

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKE PARK COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103728

Headteacher: Mr. W. T. Wolger

Lead inspector: Bill Stoneham

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th September 2004

Inspection number: 268937

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

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Terms used in this report

Key Stage 3 refers to students in Years 7, 8 and 9 who have transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. **Key Stage 4** refers to students who are in Years 10 and 11. 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 in 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 the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. 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 awards in the General Certificate of Education (**GCE**) at Advanced level (**A-level**) or Advanced Subsidiary level (**AS-level**), or the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** students reach 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 have done as well as expected. Such 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.

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. The term **SENCO** refers to the special needs co-ordinator. An **LSA** is a learning support assistant and an **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education and **WRL** refers to Work-related learning. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. For sixth form students, comparisons to national averages are based on the academic year

2002/2003, the last year for which national comparative data is available. Any reference to examination results in 2004 is to identify trends only.

At the time of the inspection there were too few students with special educational needs in the sixth form to determine judgements about the quality of education they receive.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1112
School address:	Dane Road Coventry West Midlands CV2 4JW
Telephone number:	024 76450215
Fax number:	024 76636129
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. E. McCluskey
Date of previous inspection:	February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stoke Park Community Technology College is an average sized, mixed comprehensive school serving part of the city of Coventry. There are 1112 students on roll aged between 11 and 18, of whom 207 are in the sixth form, which too is of average size. The school has already been granted specialist technology college status. It works as part of an Excellence in Cities (EiC) cluster and prides itself on the strength of its community involvement. The school serves a considerable part of Coventry, but its main catchment areas comprise various parts of the city that are often associated with poorer quality, overcrowded housing. These areas also suffer from serious deprivation and the socio-economic context of the school is well below average. The school's intake is ethnically mixed and covers a wide range of ability, though this is concentrated at the lower end of the ability range. Over a quarter of the students do not speak English as a first language, which is high, and over 18 per cent are entitled to free school meals. This too is above the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs, including statements, at 25 per cent, is above average, as is the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The school regularly caters for a small number of refugees and asylum seeking children, but at the time of the inspection there were no children on roll from the travelling community. Approximately seven per cent of students join or leave the school other than at the usual times of the year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27407	Bill Stoneham	Lead inspector	Work-Related Learning
9189	John Horwood	Lay inspector	
20629	John Bryson	Team inspector	English English Post 16
4926	Thelma Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics Post 16
30825	Keith Hayton	Team inspector	Science
1759	Geoffrey Edwards	Team inspector	Design and Technology Design and Technology Post 16
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology Information and Communication Technology Post 16
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	History History Post 16
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography
30518	Michael Johnson	Team inspector	Art and Design
31673	John Gwyer - Roberts	Team inspector	Music
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical Education
31838	Martyn Williams	Team inspector	Religious Education
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Business Studies Business Studies Post 16 Sociology Post 16
32804	Mary Chippendale	Team inspector	Biology Post 16 Health and Social Care Post 16
1769	Michael Holohan	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good, including a good sixth form. Standards rise from well below average on entry to Year 7 to average by the end of Year 11. The students achieve so well because of the excellent curriculum and strong support, combined with good and sometimes very good teaching. Standards in the sixth form are average but students again achieve well. Good value for money is provided by both the main school and the sixth form.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good, with good support from other senior staff, and this is having a marked impact on raising standards.
- The school's commitment to inclusion is very strong. This also helps students who speak English as an additional language (EAL), students with special educational needs and those in the hearing impaired unit to achieve very well.
- Teaching that is consistently good, and often very good, leads to consistently good learning.
- The curriculum is excellent. It offers all students considerable opportunities for personal development and prepares them well for life after school.
- Leadership and management in most departments are good; in mathematics and science they are very good and in English they are excellent. This makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning.
- The quality of learning is enhanced through excellent community links, the very good procedures to encourage better attendance and the very effective use of learning support staff.
- Much assessment data is collected, but its use as a means of raising standards and supporting learning at a departmental level, including the sixth form, is inconsistent.
- In a very small minority of lessons learning is disrupted by the poor behaviour of some students, which is not consistently addressed by staff.
- The library does not provide a lively learning environment; more books are needed to promote learning in both the library and in some departments.
- The strengths of the school are many, but the governing body should review the quality of its annual report to parents and ensure that these are reported properly and celebrated.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Most of the key issues identified then have been addressed well and standards are now higher, in spite of a backdrop of difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled staff and providing for the diverse nature of the school's intake. The school has continued to improve its accommodation and learning resources, and has been successful in accessing various funding streams as well as gaining specialist technology college status, but still has difficulties in providing a daily act of collective worship because of a shortage of space.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Overall, achievement in the school is very good. Standards at the end of Year 11 are similar to those reported nationally. In relation to well below average standards on entry in Year 7, this represents very good achievement over time. Students with special educational needs and those with EAL also achieve very well. Standards fluctuate from year to year in the sixth form and in 2003 were well below average, but achievement was good. In Year 9, standards are average in English, but below average in both mathematics and science. In Years 7, 8 and 9 achievement is good in most subjects; it is very good in English, mathematics and geography and is satisfactory in French. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is satisfactory in art and design, geography and physical education. In all other subjects, students achieve well, but in mathematics and science they achieve especially well.

