two-day induction arranged for the present Year 7 students has helped ensure that they settle happily into school routines.
50. Students like the awards system and the positive referrals they can earn. The extra celebration evenings now established for students in Years 7 to 9 also offer encouragement by the high profile given to achievement and other success, such as outstanding attendance. However, support falters in a few lessons where strategies to correct deteriorating behaviour are not used effectively enough and over-use of sanctions results. Students generally have a good grasp of how they are doing in the different subjects and they are motivated to aim for further improvements. In Year 11 they gain extra support through mentoring arranged for them. Students find most teachers very supportive and keen to help so there is generally a good atmosphere for learning. Students with initially low aspirations are helped to a better understanding of the options open to them, and this contributes to their achievements. However, there are rare instances when they find a teacher's attitude too discouraging. Tutors establish good

friendly relationships with their groups but use of tutor time is rather variable and is, on occasion, unsatisfactory.

51. Good support is in place for students identified as needing extra help for particular behavioural difficulties or other personal circumstances. This provision improved following the appointment of the learning mentors and of the home-school liaison officer that the school employs. Staff are exploring further ways of extending support, for instance by looking at provision at another Catholic school. The learning support option makes good and relevant provision for targeted students who follow fewer GCSE courses. Staff are also alert to use any external support available. They currently welcome a specialist worker to boost the self-esteem and achievements of African Caribbean students. Satisfactory arrangements for responding to child protection concerns are in place. The co-ordinator has a good secure understanding of requirements and ensures good efforts are made to liaise effectively with social services. Annual reviews for students with statements are well organised, with subject teachers providing clear information on students' achievement. Arrangements are in hand to extend appropriate child protection training to those members of staff still in need of this. The school nurse helps meet students' needs for advice and support, as well as being readily available to give first aid.
52. Staff listen carefully to students' views and generally do their best to respond. For instance, the school council was recently consulted about bullying issues and this led to a poster competition, with many well-designed posters now displayed around the school showing students' ideas of how to counter bullying. .
53. The health and safety policy has recently been revised in partnership with the company responsible for buildings' maintenance under the private finance initiative. It now reflects the responsibilities of those involved. Good progress is being made in checking that relevant procedures for risk assessments are in place for all school activities. Good attention to health and safety was evident during the inspection when design and technology students visited a local building site.

Sixth form

Very good routines are in place for students' guidance. Students have good opportunities to express their views about aspects of school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students like the friendly and supportive atmosphere and their work benefits from the way staff are ready to help.
- Guidance on further study and career opportunities is good.

Commentary

54. Students from across the sixth form are happy with the provision made for them. Numbers choosing to transfer from Year 11 are high and few drop out from their courses. They are confident that if they need extra help they only have to ask. At the same time they like the extra responsibility extended to them for their own work. Students from abroad who are new to the school speak in praise of the support and welcome they received.
55. Guidance about sixth form studies starts well before students join. They receive due information about the full range of post-16 options open to them. The courses available in the sixth form are explained at a meeting for Year 11 students and their parents during the autumn term. Very good account is taken of students' needs and preferences for courses, so that they can follow just the combination they want. In particular, the way students are enabled to choose courses at levels matched to their individual aptitude contributes to their achievements. Advice and support are readily available, both ongoing from tutors and subject teachers and through the one-to-one interviews offered to all Year 13 students. A few who

might find it harder to live up to expectations of attendance and work receive support from a contract agreed between them and the school when they first enter the sixth form. As the school has recognised in planning a new assessment system, there is room to make further use of assessment data to help in targeting support.

56. Planning for their own future continues, through routines for individual action planning, for instance. Guidance about choosing and following future routes is good, for instance with regard to completing university applications. Those on vocational courses such as health and social care benefit especially from links with a wide range of employers that build their experience and understanding of the world of work. Despite the good relationships that are general between teachers and students, time is often wasted during the tutor period that starts the day, because tutors and students do not make enough effort to use this time productively.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

A satisfactory sense of partnership is achieved with parents. Good efforts are made to inform and involve them, though the response of some is limited. Links with the community and with other schools and educational establishments are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is welcoming to parents and seeks new ways to encourage their support for their children's learning.
- A large minority of parents, especially of older students, are slow to show an active interest.
- Links with local business and industry are particularly well developed in the areas of ICT and business education.
- Business and enterprise status is enabling the school to increase its links with industry and with other schools.

Commentary

57. Those parents who express a view are mostly happy with the way the school provides for their children. Parents get a good flow of information from the school. The weekly newsletter gives a full account of recent and forthcoming events. It celebrates achievements and promotes the school's Catholic beliefs through the 'prayer for the week' it includes. Copies of previous newsletters are available on the school's helpful website together with other useful information. Parents get an overall satisfactory amount of written information about their child's progress. Interim reports give helpful updates, but subject sections in main annual reports tend to lack specific details of what the student has learnt. Letters are sent home about specific successes or problems and give further encouragement for parents' involvement.
58. While some parents take a keen interest in their child's work, a large minority are usually less involved. Even in Year 7 nearly one in three students is not represented by a parent at the annual consultation evening and fewer parents come in subsequent years. The school seeks to increase parents' involvement and is planning to trial a new format for consultation meetings. This will allow more detailed discussion of the student's overall progress and let parents contribute to targets set for future work. Staff make other good efforts to explore new ways to increase parents' involvement; for instance, a recent successful mathematics evening attracted parents of a large minority of new Year 7 students. The headteacher researches parents' views, for instance by questionnaires issued to those who attend parents' evenings. He responds well to their views, queries and complaints.

59. Extensive links with commerce and industry are developed to benefit ICT and business education students and to relate their learning experiences to the world of work. Several other subject areas also make good use of links, for instance through outside speakers such as those who contributed when Year 9 students spent a day learning about careers in mathematics. Links with local employers make an important contribution to students' experience of work-related learning through the two weeks work experience that nearly all Year 10 students attend. Staff benefit too; each teacher spent a recent training day working alongside an employee in business or in another outside organisation.
60. Liaison with the main feeder schools is good, with steps taken to aid curricular continuity for transferring students. Mathematics challenge evenings for Year 6 are popular and pupils also enjoy visiting St Thomas More, for instance for science activities. Business and enterprise status allows help to be extended to other schools; for instance, ICT support is given to several feeder primary schools. Links with local secondary schools and colleges and with higher education are developed productively, as when gifted and talented students attend a modern foreign language conference at a local grammar school. Higher education links are also utilised, as when a group of Year 9 students visited a local university as part of a 'you can do it' course aimed at raising their aspirations.

Sixth form

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Links with the community and with other educational establishments are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good encouragement for parental involvement continues from the main school into the sixth form, though attendance at parents' evenings continues to fall.
- Links with employers are particularly well developed to benefit students on vocational courses.

Commentary

61. Good efforts are made to inform and involve parents of sixth form students, though many are slow to take an active interest. At a recent consultation evening only half the students were represented by a parent, even though letters were posted home to the parents of each one. Parents get plenty of information about the sixth form before their son or daughter joins and this year extra efforts were made to involve parents of new Year 12 students. They were invited to come to a presentation about study skills that reflected advice already given to their sons and daughters. Only a minority attended but their feedback showed that they found it worthwhile. If problems arise at any time parents are contacted, just as happens with younger students. While some are grateful others prefer staff to sort out problems without their intervention.
62. Links with the wider community are good, with particular strengths in the work placements arranged for health and social care students. These make an important contribution to the students' achievements. Relevant links also enhance the curriculum in a range of other subjects, as when a theatre visit for students studying English stimulated their understanding of *Measure for Measure*. As in the main school, the success of the Young Enterprise initiative is aided by the support of a local company. Suitable links with the Catholic community are maintained; for instance, the head boy and girl took responsibility for Mass readings during a recent visitation by the Archbishop to the local deanery. Students' aspirations are encouraged through links with further and higher education, for instance at a careers' conference organised with other local secondary schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other senior staff is good; management is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in many areas as a result of good leadership.
- The leadership and management of science are unsatisfactory so standards are falling.
- The systems in place for monitoring many aspects of the school are not applied rigorously enough so there are too many inconsistencies in practice.
- There is a good sense of teamwork in the school.

Commentary

63. Standards at the school have been rising at a faster rate than the national average since the school was last inspected. In particular, there have been rapid gains in standards in mathematics recently. However, standards in science are not good enough and have declined because the monitoring of performance and subsequent action have not been rigorous enough. The school has used its membership of a local network of schools well to access expert advice, guidance and funding for school improvement initiatives. The good leadership of the headteacher is reflected in the school's strategic planning, which has identified the key priorities needed to move the school forward. These priorities centre upon raising the quality of teaching and learning, improving the involvement of students and parents in the learning and using its status as a specialist business and enterprise college to build effective links with the community and improve enrichment opportunities for its students.
64. There is a good sense of teamwork at the school at all levels. Throughout the school, staff work together, striving to provide the best education for the students. The headteacher's sense of purpose is clearly communicated to staff, many of whom take an active role in decision making through involvement in working groups; this reflects the headteacher's commitment to collaboration.
65. The leadership provided at middle management level is also good in most subjects; it is very good in mathematics and physical education, but unsatisfactory in science. However, there are significant inconsistencies in the quality of provision between the different subjects, such as teaching, achievement and standards, caused by weaknesses in management. The monitoring carried out by senior and middle managers is not rigorous enough and whilst students' performance is analysed, the results are not being used to inform the teaching. Some aspects of the school's self-evaluation are too generous, caused by the senior managers' policy of praising good work, but not providing formal written feedback to staff where they are not doing their job properly. The approach does have its strong points, however. Many staff are encouraged by the praise they receive and work hard to improve still further. Teachers know that they are valued and supported. However, where problems exist, such as in science or with other individual teachers, insufficient is done to improve their performance and standards continue to decline. By failing to record the weaknesses in this way, the school's senior managers have too rosy a view of the school's performance.
66. Leadership and management of special educational needs are good. Students with special needs achieve as well as other students. Since the last inspection the provision for students with special educational needs has improved.
67. The governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but still need to do more to ensure that the areas of weakness are being addressed rigorously enough. They are particularly good at ensuring that the school is on a solid financial footing, and that the school meets all of its statutory requirements.
68. The school's commitment to staff development is satisfactory. There are good strategies for professional development and all school staff have opportunities to receive additional training that fits

in with the general priorities of the school. Systems to monitor and disseminate skills gained from external courses are weak and do not ensure good practice is shared effectively. The systems for induction of newly qualified teachers are not rigorous enough and do not include a calendar of events for the year. This aspect is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is good; management is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way the curriculum has been developed has ensured that an increasing number of students continue their studies.
- The same variation in provision is observed in the sixth form as in the main school.

Commentary

69. The improvement in the sixth form has mirrored that in the main school, because the systems that are used are the same. The good leadership is reflected in the very good curriculum provision that enables all students to progress onto courses that are appropriate to their needs. As with the main school, management of the sixth form is satisfactory because there are inconsistencies in the application of school systems by different subjects. In particular the monitoring of how well individual students are doing against their targets is not rigorous enough for the school to quickly identify patterns of underachievement or take action to improve the provision. Where this does happen, such as in physical education or health and social care, standards are improved and students achieve very well. On the other hand, there are subjects such as chemistry where underperformance is not analysed and so students continue to underachieve.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5127832
Total expenditure	5086266
Expenditure per student	3620

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	84866
Balance carried forward to the next	126432

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A co-ordinator has very recently been appointed to take charge of WRL giving good leadership, management and direction to the subject.
- Work experience and school-based work successfully support and complement one another.
- Good use is made of local partnerships.
- An evaluation of cross-curricular WRL has not been carried out.
- Monitoring and assessment of the WRL programme are not yet undertaken.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

70. WRL courses successfully build upon work experience placements for the Year 10 students. There are good links with employers, which have been established in subjects, especially business education and vocational courses. A link with a national house builder is well established providing many opportunities for students to have direct experience of the world of work. The school's business and enterprise status has empowered departments to look for business links. The majority of Year 10 students find their own work experience placements. Students value their work experience placement, understanding it both supports and complements the work they do in school and successfully develops an awareness of the world of work. Students benefit from thorough preparation for work placement and the debriefing afterwards is good. Visits to the school by employers take place, which develop the link between the world of work and the school, for example a recent visit by the manager of a residential home as part of the health and social care course. Business studies explore with students job recruitment, human resources and marketing. For instance, a group of students visiting a building site successfully studied house sales with the manager. Students demonstrate they are gaining standards better than could be expected.

Teaching and learning

71. WRL develops successfully from the courses previously run in school. Consequently the effect that WRL is having on learning and achievement is already good. Subjects like English, mathematics, drama, enterprise initiatives and ICT involve students in problem solving and working both independently and collaboratively. These skills can be easily transferred to the work place. In lessons students often work in groups, delivering presentations to other, producing reports and analysing data. WRL is seen as a tool to enliven teaching and improve students' learning and achievement. This was well exemplified when Year 10 students, visiting

a house builder, used the skills of working both individually and in small teams to learn about sales and home construction. Gifted and talented students apply their computer skills to design and update a grocery wholesaler's website for use by the community. The school has developed business, commercial and industrial partnerships in order to enliven and enrich students' learning, especially those who prefer to learn in a practical way. For example, both boys and girls took an opportunity to learn simple elements of brick-laying during their visit to a building site. A local supermarket and Rotary Club both give opportunities for students to solve real business problems using ICT.

Leadership and management

72. The recently appointed co-ordinator has quickly assimilated what the school has done and has already successfully begun to move things forward. The links developed with business and partnerships are being successfully developed to make learning more meaningful with a flavour of the real world. All staff recently spent one training day in a local businesses to gain first-hand experience of the world outside education. An extensive cross-curricular analysis has just been completed, which shows how subjects can learn through, about or for work. The effect of WRL has yet to be evaluated. WRL was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection

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**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, so students achieve well in Years 7 to 11.
- In Years 10 and 11, students adopt a mature approach and work hard at redrafting their written work to improve its quality.
- ICT is not being used as effectively as might be expected in supporting students' learning.

Commentary

Examination results

73. In 2003, results obtained at the end of Year 9 were below the national average. This represented a dip from the 2002 level, when they were above average. However, results in 2004 rose again to the levels seen before 2003.
74. In 2003, GCSE results in English and English literature were average. In 2004, results in English were similar to those in 2003. Results in literature were considerably better but a considerably smaller proportion of Year 11 was entered for the examination than was entered for English.

Standards and achievement

75. Higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9 have good speaking and listening skills and can express themselves fully and confidently. Middle attainers are also usually confident and can communicate clearly but a number have difficulty in elaborating their ideas when asked to do so. Lower attainers tend to be brief and to rely upon colloquialisms. Written work mirrors students' oral work. Higher attainers and many middle attainers are able to write for different audiences but lower attainers are restricted to one style. Most students read with sound understanding but the lowest attainers are not able to read independently.
76. In Years 10 and 11 students improve their skills at a rate that means they remain in line with the national average. Higher attainers become increasingly more persuasive speakers and are capable of quoting relevant supporting evidence. They understand demanding literature and express their responses with clarity and using the appropriate technical terms. Middle and

lower attainers also improve their understanding of what they read and can demonstrate, for example, that they appreciate some of the techniques used by the mass media. Higher attainers produce work of high quality, though the work of many middle and lower attaining students is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Many students improve the quality of their written work by redrafting it. They appreciate the guidance of their teachers and possess the maturity to act on it.

Teaching and learning

77. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess good subject knowledge and use this to arouse students' interest, for example by being able to formulate questions that provoke thought and debate. When students' work is marked accurately and thoroughly and targets are set for improvement, students work hard to raise their standards, take a pride in what they produce and learn to be more self-critical. Such guidance is especially valuable when it is accompanied by students being required to redraft their work. A number of teachers use the three-part lesson to advantage and this creates variety in lessons and so enables students to concentrate well. The resources used in lessons are usually of good quality, relevant to students' needs and effective in engaging their interest. Teachers make use of ICT in their teaching and this, for example, enhances their ability to communicate information to students. However, there is comparatively little use of ICT in enabling to students to learn more quickly or in different or more challenging ways. Students mostly behave well and respond positively to imaginative teaching.
78. Teaching and learning are less effective when the work being covered does not take sufficient account of students' prior attainment, the most common result being that higher attaining students do not make progress as rapidly as might be expected. When the pace of the lesson is too slow, students become bored, restless and noisy.