The students' personal qualities are good. Attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality are all good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are good in all years, including the sixth form. Throughout the school, learning is enhanced by the good relationships established with students and the extensive monitoring and evaluation of teaching undertaken by the school's managers. The continual efforts to improve accommodation and resources are also benefiting the quality of learning. The curriculum is excellent and reflects the school's overwhelming passion to include and involve all students irrespective of their background, attitudes and aptitudes. Students have very good opportunities to enrich their learning from a wide range of visits and other educational experiences. Community links are already excellent, support for learning outside the school day is similarly excellent and there is a desire to strengthen further these aspects of the school's work. Links with parents are very good, though a minority of reports do not contain everything they should. Students receive very good support and their views are taken seriously.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is **effectively led and managed**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. His often inspirational thinking has established a community where supportive and harmonious relationships flourish and where there is a strong focus on raising expectations and continuous improvement. The leadership and management offered by other key staff is good and they are skilled in encouraging colleagues to work effectively to raise students' attainment. The governors are most supportive and proud of the school. They effectively undertake their responsibilities, however, there are some minor statutory infringements; thus governance overall is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is very popular and over-subscribed, suggesting that parents are very happy. The response to the questionnaire was too low to identify what pleases parents most but, whilst individual parents had worries, there were no areas of general concern. Students enjoy being at the school; they are well taught and cared for. Though they have concerns over the behaviour of some students, the inspection confirmed that in most cases this is addressed well by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that examination and other data is used consistently by all departments, including in the sixth form, to challenge students and set them learning targets.

- Reduce further the incidences of poor behaviour from a minority of students.
- Upgrade the library accommodation to make it a livelier and interesting place to work and ensure that there are more books in the library and in some departments.
- The governors should review their annual report to parents to ensure that the many successes of the school are adequately reported and celebrated.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Ensure that all reporting requirements are met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT STOKE PARK COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards vary considerably from year to year, reflecting the nature of the intake, but during the inspection standards were average, with students achieving well. Teaching, learning, leadership and management are all good and though some teaching groups are small, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well because of good teaching, monitoring and guidance.
- The very good curriculum meets needs very well and offers the students excellent support and opportunities.
- Careers education and guidance are good but there are missed opportunities to use the programme to raise aspirations.
- There is no provision for a daily act of collective worship.

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	Very good in English. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and students' achievement is very good.
Mathematics	Satisfactory in mathematics. Good teaching is now leading to improvements in standards after a period of uncertain staffing.
Science	Good in biology. Students achieve well because of good quality teaching.
Information and communication technology	Very good in ICT. Very good teaching is having a clear impact on learning.
Humanities	Good in history. Very good subject knowledge and support from enthusiastic teachers lead to good achievement. Very good in sociology. The imaginative structure of the course is having a major impact on the quality of learning.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good in design and technology. Good teaching is leading to good learning and good achievement.
Business	Good in business. Students achieve well and they are keen to improve.
Health and social care	Very good in health and social care. Achievement is very good because of the very well planned and thoughtful teaching offered.