Leadership and management

79. The standards and achievement noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained because of good teamwork. Schemes of work are kept under constant review and are modified in the light of teachers' experience of using them, so that the guidance teachers receive is always up to date and improving. This helps teachers to respond to students' needs and interests.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

80. Overall, standards of literacy are below average. Since the previous inspection, action has been taken to raise the general standard and, overall, progress has been satisfactory. Departments have, for example, put strategies in place that encourage students to learn subject-specific vocabularies. Some departments focus upon particular features of the work, for example the use of starter and plenary sessions in lessons, and have shared these ideas with other colleagues. However, the pattern is inconsistent. The curriculum is not used systematically to ensure that all students fully use and develop their reading and writing skills. In particular, there are relatively limited opportunities for students to produce extended writing, then to have the benefit of it being carefully marked and evaluated. Marking is variable. Some of it is thorough and helpful but in a number of cases it is superficial and overlooks many basic errors. Some monitoring takes place but it has not yet been effective in overcoming inconsistencies because the written feedback that teachers receive fails to identify weaknesses that can be acted upon by the co-ordinator.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection.	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers control classes well, so no time is lost in lessons through misbehaviour.
- Students' writing skills are weaker than their speaking, reading and listening.
- Very good assessment procedures enable teachers to accurately track students' attainment and progress.
- Monitoring in the classroom is not frequent enough to improve teaching and learning.

Commentary

Examination results

81. GCSE results in 2003 were average in both French and German. Provisional results for 2004 indicate a drop in results at A* to C in French, but a rise in German. More higher attaining students studied German in 2004. Results for boys are lower than those for girls. Results have improved in line with those found nationally since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

82. Students' speaking, reading and listening skills develop satisfactorily over their time in school. Teachers do not focus well enough on development of writing skills and this is the weakest aspect of the students' skills. Examples of longer passages of accurate writing using a range of tenses and a wide vocabulary are limited. Satisfactory achievement is consistent across all groups of students.

Teaching and learning

83. Teachers control their classes well and no time is lost in lessons because of poor behaviour; in the vast majority of lessons students behave well and have good attitudes to work. Where teaching and learning are good, teachers plan their lessons carefully to provide a range of challenging work and manage a range of resources efficiently. In the majority of lessons the use of the language being taught is good. In some lessons, teachers do not use the foreign language well enough and students' listening and speaking skills are diminished as a result. In other lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of ability found in most classes. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, classes taught by temporary teachers are set work that is too easy for the students. The commercial course in use provides very good procedures for assessment. The use of the data provided to set students' targets and to show them how to improve their work is very good. The subject makes a good contribution to learning with computers.

Leadership and management

84. The new accommodation is very good. This is especially true of the language laboratory and the ICT facilities and these are now contributing to rising standards. The curriculum is good. The vast majority of students study at least one language in Years 10 and 11 and an encouraging number study two. The department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has clear priorities for development. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching in the classroom does not focus rigorously enough on students' learning in order to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Gifted and talented students are well provided for in Years 9, 10 and 11; consequently they achieve well.
- In some lessons, the behaviour of a few students is not sufficiently controlled.
- The very good leadership and management are moving the department forward very quickly.
- Good use of data is made to track students' performance, inform planning and monitor the department.

Commentary

Examination results

85. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below average. In 2004 the results improved. The GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average and improved in 2004.

Standards and achievement

86. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining students can explain how to calculate the sums of the interior and exterior angles of polygons. The lower attainers can construct and identify the different types of triangles. Although standards are still below average, they are clearly improving and are now much closer to average than they have been in previous years. In Year 11, higher attaining students can recognise the difference of two squares and factorise quadratic expressions. The lower attainers can display data in scatter graphs and make appropriate comment on the type of correlation.

Teaching and learning

87. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good as it directs the students' learning closely to the GCSE requirements. Consequently students achieve well. Teachers help students to do well by planning lessons clearly, using their good understanding of mathematics. Where this planning is relayed to the students, they understand the relevance of the lesson and the progress to be

made. The use of the three-part lesson structure gives students a variety of activities that assist their learning. Teachers use good starter activities to get students going, but the finishes do not recapitulate what has been learnt sufficiently. In contrast to the good provision for gifted and talented students, individual higher attaining students in other classes in Years 7 and 8 do not benefit from such challenge. Similarly, teachers do not always match the work in lessons closely enough to the needs of the students, especially in Years 7 and 8. Students are not given enough opportunities to work together, although when they do they learn more quickly. ICT is used well by teachers to help students learn. However, in some lessons the teachers' management is not good enough to engage, interest or manage the behaviour of a number of the more challenging students. Helpful diagnostic comments are evident in the majority of teachers' marking and this assists students' understanding.

Leadership and management

88. The very good leadership and management have resulted in a united teaching team, which is successfully moving the department forward very quickly. The department carries out rigorous self-review and is fully self-evaluating; consequently standards are rising rapidly. Good, regular assessment of students' learning takes place, the outcomes of which are monitored and inform planning. Frequent monitoring of teaching and students' work takes place with feedback to teachers to support their teaching. Gifted and talented students are supported well. For example students are given the opportunity to take GCSE early in Year 9; this year all those taking the examination gained grade C or above. The department offers good enrichment for the students, which includes revision classes, a maths club and involvement in the junior maths challenge. The very good links with the community include a Year 7 and primary schools mathematics activity day, as well as a 'Careers in Maths Day'. The department has made great strides in the recent past, improving significantly from the time of the previous inspection, when standards were low and achievement unsatisfactory at GCSE.

Mathematics across the curriculum

89. Standards in the basic skills of mathematics are average. The strategy for teaching mathematics as a basic skill in subjects is satisfactory. The mathematics department has carried out basic training with other departments. However, there is a lack of cross-referencing between mathematics and subjects to build upon the basic understanding they have. This does not assist sufficiently the students' development of numerical skills in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students do not do as well as they should in science because of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.

- Students in ‘top sets’ generally experience better teaching than others and their achievement is satisfactory.
- Teachers often fail to ensure that students are listening when they are speaking to the whole class.
- Students’ exercise books are inadequate as a record of the essential facts they need to remember.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous and does not result in enough action to improve the consistency of teaching quality across the department.

Commentary

Examination results

90. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average. GCSE results for double award science were below the national average in 2003 and students did not do as well in science as they did on average in their other subjects. In 2004 results fell, both in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.

Standards and achievement

91. Students in ‘top sets’ generally gain standards that are above the national average. However, for students in other groups, there are significant weaknesses in standards. These students have very limited recall of work they have covered earlier. Their practical and investigative skills are not as well developed as expected for their age. Many students have weak literacy skills and do not express themselves clearly when trying to answer written questions.
92. The department is aware that students are not gaining as many marks as they should for their investigative coursework in Years 10 and 11; the electricity modules are another area where students do not do as well as they might. These problems have their origins in Years 7 to 9 where, although the situation is now improving, there have not been enough investigative opportunities or ‘hands on’ electrical experience for students.
93. At the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, students do not do as well in tests and examinations as might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school. Achievement is generally satisfactory in the top sets for higher attaining students. However, in other groups, particularly in ‘second sets’, students are underachieving. This underachievement is the result of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning

94. Teachers have at least satisfactory knowledge of their subject and they usually plan their lessons appropriately. However, there are important weaknesses in much of the teaching and learning that students experience. For example, students in many groups are reluctant to listen when the teacher is speaking. The teacher often, though not always, succeeds in maintaining satisfactory behaviour and ensuring that students are quiet but does not succeed in holding their concentration; they simply are not listening and hence are not learning effectively. Inevitably they then have only limited recollection of the topics they have been taught.
95. Students’ notebooks often do not provide an adequate record of the essential facts and ideas that have been covered in lessons and hence are not useful for revision. This is sometimes because teachers do not provide appropriate opportunities for students to record essential information but, more often, it is because students do not follow instructions and do not make the effort to complete their written class work or homework.

96. Students' books also show that there is not enough variety in the learning activities they experience over time. There is a tendency in several groups to rely too heavily on textbook and worksheet activities. There are, for example, few opportunities for students to use ICT, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Even more importantly, there is insufficient practical work for many students. This shortage of interesting and imaginative activities has an adverse effect on students' attitudes to the subject and contributes to the difficulties teachers face in trying to motivate and interest students.
97. When teaching is unsatisfactory, this is usually because the teacher has to put too much time and effort into trying to manage behaviour and this slows down learning for the whole class. In these lessons, teachers often do not expect enough of students and activities are unchallenging. Occasionally, important explanations and instructions are not presented clearly enough for students.
98. Nevertheless, there is some good, lively and demanding teaching within the department. Several teachers make good use of interesting resources. In particular, they use high quality materials with laptops and projectors. These provide students with strong visual reinforcement of vital information and hold their interest and concentration well.

Leadership and management

99. The head of department is very anxious to raise standards in the department and keen to receive advice about how this might be done. He is ably supported by his second in department who is working with other colleagues to improve students' attitudes in the early years in school, notably in a successful and enjoyable science club. However, the plans for moving the department forward are too wide-ranging and do not concentrate sufficiently on addressing the important weaknesses in teaching and learning.
100. The department has analysed module test results to show where teaching is and is not effective. Teachers have been informed of concerns arising from this analysis and from other monitoring. Nevertheless, there is not enough systematic, formal monitoring of teachers' work, nor enough action taken to improve the quality of teaching that students experience.
101. GCSE results are not as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching was judged to be good at the time and is now unsatisfactory. Hence the department has made unsatisfactory progress since it was last inspected.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers do not pay enough attention to improving students' literacy skills.

- Standards in control and data-logging are well below average because students do not make enough use of these aspects.
- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection because of good leadership.

Commentary

Examination results

102. GCSE results were average in 2003 but fell in 2004.

Standards and achievement

103. By the end of Year 9 many students are able to use computers confidently because they are provided with a well-structured course that enables them to achieve satisfactorily from their wide range of experience upon entering the school. They use the Internet satisfactorily for research but do not always edit this information to suit an appropriate audience. They show a sound understanding of word processing and databases. They are particularly adept at using presentation software, frequently incorporating image and text manipulation and use of *ClipArt* and *WordArt* to enhance their work. Higher attainers have a good understanding of matching work for particular audiences and incorporate and manipulate sophisticated and imaginative materials into their presentations. However, gifted and talented students are not always extended enough. Middle and lower attainers have poor writing skills that result in them making frequent errors when entering data or writing about themselves. Not enough use is made of data-logging or control systems and as a consequence students' standards are well below average in these aspects.
104. By the end of Year 11, students' ability to use the Internet and word processing is in line with that normally found. Their understanding of spreadsheets and databases and the general quality of their coursework is below average. Higher attainers understand the role of ICT in society and are able to give a sound evaluation of the use of ICT for social, academic and personal use. Many students have well-honed skills in producing presentations incorporating digitised images, tabulated results and screen dumps. However, some students lack the skills in the use of some basic software tools. Middle and lower attainers are restricted by their low level literacy skills, particularly when inputting data. They are more dependent on teachers for guidance and struggle to cope with formulae and using databases.

Teaching and learning

105. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which they use well to ask searching questions and stretch the students within lessons. Teachers plan their lessons really well. In the best lessons, they have high expectations of what students can achieve and how students should behave. Teachers share the lesson objectives with their classes so students understand what they are going to do and how they will do it. The content of lessons is accurate and teachers explain principles well. However, not all teachers modify work so that all students can achieve as well as possible; gifted and talented students are not challenged enough. Effective use is made of digital projectors to demonstrate each stage of the lesson clearly. Relationships are particularly strong and result in a good balance between enjoyment and hard work, but teachers do not place enough emphasis on improving students' writing skills and this stops many of the students from attaining the highest GCSE grades.

Leadership and management

106. Teaching and standards are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection, but the school now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum which was a key issue previously. The staff team work well together and are very well supported by the team of high

quality technicians. The variations in the quality of teaching across the department are not being sufficiently highlighted or addressed through the current monitoring arrangements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. Students' skills in the use of ICT across the curriculum are below average. The use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum is good. The proportion of computers available for use by students is much higher than the national average. Very good use is made of ICT in geography and modern foreign languages. However, very little use is made of ICT in music to enhance students' learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to students achieving well.
- Insufficient attention is given to improving presentation.
- ICT is well used to enhance students' coursework, which is very well prepared.
- Assessment gives insufficient guidance to students.

Commentary

Examination results

108. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were average and were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

109. By the end of Year 9, students have achieved well and improved their knowledge and understanding on a wide range of topics. They have average map and atlas skills. Higher attainers extract information from the Internet and have good understanding of local environmental issues as well as global issues such as those associated with wealth distribution. Students' writing skills are below average and they are not provided with enough opportunities to practise extended writing through homework. Students' knowledge of place and world regions is below average.
110. By the end of Year 11, students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of issues to do with population and social engineering. They can name different forms of energy and discuss sustainability, but do not explain answers in enough detail. Higher attainers, girls in particular, have skills in collecting, sorting and representing data. Students' analytical skills are below average; they do not always use information well enough in extended writing. Lower attainers struggle to develop ideas about settlement. Weaknesses in writing restrict the quality of students' analysis in essays.

Teaching and learning

111. In Years 7 to 9 lessons have clear aims and are generally well planned, but teachers do not always match the work to the needs of all students; as a result not enough is expected of higher attainers and lower attainers do not improve their writing skills. Teachers are appropriately qualified and lessons are well managed so that learning proceeds smoothly and students make good progress. Teachers encourage and motivate students through the good use of ICT. Teachers normally inform students about what they are going to learn during the lesson but do not always follow this up by testing students' understanding at the end of the lesson. In Years 10 and 11 teachers have good knowledge of the examination requirements and prepare students very well in GCSE coursework. However, some teachers have difficulties in managing their students and this results in unsatisfactory learning in some classes. Teachers do not always insist on students presenting work to a high standard; again this has a negative effect on students' progress. Whilst marking is frequent, teachers do not provide enough correction and constructive comments that would help students to improve their work.

Leadership and management

112. Plans for improvement are good and there has been good development of ICT which has had a positive impact on achievement. Not enough use is made of the wealth of data to aid planning or to ensure that all groups of students achieve well.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching by enthusiastic teachers.
- Lessons are interesting and challenging and students behave well and work hard.
- Teachers give good feedback so that students understand how to improve on their written work.
- The same good emphasis placed on developing students' writing skills is not used to improving their speaking skills.

Commentary

Examination results

113. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above the national average. Students performed better than they did in all of their other subjects. Results were similar in 2004.

Standards and achievement

114. In Year 9 students reach average standards and, as they are below average when they enter the school, their achievement is good. In their oral and written work students show that their skills have developed well in using sources of evidence to interpret events. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others because their specific needs are met in lessons. By the end of Year 11 students' achievement is, again, good. They produce well-developed coursework assignments and this helps them to gain the good GCSE grades that are above the national average year on year. Higher attaining students write particularly well, and most students have a clear understanding of historical issues.

Teaching and learning

115. In Years 7 to 9, all students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and provide interesting and challenging learning tasks. In the lesson on life in the trenches, for example, the atmosphere buzzed as students developed powerful empathy with soldiers who fought and died there. Students' work is assessed accurately and they know, because of informative marking, how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Homework is used well to extend learning beyond the lesson. Learning is enhanced by teachers organising visits to places such as Warwick Castle and the battlefields of the two World Wars, and this enables students to link theoretical study to events and places. The teaching of literacy is effective in helping students to improve their writing but speaking skills need more considered and planned development. Students' learning is good because of good teaching.

116. By the end of Year 11 students produce good assignments because teachers have emphasised the importance of this, to the gaining of high GCSE grades, in lessons. Good teaching continues to challenge, and capture the interest of, students who work hard and strive to reach the highest levels possible. Assessments are accurate and students benefit from very knowledgeable feedback from teachers who are experienced external examiners.