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;

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Advice, guidance and support are very good. Induction into the sixth form is good and once their courses have started students are given good advice about planning their futures. Assessment data is used to set targets and to monitor progress, but such procedures need to be more consistent and rigorous at departmental level. Students are offered good quality advice on their futures, but opportunities are missed to raise aspirations through a well-planned work placement programme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. A good learning environment has been established and students achieve well. The procedures for monitoring work are improving, relationships are supportive and there is a broad range of curricular opportunities. Students value the experiences that sixth form education offers.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and regard the teaching they receive as being demanding and helpful. Some are critical of the advice they receive about courses in the sixth form and in higher education, though the inspection team does not concur with these views. The students believe that the sixth form is run very well and is a harmonious community, and they appreciate the recent improvements in their facilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The overall achievement of students, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, is very good. Achievement in the sixth form is good. In general, students enter the school with well below average standards, with a significant number having particularly low literacy skills. By the end of Year 9 standards have risen to below average and by the end of Year 11 standards are broadly average, when compared to all schools nationally. The school's own analysis of value added shows that, overall, students gain far better results at GCSE than is predicted by their prior attainment. Standards in the sixth form vary considerably, but are now average. Students start their sixth form courses with below average prior attainment and, overall, gain better results by the end of Year 13 than predicted.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students achieve very well because of consistently good teaching and the whole range of support services offered.
- The alternative, work-based curriculum in Years 10 and 11 helps disaffected students to make significant progress.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve very well because of the quality of support they receive.
- The achievements of the students in the hearing impaired unit are very good.
- To improve achievement further, more consistent use should be made of assessment data by teaching departments.

Commentary

1. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 vary enormously between students and from year to year. However, standards are generally well below average and for the significant minority who have poorly developed literacy skills, standards are even lower. Through a powerful combination of approaches, including an excellent curriculum, consistently good and often very good teaching, strong school-based care and guidance and the highly effective support offered by a plethora of staff, not just classroom teachers, the school succeeds in raising standards to the national average by the end of Year 11. For these students this represents very good achievement; an outcome that is clearly evident from the extensive assessment data collected by the school.
2. The Year 9 national test results in 2003 were average in English, but well below average in science and mathematics. Overall, standards were below average when compared to all schools nationally. In comparison to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and science and well above average overall. This indicates that achievement was very good.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.4 (32.5)	33.4 (33.3)

mathematics	32.5 (34.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.2 (33.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 179 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were average when compared to all schools nationally, based on the attainment of five or more grades at A* to C, average total GCSE points per student and average points scored on their best eight subjects. When compared to similar schools based on prior attainment, results decline to either below or well below average. However, these statistics ignore the fact that at least 12 per cent of the year group do not sit a full range of GCSE examinations. As part of its agenda to be inclusive and cater for all needs, the school offers these students, some of whom have very challenging personal and social difficulties, an alternative work-based curriculum, whereby they can develop personal and employment skills, but this is done at the cost of sitting some GCSE examinations. This alternative curriculum is very successful and most students placed on the programme achieve highly, but their successes are not reflected in the school's examination results. The school's own value-added data indicates that the pace of improvement for a number of students slows in Years 10 and 11 because their restricted literacy skills impede their ability to access fully the demands of GCSE courses. Put simply, some students do less well at GCSE because they do not fully understand the examination questions they are set. Nevertheless, the school's extensive assessment data also shows that over the five-year period from Year 7 to Year 11, most students reach standards that are far higher than those predicted at the start of their secondary education. In short, they achieve very well.

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	51 (46)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (81)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.3 (30.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 182 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In the 2003 GCSE results the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades, or the equivalent, was at least average, and often better, in all subjects apart from geography and physical education. In terms of average points scored, standards were well above average in English literature and statistics; above average in design and technology, French, history and sociology; average in art and design, science, English, geography, mathematics and drama; and well below average in physical education. The overall picture is one of success and the main contributory factors are the quality of teaching, the extensive support and encouragement offered by the school to its students and the willingness of many students to improve their standards.
- Inspection evidence based on lesson observations and analysis of students' work indicates that standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average in ICT, music and physical education. They are average in all other subjects except French, mathematics, science and history, where they are below average. All students, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are achieving well, but in English, mathematics and geography, they are achieving very well. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in most subjects, but are above average in citizenship, design and technology and ICT and are very high in English literature, where a small group of particularly able students are doing extremely well.

In most subjects students achieve well, but in art and design, French, geography and physical education, achievement is satisfactory. In English literature, the achievement of the small group of students is very good. The overall levels of achievement are very good because of a variety of factors including the highly effective curriculum, the tremendous commitment of all staff to the students and the school's very good use of assessment data to set targets and monitor performance against such targets. However, one remaining challenge is to ensure that at a departmental level assessment data is used with consistency to monitor students' progress and to set challenges.