Leadership and management

117. The subject is well led and managed by a very experienced and enthusiastic head of department. Development plans are clearly focused on further raising students' achievement, although they do not yet state explicitly enough the strategies that teachers must use to further improve students' literacy skills, especially speaking skills. Good progress has been made in all respects since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM)
- Designing skills are weak, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11 too little time is spent on developing students' skills of analysis and evaluation.
- Good use is made of starters and plenaries in lessons.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

118. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average, but improved in 2004.

Standards and achievement

119. By the end of Year 9, students' designing and making skills are below average; however, this represents satisfactory achievement given students' attainment on entry to the school. They use a variety of tools and equipment competently and with confidence in all material areas. Students' designing skills are not as good as their making skills because the department concentrates on teaching practical skills. By the end of Year 11 standards of designing and making are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement since Year 9. Students make interesting products using a range of materials and good use is made of ICT overall and in resistant materials students are using computer-aided design software and computer

controlled machines to produce accurate, well-presented projects. Students who have special needs or who are of lower ability achieve well on their learning support course because they benefit from smaller classes and closer individual attention.

Teaching and learning

120. In Years 7 to 9 students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Lessons are usually well paced and have clear learning objectives. In many lessons teachers use starter activities to engage the students, and carefully plan activities such as plenaries to ensure that students have learnt what they should have done. Occasionally students do not learn as much as they should do because the teaching is dull and uninspiring and the work set is too easy, especially in food lessons.
121. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have good subject knowledge and plan focused lessons. Good use is made of CAD/CAM in resistant materials and graphics. When challenged and engaged by teachers, students' attitudes are positive; students are interested and take pride in their work. A strong feature of the teaching is the emphasis given to the correct use of technical vocabulary. In general, skills of analysis and evaluation are insufficiently developed and too little emphasis is given to presentation skills. In graphics, too much time is spent on technical skills, which are not part of the examination board course.
122. The assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory because not all teachers mark students' work regularly and students are not consistently told what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

123. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject; knows the current strengths and weaknesses in the provision and has worked closely with colleagues to develop strategies for improvement. However, many of these strategies are at an early stage and they have yet to affect students' performance. The monitoring of teaching and learning has not been thorough enough and as a result there are many inconsistencies in teaching practices. The new buildings are a super resource for the department and the investment in CAD/CAM equipment is already beginning to improve the standard of students' work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

124. The inspection focused upon art and design and music. A small number of drama lessons were sampled. In these, teaching and learning were either excellent or very good. In the lessons seen, students had had little earlier experience of the subject, but after only a small number of lessons were achieving well and reaching average standards. A particular feature of the work was the involvement of some very enthusiastic sixth form students. They demonstrated skills to younger students, helped to lead group discussion and generally contributed to creating an excellent environment for learning.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good achievement in all years as a result of good teaching.
- Students have good attitudes to the subject and experiment well.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.
- There is not enough experimental work using ICT.

Commentary

Examination results

125. GCSE results were below average in 2003, but improved in 2004. Results have fluctuated between above and below average over the past four years.

Standards and achievement

126. Students' standards on entry to the school are average in drawing, painting and the knowledge of colour. By Year 9 standards are above average in drawing and in the use of oil pastel and watercolour. Work based on observed drawings of natural forms shows a good awareness of composition and the impact of line. Students use the work of artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe to gain inspiration. In Year 8 there is very good work in collage based on the ideas of the artist Klimt. Portraits are successful in exploring the use of colour for gaining three-dimensional effects. This represents good achievement given students' skills on entry.

127. By Year 11 standards are currently at the national average for GCSE. A significant feature is that there is no poor work at all. This represents good achievement as a significant number of high attaining students do not continue art to GCSE. Students research in good depth and use ideas gained from a range of artists' work to bring a vibrant quality to their own work. They draw well from observation and blend colour well for impact. Work is generally bold and dramatic. In all years, students show good attitudes to the subject and this contributes to their success. In GCSE, written notes are not considered carefully enough to do justice to the ideas being described. They do not contribute fully to students' learning in the subject. Although there is very good use of ICT for research it is not used to any significant extent for experiments or in the development of work.

Teaching and learning

128. The students benefit from a good range of specialist expertise. Teachers work hard to make the lessons interesting and provide a good range of experiences in two and three-dimensional work. They give all students good one-to-one guidance and support. This ensures that all make equally good progress and know what they have to do to improve. Assessment is ongoing in all lessons and involves self-assessment, and occasionally, whole-class assessment. This adds to students' knowledge of the range of possibilities in art and design. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering how these aspects motivate artists.

Leadership and management

129. There is good vision for enhancing the subject in the new, very good accommodation. This involves getting ceramics established. There is good planning, self-evaluation, teamwork and mutual support. There is good provision for extra lessons and visits to places that extend students' experiences of art and architecture. Standards and achievement have improved since the previous inspection. Teaching has also improved.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory

Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
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Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge and very good planning.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well because they receive a diet of interesting musical activities.
- Students do not use computers with music software enough in lessons and as a result miss out on an important part of the curriculum.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and result in over-inflated results at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

Examination results

130. In 2003, GCSE results were average. Results in 2004 were similar.

Standards and achievement

131. By the end of Year 9 students have experienced an exciting and well-structured course that enables them to achieve well from their wide range of experience upon entering the school. Musically talented students can confidently improvise melodies over ‘blues’ chords. Lower attainers and students with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates because tasks are often adapted to ensure they can succeed. However, they occasionally struggle to find the correct starting note on the keyboard and written work is restricted by their low-level writing skills. Students do not get enough opportunity to use computers with music software so they are not able to create, refine and modify pieces. By the end of Year 11 students’ theory and appraising work shows an adequate understanding of the examination requirements but performance skills are below average. Students, including some higher attainers, have weak writing skills and their written work contains many spelling errors.

Teaching and learning

132. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject and lessons are planned thoroughly. They generally have high expectations of what students can achieve and also how students should behave. In Years 7 to 9, students learn well because teaching frequently incorporates a range of interesting topics that ensures students are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons. They circulate around the class well, passing on advice and supporting students’ achievement. In the best lessons teaching is exciting and enthusiastic and students respond by working really hard. For example, the pace of learning in one outstanding Year 9 lesson was breathtaking and the students achieved much more than expected because of the dynamic and inspirational teaching they received. In the weaker lessons, teachers spoon-feed the students too much information instead of letting them work it out for themselves. Teachers frequently talk too much and students are not given enough musical activities. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know the requirements of the examination syllabus well. Lessons, whilst overall satisfactory, do not always contain the same variety of interesting tasks and are not always structured as tightly as those for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well.

Leadership and management

133. Day-to-day management is underpinned by satisfactory systems and procedures geared to ensure success at examinations. Teachers work well together but the good practice found within the department is not shared enough and procedures to monitor the quality of teaching lack rigour. Assessment procedures are adequate in Years 10 and 11 but are not accurate in Year 9 so students' standards have been considerably over-estimated. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection but there is still a major problem with the use of ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in the GCSE examination as a result of good teaching.
- Very good leadership provides a clear vision and direction for the subject.
- A very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students, especially the gifted and talented, to excel.
- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure best practice is identified and shared.

Commentary

Examination results

134. The 2003 GCSE examination results were average, and the 2004 results were similar. Students did better in physical education than they did in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

135. Standards in Year 9 are below average at this early stage in the year. Nevertheless, this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' starting point on entry to the school. Girls achieve well in gymnastics, and boys in rugby. All students achieve equally well.
136. In the Year 11 core curriculum, standards are average, with some boys achieving at a higher level in football. Girls achieve well in trampolining at the beginning of their course. Standards in GCSE coursework are average overall, but a significant proportion of students produce above average work. Achievement is good, well illustrated by the accuracy with which students recall previous learning on the structure and function of the skeletal system. Performance in extra-curricular sport is high, reflected in students' successes at local, county and, sometimes, national level in team games and athletics.