6. The achievements of students with special educational needs are very good overall and particularly strong in English and literacy. Their achievements against their individual targets are also very good. The very effective links between the specialist educational needs staff and the subject departments are the basis for the students' successful achievements. The small group support provided in literacy is a significant factor in students' success. The department is particularly successful in ensuring that students develop the skills necessary to be included in all the school's activities. Students in the hearing impaired unit (HIU) achieve very well in all aspects of the curriculum, as a consequence of skilled, specialist teaching. From analysing and comparing poetry to undertaking scientific experiments, students' learning is in line with that of other students.

Sixth form

7. Standards reached in A-level and equivalent level examinations in 2003 were well below average and were well below the standards reported in 2002. Girls fared better than boys in 2003; their results were below average overall compared to the boys' results, which were well below average. Unvalidated results for 2004 suggest a marked improvement in standards. These fluctuations in performance reflect the school's open access policy. Though course retention rates are high, the number of students finishing their advanced level studies each year is reasonably small and many groups contain small numbers. Thus, in percentage terms, a small change in attainment can have a significant impact on the school's overall results. Thus, with some justification, the school can claim that the 2003 year group was weaker than in most other recent years and this is reflected in the overall results. However, in terms of prior attainment, many of the students gained results that were better than expected, so their levels of achievement were good.
8. For those subjects where sufficient candidates were entered to allow national comparisons, standards in 2003 were well above average in art and design and ICT, average in biology and in the AVCE courses in business and health and social care, and below average in sociology and other social sciences. In English literature and design and technology standards were well below average and they were very low in history, where results were in the bottom five per cent nationally.

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	96.0 (93.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	21.6 (35.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	175.5 (226.5)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 67 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

9. Sixth form work seen during the inspection, based on the nine subjects that were inspected in depth, indicated that standards are broadly average. Some improvements in standards are being made because of more rigorous monitoring systems. Standards were well above average in ICT

and above average in biology. In English literature, design and technology, sociology, business studies, history and health and social care, standards are average, and they are below average in mathematics, where it is taking time to overcome a legacy of staffing problems. Students' attainment on entry is below average, but because of good quality teaching students achieve well overall. On some courses, such as English, sociology and ICT, their achievement is very good because of the high quality of teaching offered. No significant differences in achievement between female and male students were discernible.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are good. Behaviour is generally good throughout the school. Students' attitudes to learning and relationships with each other and with adults are good. The number of fixed term exclusions is low for this type of school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. This enables students to serve the school and wider community in a responsible and caring manner.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very good procedures to improve attendance and receives very good support from external agencies, resulting in a steady improvement in attendance figures.
- Students are very willing to join in activities available to them and to take on responsibilities.
- The school's high expectations of behaviour and relationships result in a harmonious community where bullying, which is dealt with well, is rare.
- A small number of students present challenging behaviour in some classes.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is very good.
- There is very good provision for students' social development, and good provision for their moral and cultural development.

Commentary

10. Students are supportive of the school and are keen to attend. Attendance is below the national average but has risen steadily over the past two years as a result of very good procedures introduced by the school. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is efficiently carried out, and absences are followed up with the help of a highly effective education welfare officer based in the school. Where a student has poor attendance the school will work with the student and the family to encourage improvement. The school has recently appointed an attendance clerk who is to ensure that parents of any student who does not arrive at school are contacted as soon as possible on that morning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.0	School data	0.4
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.

11. Most students behave well and often very well in lessons and throughout the school, but a small minority present inappropriate behaviour in a few lessons; such instances occasionally impinge on the quality of learning. There are very good rewards and sanctions procedures in place to promote improved behaviour. Exclusion is only used when it is clearly the appropriate sanction. Students identified that there is some bullying and bad behaviour in the school but that it is infrequent and dealt with well by the school.

*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	705	30	0
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	27	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	19	3	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	19	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	257	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	31	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	0	0
Black or Black British – African	9	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	2	0

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

12. In lessons students have good attitudes to learning which, supported by the good relationships between adults and students, results in a good learning environment where they participate fully and achieve well. Students enjoy being at the school and take an active part in the opportunities available to them. As well as helping in the classroom there are whole school responsibilities such as being a member of the school council. Students with special educational needs are self-confident and play a full part in lessons and the life of the school. Very good relationships with the special educational needs staff mean that students feel valued and safe.
13. The HIU is strongly and successfully committed to ensuring that their students are fully included in the life of the school. This commitment is shared by the senior management, staff and students throughout the school. Consequently, students participate in activities as diverse as the Leavers' Ball, school discos and work experience. The positive atmosphere of the school is further reflected in the friendships between HIU and hearing students and the willingness of the latter to learn sign language to aid communication.
14. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development presents a similar picture to the findings of the last inspection. Most relationships around school are based on mutual respect and consideration for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. This stems from the high expectations of all staff, which promote a strong sense of community and an ethos that is inclusive and caring. In consequence students are in general polite, courteous and work together responsibly and constructively, both within school and when taking responsibilities in a broader sphere such as working with primary school pupils or supporting charities. Most

students know right from wrong, observe the school's code of conduct and respect authority. Moral and ethical issues form a strong element in subjects such as English and religious education and the school's PSHE and citizenship programmes, including WRL, prepare students well for life in a diverse, multi-cultural society. Cultural development is promoted strongly through art and design and includes visits to galleries in Britain and abroad. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory because they are inherent in religious education and are seized where they arise in English. They are rarely planned elsewhere and are consequently often absent. Assemblies take place daily for different year groups but the school does not fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all its students.

Sixth form

15. Students in the sixth form have a more flexible registration system but monitoring and encouragement are good. Both attendance and punctuality are good. Students' attitudes to learning are good and often very good. Behaviour in the sixth form is consistently very good. As well as the school council, there is a sixth form council where students can play an active part in the organisation of the sixth form.
16. The school's high standards for conduct and approach to work are well maintained in the sixth form and provision for students' social development remains very good. There is adequate provision made for students to meet the Coventry Agreed Syllabus requirements for religious education, an improvement since the last inspection, but outside this, provision for spiritual development is unplanned and often absent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a very good quality of education. Though teaching is good overall, including in the sixth form, the curriculum is excellent; it meets the needs of a most diverse student population very well. It is inclusive and opportunities for enrichment are very good. Both accommodation and resources are improving. Students receive very good care, guidance and support. Work with parents is very good, as is work with other schools. The school's work with the wider community is excellent.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Assessment procedures are good overall, but a more consistent use of assessment data to improve further levels of attainment is needed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning benefits from the good and often very good teaching provided.
- Very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has led to continuous improvement.
- Students with special educational needs benefit greatly from the quality of teaching they receive.
- In some lessons seen, especially in Years 9 and 10, the quality of learning suffered because a minority of youngsters behaved in a manner that impeded the learning of the majority.
- At a whole school level assessment data is used well as a device to raise standards through target setting, but at a departmental level this information is used inconsistently and this can impair the progress students make.

Commentary

17. Much of the teaching and learning seen was either good or very good and seven lessons were graded as excellent. The quality of teaching was stronger in the sixth form, where most teaching was good or better, but very good teaching was spread across all year groups and subjects. Only a small minority of lessons failed to offer teaching and learning of a suitable quality. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was an improvement since the last inspection when standards were also graded as good. The findings of the inspection team mirror the views of parents and students, all of whom had commented favourably on teaching. The quality seen reflects the work that the school puts into monitoring and evaluating its own performance, plus the care that is taken in recruiting staff. The quality of learning also frequently benefited from the work of classroom support assistants. Their contribution was especially significant in helping students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language to learn. Though standards are at least good and improving, one challenge that still faces the school is to make more lessons excellent. Overall five per cent of lessons were graded as excellent, but there was no excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11 and many of the excellent lessons seen were taught by the English department.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 156 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (4%)	36 (23%)	81 (53%)	27 (17%)	5 (3%)	0	0

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

18. Many strengths of teaching can be identified, not least that in most lessons seen teaching was delivered by subject specialists and this made a significant contribution to the learning of all students. This reflects well on the school as in the recent past it has not always been easy for the school to recruit and retain staff of the desired calibre. Learning also benefited because lessons were usually well planned, they were challenging, the pace was pitched correctly and the students were given appropriate opportunities to enhance their learning by working independently or collaboratively. These strengths were seen in all years, including the sixth form.
19. The school's intake is very mixed and some youngsters are challenging to teach. Though the school has very good systems to support staff who may be faced with some youngsters who are not keen to learn, these systems are not always used with consistency by staff and in some lessons seen, especially in Years 9 and 10, the quality of learning suffered because a minority of youngsters behaved in a manner that impeded the learning of the majority. This was a major factor leading to a few lessons being graded lower than good - either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. On some other occasions the quality of learning suffered because staff did not challenge the students sufficiently and there were too few opportunities for the youngsters to take a lead in their work; their teacher tended to dominate.
20. In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning were good in all subjects inspected, with the exception of physical education, where they were satisfactory, and English, where they were very good. Such a consistent level of good teaching is reflected in the students' good learning and in their overall achievement, which, over their five years in the school, is very good. This high level of consistency also reflects well on the time and energy that is devoted to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and sharing good practice.
21. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall and often very good. Highly effective teaching assistants enable subject teachers to ensure that students' needs are effectively met and that they are fully involved in lessons. Students learn very well and work hard in lessons, contributing to both discussion and written work. The support staff are used very well by teachers and their contribution is valued. However, in a small minority of lessons,