Teaching and learning

137. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers motivate students, who have generally good attitudes towards the subject. These are reflected in the high levels of participation, standards of dress and good behaviour in most lessons. A minority of students in Years 7 to 9 do not take their work seriously, which detracts from learning and achievement. The best learning occurs when there is physical and intellectual challenge, a demanding pace and high expectations, well illustrated in girls' gymnastics and boys' rugby. These lessons had a consistent focus on quality and improvement of performance. Too much teaching in Years 7 to 9 lacks this rigorous focus on learning; the development of students' independent learning skills, and of their ability to work collaboratively, is slow.

Leadership and management

138. Strong leadership ensures that raising standards is central to departmental planning, reflected in the significant improvement in GCSE results. Good documentation and resources support the work of the department, and there is an inclusive ethos. A very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students, especially the gifted and talented, to excel in school and beyond. Monitoring is in place, but there is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure that the very good practice that exists is identified and shared. The school is moving towards achieving the aim of the national strategy for students to have two hours a week of good quality physical education. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. GCSE results are much higher and the quality of teaching is improving.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching brings about good achievement for all students.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subject with their students.
- After-school courses are of benefit to gifted and talented students.
- Support staff are not adequately trained to effect standards in the classroom.

Commentary

Examination results

139. Results in 2003 were average; results in 2004 were similar.

Standards and achievement

140. Standards are currently above average and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Girls perform better than boys in the traditional GCSE whilst boys are outperforming girls on the business and communication courses. Current students' knowledge and skills are beyond what might typically be expected. Students generally work to their capacity and respond well to challenges. Year 11 students show a clear understanding of key business ideas and processes, such as balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. Notes are carefully written and students communicate confidently and accurately. This also applies to Years 9 and 10 students who are studying business and communication in their own time after school. Standards on these courses are very high.

Teaching and learning

141. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and most quickly establish a purposeful atmosphere for learning using carefully chosen starter activities. All teachers thoroughly prepare their work. Most staff have an enthusiasm for the subject and a commitment which inspires students and they respond well to the variety of challenges set for them. Assessment is well organised. Teachers make effective comments on students' written work so that they know how well they are doing and how to further improve their work. Teachers set clear targets in language that students fully understand. In class, questions are well targeted and responses are supportive so that understanding is continually checked.

Leadership and management

142. The head of department leads the subject well. He has a strong sense of direction and a constant drive for improvement, particularly at the higher A and B grades. He is aware of new curricular opportunities and supports all courses and initiatives well. Management of the department is satisfactory. Procedures are clear and are generally followed. However, there is non-productive use of support staff allied to the business studies department and they make no impact upon standards achieved. There has been good progress since the time of the previous inspection. To raise achievement a new business and communication skills GCSE has been introduced; this is having a definite impact on boys' achievement. It focuses heavily on the use of ICT and boys are now outperforming girls on this course. Likewise he has introduced after-school classes for students identified as gifted and talented and they are taking the new GCSE course in their own time and one year ahead of their peers,

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

PSHE

143. Insufficient lessons were seen to allow an overall judgement on provision. Teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen.
144. PSHE is delivered through the school's personal, social and spiritual education (PSSE) programme and through other subjects including science and religious education. The PSSE programme makes a satisfactory contribution in Years 7 to 9 when both lessons and form time are allocated for it. In Year 7 for instance it contributes to students' welfare by helping them settle in when they first join the school. However, in Years 10 and 11, time is only available for PSSE in tutor time. The use of tutor time is, on balance, satisfactory, but with examples across the school both of good practice and of missed opportunities. The present summary audit of PSHE indicates relevant coverage in other subjects but lacks the detail needed to check that, especially in Years 10 and 11, students' knowledge and skills are developed progressively in the

various aspects. The co-ordinator has rightly identified the need to produce a mapped programme of coverage in Years 10 and 11, continuing into the sixth form.

145. The careers education part of the programme has been appropriately extended to start in Year 7. It provides for progress in development of understanding and of skills for planning a career and is good. It includes good use of expert visitors, for instance at a Year 9 day about careers in mathematics, to bring the world of work to life. The well-organised work experience followed by nearly all Year 10 students also makes a good contribution to students' understanding. Liaison with the Connexions adviser contributes to the good success rate in helping students identify their post-16 routes; those in Year 11 are generally well informed about the options open to them. Their planning is assisted by the supportive booklets they use in tutor time, that aid self-assessment for example. Students show a good understanding of how they can find out more, for instance about provision in the sixth form or how to join courses at local colleges.
146. Sex and relationships education is governed by a good policy. Teaching of this topic is largely through religious education and science and was not observed. Other appropriate aspects including drugs education and healthy eating are also included in the programme

Citizenship

Citizenship is taught each week through the PSSE programme in Years 7 to 9. Citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is an integral part of the three weekly lessons allocated for the GCSE religious education course. Additional citizenship is undertaken through assemblies, tutorials and timetable suspension.

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities to take part in significant group activities.
- There is no effective monitoring or evaluation of the citizenship programme.
- Assessment procedures do not sufficiently inform the progress that students are making in developing citizenship skills.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

147. Students join the school with a very wide range of experiences in citizenship. By the end of Year 9, students have an understanding of the debating process, although many find it difficult to work to these conventions. Enrichment activities like whole year charity work for cancer research and elections for the school council are starting to provide opportunities for all students to be involved in active citizenship. Students choose, support and elect representatives, so experiencing the electoral system. However, the limited time allocated for citizenship constrains the development of skills and consequently achievement is satisfactory. At times, a suspended timetable allows specific activities like team building to enhance the provision of citizenship. Such activities help to give additional depth to the subject and go some way to addressing the limited time allocation. By the end of Year 11, students have an average understanding of such topics as care for the environment, genetic engineering, the rights of individuals to live and die, human rights, prejudice and disadvantaged people. Students successfully discuss the associated ethical and moral issues, helping to ensure that they become better-informed citizens about world issues.

Teaching and learning

148. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good and detailed scheme of work with lesson plans, which brings some consistency to the content of citizenship lessons. This is important because a large number of teachers teach citizenship. Where teaching is good or better it has good challenge and pace. However, in some citizenship lessons there is limited discussion and student involvement is restricted.

Leadership and management

149. The newly appointed co-ordinator has identified how to move the subject forward. An analysis of citizenship across subjects has very recently been made in order to extend citizenship coverage. In tutorial time opportunities are frequently missed to develop current citizenship

issues. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment procedures are not sufficiently developed. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, **nine** 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 2003.

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	3	100.0	98.6	33.3	50.2	80.0	87.5
Biology	6	100.0	96.4	33.3	39.2	73.3	78.6
Business studies	11	100.0	98.7	45.5	36.8	92.7	80.1
Chemistry	6	83.3	97.6	16.7	49.0	63.3	84.9
English literature	7	100.0	99.5	0.0	46.5	74.3	86.5
Design and technology	7	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	57.1	77.9
French	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	51.5	50.0	87.6
General studies	2	100.0	94.7	100.0	31.0	110.0	73.1
Geography	3	100.0	98.7	0.0	44.5	66.7	84.0
German	2	100.0	98.4	0.0	47.9	70.0	84.8
History	3	100.0	99.0	33.3	44.6	66.7	84.6
Information technology	9	77.8	95.6	11.1	24.6	55.6	69.5
Mathematics	6	83.3	96.7	0.0	55.6	43.3	84.7
Other languages	1	100.0	96.9	0.0	64.5	60.0	93.8
Other social studies	21	76.2	97.4	4.8	42.7	44.8	88.8
Physics	8	100.0	96.7	37.5	44.6	72.5	81.7
Religious studies	8	100.0	98.8	0.0	46.7	62.5	104.0
Sociology	16	100.0	98.2	6.3	44.3	65.0	83.6
Sports studies	6	100.0	98.0	66.7	30.9	90.0	75.2
Vocational studies	2	100.0	91.4	0.0	25.5	70.0	66.5
Business VCE	22	77.3	65.0	0.0	14.6	37.7	60.1
Health and social care VCE	24	100.0	67.7	33.3	14.5	77.5	63.5
Information technology VCE	12	66.7	77.9	0.0	23.4	35.0	64.9
Leisure and recreation VCE	3	100.0	62.9	0.0	10.2	53.3	57.9
Travel and tourism VCE	5	100.0	71.8	40.0	14.5	88.0	62.2

Many more students stay on to the sixth form than is usually the case. Many of these students retake GCSE subjects in order to improve their grades. A high proportion also study for vocational examinations. Once a student has started a course, it is rare for him or her not to finish it.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this report was on English.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- In Year 12, a significant minority of students are reluctant to share ideas in group discussion.
- The work of the six A-level teachers is very well co-ordinated.

Commentary

Examination results

150. Examination results at A-level in 2003 were below average; they were significantly better in 2004. The Year 12 groups retaking GCSE English achieved satisfactorily in 2003 and 2004; nearly all students moved up by at least one grade, to a grade C.

Standards and achievement

151. In Year 13, students work well in groups to show how the characters in *Measure for Measure* are not what they seem. They read Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English and gain a detailed knowledge of the pilgrims. Students write on the set books showing firm understanding of content. However, there is insufficient evidence from the text to support arguments. Year 12 AS-level students discuss Blake's poetry with attention to theme and imagery, but not all are willing to share ideas in group work. They understand the importance of setting in *Wuthering Heights* and produce evidence of Iago's deviousness in *Othello*.

Teaching and learning

152. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject, which helps them to encourage students to think more deeply about the texts. They use group work well to provide opportunities of learning through discussion with others. Relationships are strong so that students work hard and show interest in the set texts. Marking is good. Teachers give detailed comments which tell students what they need to do to improve. Classroom displays are very good, providing a stimulating environment for learning.

Leadership and management

153. Teachers work well as a team to raise standards of students' work. They provide valuable opportunities for students to visit theatres to see set plays enacted. The work of the six post-16 teachers is very well co-ordinated. Inexperienced teachers work with established teachers in lessons before taking their own classes and this raises the quality of teaching. It is difficult to judge improvement since the last inspection, as little was said about post-16 English in the report. However, students continue to achieve well and resources are much better.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. Overall, standards of literacy are below average. Students on A-level courses write clearly though errors in expression occur. On other courses, students' written work contains errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation, which affect the clarity of their writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

The school offers A-level in the areas of core mathematics, pure mathematics, statistics, decision, discrete mathematics and mechanics. It also gives students the opportunity to retake their GCSE in mathematics.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Insufficient evidence

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is good and leads to a clear insight into what needs to be done to improve standards.
- There are good methods of monitoring and tracking achievement so that students can see how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers do not always match the work closely enough to the needs of higher attaining students.

Commentary

Examination results

155. In 2003, the results at A-level were well below average. There were too few students in 2004 to be able to comment on the trend.

Standards and achievement

156. Overall achievement is satisfactory given the students' attainment on entry to the course. As the numbers are small, results are highly dependent on the attainment of students when they start the course. The quality of students' written and oral work is generally as expected at this stage in the course. However, skills in algebra are much lower than expected and this is evident when

they are applying integration techniques. Although students demonstrate a good understanding of the remainder theorem, they make numerical errors because not enough care is taken when substituting. The standard of work seen by the students taking the GCSE course in the sixth form is below the level expected, but their achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

157. Teachers have a secure knowledge of mathematics. They give comprehensive support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively. In the better lessons teachers involve students and encourage students to work together to solve problems and this engages their attention. Teachers generally plan their lessons well, making sure that students are secure in their understanding of basic skills before progressing to new concepts. However, where there is a wide range of abilities in lessons, there is insufficient provision for higher attaining students so that they can achieve their full potential. Homework is set regularly; it is used effectively to consolidate and extend new work that is introduced in the lesson, but there are too few opportunities for students to develop their study skills by encouraging them to read about topics in preparation for lessons. The marking of students' work contains good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

158. Good leadership and management result in effective consultation and collaboration amongst teachers. Teachers work well together. There is a good programme for monitoring teaching and learning that gives teachers opportunities to see each other teach and share skills. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. Although there is a comprehensive programme of study that follows the published syllabuses, the schemes of work lack guidance on appropriate teaching methods and use of resources, including ICT, that would enhance the teaching further. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. There is insufficient information in the previous report to make a judgement on progress since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

159. Students' mathematical skills are generally well below those seen in other sixth forms. This is mainly a result of the entry policy to the sixth form, where the school admits far more lower attaining students than is usually the case.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on chemistry, although biology and physics were sampled. Teaching in biology was good and students were achieving well. Teaching was satisfactory in physics and students were doing as well as expected given their standards on starting the course.

Provision in chemistry is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
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Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory teaching.
- Teachers' expectations of students are low.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

160. Examination results at A-level were well below average in 2003 and students underachieved compared to their performance in other subjects. Results in 2004 were similar.

Standards and achievement

161. Students enter the AS-level chemistry course with GCSE science grades that are below average. Standards are well below average, however, and achievement is unsatisfactory. Students are underachieving because they are not made to work hard enough due to teachers' low expectations of the breadth and depth of work that can be covered in a given time.

Teaching and learning

162. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but their expectations of how much work can be covered and how much effort students should make are unsatisfactory. Activities, such as covering what would otherwise be suitable content for homework, simply waste time that could be spent teaching. Marking is frequent but there is a relatively strong focus on presentation combined with inaccurate judgements on strengths and weaknesses in students' work. Skills are less well developed than knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson involving a titration, students were taking readings that contained significant parallax error.

Leadership and management

163. There is no clear lead showing how high expectations should be set and how standards could be improved, and leadership is unsatisfactory. However, departmental documentation, in terms of relevant data acquisition and useful resources that are emerging, reflect satisfactory management, but not enough is being done to monitor teaching in the classroom or to raise standards.

164. The previous inspection report describes A-level chemistry provision in very general terms as part of wider comments on provision. Consequently improvement since the last inspection cannot be judged.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology.

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good

Teaching and learning	Good	Good
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Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
- The subject is growing in popularity and has quickly established itself within the school.
- Some lessons do not involve students enough in their own learning.

Commentary

Examination results

165. Results in the 2003 examinations were well below average; results improved significantly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

166. By the end of Year 12, students have a satisfactory grasp of how generic software can be used to support their studies. They know and understand the difference between different types of media storage and are competent at using a wide range of applications. By the end of Year 13, students' practical skills are average and they achieve well. They confidently use a range of software applications to solve problems, and draft and redraft essays. They build upon existing spreadsheet skills, by beginning to use more advanced ones, in work that is preparing them to meet specific examination requirements. Students' achievement is exemplified by their work on real problems, such as the design of a website or a spreadsheet with input forms for calculating and managing expenses. A weakness which stops students attaining the very highest grades is the students' weak literacy skills. Many gain high marks in their coursework but struggle with the written examination.

Teaching and learning

167. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject which they pass on well to students. All students achieve well because teachers match the work effectively to the needs of every student. Good relationships lead to a positive atmosphere for learning. Good software and hardware, including modern equipment for teaching, aid effective learning because of more efficient and effective ways of presenting information. Students respond well to opportunities to discuss, or answer questions, sometimes asking searching ones of their own. However, these opportunities are not common to all lessons; on occasions lessons are too teacher-led and prevent students from taking responsibility for their own learning. Teacher assessment is rigorous, with accurate feedback on progress that informs students' next steps in their learning. Not enough opportunities are provided for students to practise their writing skills.

Leadership and management

168. The head of department has a clear vision and has succeeded in attracting and retaining an increasing number of students to the courses. The staff team work very well together and are supported very effectively through constant contact with the technical staff. The courses were not running at the time of the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

169. Many subjects build the use of ICT into their work, so students get lots of opportunities to use computers in a wide range of situations. Students apply and use computers confidently to support their learning. Throughout the inspection, many students were observed using the ICT facilities both in and outside normal school hours especially for research in other subjects. Subject teachers are becoming confident users of ICT and as a result students use computers far more than at the time of the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

The focus for this report was on psychology, although geography, history and sociology were sampled. The teaching was good in history and sociology and their work shows that students are doing better than expected. Teaching was satisfactory in geography, where achievement was also satisfactory.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Teachers plan and prepare lessons effectively.
- The improved quality of teaching has not yet had time to fully impact on achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

170. Examination results at A-level were below average in 2003 with no student attaining a higher grade A or B. Students underachieved in comparison with their performance in other subjects. Students also underachieved in 2004 but the percentage of students attaining higher grades increased.

Standards and achievement

171. Standards on current AS and A2 courses are average. Students are no longer underachieving because the quality of teaching has improved as a result of initiatives put in place by the new head of department. Students concentrate and work hard and their teachers plan, prepare and deliver lessons effectively. Nevertheless, the improved teaching has not yet had time to fully impact on students' achievement, so, although teaching is good, students' achievement is only satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

172. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and effective planning ensures that lessons have clear learning objectives and are well organised. Teaching is suitably challenging and lessons proceed at a good pace. The majority of students achieve at a satisfactory level and some make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject during lessons. Students are encouraged to evaluate evidence critically in a generally supportive atmosphere. Positive relationships between teachers and students are a strong feature which contributes to effective learning. Written feedback is of a good standard. Assignments are marked

constructively and inform students about what they have done well and what could be improved.

Leadership and management

173. Although having only recently taken over leadership and management of this subject, the teacher in charge has a clear vision for the further development of the subject. There is an emphasis on raising standards and the subject development plan has appropriate targets in place aimed at doing this. Value added measures are now used to predict and set grades for students at AS and A2 level. Students reported that they find this useful, in particular the feedback they receive on their performance in assignments, in relation to their target grades.
174. Psychology has grown in popularity since the last inspection and there are now two specialist subject teachers. Accommodation has improved with the subject now having two designated teaching rooms which provide a data projector as a teaching and learning resource.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected or sampled in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus for this report was on art and design, although music was sampled. The teaching was satisfactory in music; there was not enough evidence available to judge the students' achievement.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement.
- Students have very good attitudes and work extensively outside of lessons.
- Accommodation and resources are very good and contribute to learning.

Commentary

Examination results

175. Results at A2 level were below average in 2003. Only two students studied for A2 in 2004, gaining an A and B grade.

Standards and achievement

176. Standards in both the AS and A2 courses are currently above average. In Year 12, students have started the course with energy and commitment. In both years, students respond well to the individual tutorial style of teaching. They value the freedom to develop their work in individual ways. They gain inspiration from the work of major artists and art movements and

their work is highly creative and imaginative. They make very good use of ICT for research into their chosen topics, use a variety of media and express their ideas vividly. Achievement is very good as students build systematically on their skills. There is open entry to the course and GCSE is not a requirement.

Teaching and learning

177. The teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and high expectations of their students. They give very good, lengthy one-to-one guidance and support to all students. This ensures that everyone has a good awareness of how to experiment and explore ideas further. Assessment is very good. It is ongoing in all lessons and involves self-assessment and peer group assessment. It is an integral part of teacher guidance and support. There are good opportunities for students to visit galleries at home and abroad. They attend life-drawing classes in the evenings and this makes a good contribution to their success.

Leadership and management

178. The head of department has a clear vision for raising standards and extending provision in the new building. There is good teamwork and clear self-evaluation. The very good resources generated by the teachers contribute significantly to learning and standards. The good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and achievement has improved.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focused on physical education, but a leisure and recreation lesson was also sampled where the teaching and learning were good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides a clear vision of the standards required.
- Students achieve very well because of their very good attitudes and the very good teaching they receive.
- Progress since the previous inspection has been very good.

Commentary

Examination results

179. The 2003 A-level results were well above average, and these high results were maintained in 2004.

Standards and achievement

180. Year 12 students are achieving very well in the early stages of their AS course. They work quickly at a demanding pace, and are confident using the specialist language of the subject. In Year 13 standards are above average, and a significant number of students are on track to achieve well above average standards by the end of the year. Achievement is very good, and students show an impressive knowledge and understanding of trends in international sport in a study of global games.

Teaching and learning

181. Very good teaching reflects very good specialist knowledge of the subject and the examination syllabus. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, and students are well motivated by a range of teaching methods that actively involve them in reflection, problem solving and decision making. Students' attitudes are very good; they work hard, contribute readily and support extra-curricular activities well. Probing questioning initiates stimulating discussion. Informative marking ensures the students know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

182. Very good leadership and management have ensured that standards have risen significantly. The quality of support and guidance given to students is very good, and they appreciate this. Many students take advantage of opportunities to gain wider experience by assisting with extra-curricular activities, and coaching younger students. Many sixth formers help in primary schools as part of the Community Sports Leader Award. Standards and the quality of teaching have risen significantly since the last inspection, and progress has been very good.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCE A-level results are well above average because of good teaching.
- Students' experience is enhanced well through the links with the business community.
- Standards on the GNVQ business course are below average because some students have poor attitudes to learning.

Commentary

Examination results

183. Results in the 2003 GCE A-level examination were well above average and have been maintained at this level in recent years. The 2003 GNVQ intermediate level results were well below average but improved marginally in 2004.

Standards and achievement

184. By the end of Year 13, GCE students have good knowledge about the structure and organisation of business and understand the practical application of theoretical study. Year 12 students were able to show the outcomes of research and used ICT confidently to present findings. Students gain knowledge of a wide range of business terms but they do not develop answers in discussion or use case studies enough in extended writing. In the GNVQ intermediate course high attaining students achieve very well in researching information about business enterprises, but some male students underachieve because they do not apply themselves in lessons and at home. As a result the standards they are reaching are below average.

Teaching and learning

185. In the GCE course students benefit from being taught by well-qualified and experienced teachers and this results in them making very good progress. This is because they are set challenging tasks and given careful guidance on how the work is assessed. Lessons are well planned and ICT is used well to generate interest and engagement; it leads to them making gains in understanding business terms and skills in applying marketing principles to companies. Occasionally, learning is too slow because lessons lack pace and at times students are insufficiently challenged in discussion. In the GNVQ course lessons have clear aims and are structured to incorporate business application. This leads to students improving their understanding about how firms plan and manage departments. Teachers work hard to manage students, but learning is disrupted because of poor attitudes of some students, mainly males. This reduces the achievement of the majority of students on the course.

Leadership and management

186. The subject is well led with vision about future business-related developments, but this vision has not been formalised through a longer-term development plan. The handbook provides guidance on policies and practice and colleagues are well supported with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge of the subject. The schemes of work are good, except for insufficient information about how resources can be most effectively used. Since the previous inspection GCE A-level results have improved and there is now a wide range of links with business.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching allows students to achieve very well.
- Students apply their knowledge and understanding to real situations and this impacts upon standards achieved.
- The head of department provides an excellent role model for staff and students alike.
- Courses are flexible to best meet students' individual, differing needs.

Commentary

Examination results

187. Results in the intermediate GNVQ and the part, single and double VCE awards have followed an improving trend in recent years. Students exceed their target grades.

Standards and achievement

188. Students achieve far better than might be expected from their GCSE results. Current standards are above average and achievement is very good. Work is very demanding. Year 13 students not only exhibit secure knowledge but also clearly demonstrate that they are confident and independent learners. They have an excellent understanding of health and social care services. They use and explain health measurements, accurately interpret data and effectively draw conclusions about the physiological status of clients. Students who are not traditionally accepted onto sixth form courses are welcomed onto health and social care and all make significant progress.

Teaching and learning

189. Teaching is very good and students learn very quickly as a result. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a genuine enthusiasm for the subject. They prepare their work thoroughly; the teaching methods used are imaginative and lead to a high level of interest from the students. Over a period of time, lesson plans and students' work demonstrate that the range of methods used is varied and students are therefore able to develop different ways of working. Students' individual needs are very well catered for and they value the individual approach that teachers adopt. They are expected to work very hard, but the level of challenge is realistic and students are appropriately productive. Assessment is very well organised. Teachers make highly effective comments on students' written work so that each knows how well they are doing and how to improve their work

Leadership and management

190. The head of department leads and manages the department very well indeed. She acts as a role model for staff. She is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement for GNVQ and VCE students alike. She is reflective and self-critical. She designed the open plan learning area which impacts upon standards because it allows a more independent approach to learning as all resources, including computers, are readily to hand.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement *Sixth form grade* *School grade*

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	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
Students' achievement	4	4

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		4
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4

The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	4	4
How well students learn	4	4
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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