where less support is available, the teachers' task is made more difficult by the number of special needs students in the group. Teaching within the special educational needs department and with the withdrawal groups is very good. This is a consequence of careful assessment which matches the students' needs to the teaching and the effective use of computers to support learning. The quality of the teaching of students from the HIU is very good. The strong relationships that exist between students and HIU staff give students the confidence to undertake new tasks. The quality of the teaching is such that students have full access to the curriculum. The signing skills of the support staff are exemplary, as is their commitment to developing subject knowledge in the full range of curriculum subjects.

22. Assessment arrangements are good. The school has a wealth of data on students' attainment. Primary school teacher assessments and Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores form the baseline for a profile of each student on entry to the school. Each year a National Curriculum level in each subject extends the profile. Data is recorded using the School Information System Assessment Manager programme and is thoroughly analysed to establish targets for each student. This is now a strength of the school's assessment procedures and an improvement since the last inspection.
23. The quality of marking and assessment in subjects is good overall but varies within departments. Most teachers mark work regularly but some fail to indicate clearly enough what students have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Assessment is not always an integral part of the learning process, and targets related to levels which are shared with all students would further improve learning.
24. Assessment information is generally used well to monitor achievement. Good practice is seen in particular in English, mathematics and science. In many subject areas assessment is an integral component of departments' schemes of work. Up-to-date grade levels are well displayed in the classrooms, informing students of their progress and providing motivation. It is often better in Years 10 and 11, where examination criteria are known to students and they themselves know how to improve their grades. All departments have access to the school's system for tracking progress and most make good use of it to set targets that are challenging for students. It is also used well by senior management to track the progress of different groups of students, such as those with special educational needs, those from different ethnic backgrounds, those who are gifted and talented, and boys and girls, and to set them challenging targets. At present there is no assessment procedure in place for students in Years 10 and 11 taking ICT as a non-examination subject.
25. The school produces good annual reports for students, so parents and students understand the areas for improvement. However, improvement in consistency of assessment procedures throughout the school would give parents a greater depth of understanding in all subject areas.
26. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in the development of the school's academic monitoring procedures across all years and its understanding and use of value added data.

Sixth form

27. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the nine subjects on which the inspection focused, teaching and learning were very good in English, health and social care, ICT and sociology, where a very creative, dynamic and individualised approach to teaching and learning has been adopted. In all other subjects observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Such a positive outcome again reflects well on the school's monitoring strategy.

Students are also benefiting from a recent reduction in staff turnover and because the school has successfully recruited a number of quality staff. This new era of stability is already bringing success and this was well illustrated in mathematics, for example.

28. Sixth formers benefit from the commitment, enthusiasm and subject knowledge of their teachers. In many classes, and especially in Year 13 where staff and students have worked together for longer, learning benefits from the strong mutual respect that has developed. Students attend lessons expecting to be challenged and they respond most positively to the teaching strategies employed. Occasionally, however, when the standard slipped a little, it was either because the lessons became too teacher-centred, or the level of challenge was not sufficiently taxing. Such lessons were in the minority and were usually taught by staff with the least experience of post-16 teaching.
29. The students are appreciative of the work of their staff and acknowledge that many staff spend much extra time and energy helping sixth formers, especially, though not exclusively, when examinations are pending. The efforts made by the staff are a major factor contributing to the good achievements of advanced level students.
30. The head of sixth form co-ordinates a good pastoral system that includes improving arrangements for assessment through which students' academic progress is regularly assessed and reported. The use of assessment to promote students' learning is good. The school guides students in their choice of courses so that there is a good match between courses and students' aspirations and potential. Students are given a minimum target grade to help them achieve well and know what is expected of them. Students' progress is checked and monitored regularly. Teachers' assessments in many subject areas are effective, both in relation to marking of essays or assignments and to feedback given to students in lessons. In ICT, art and design and English, very good advice is given on targets through ongoing assessments. Students enjoy courses and feel well supported with guidance and advice for further education and employment. The majority of teachers are good at diagnosing individual learning needs and provide for them well. Reports give good information about students' progress.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is excellent throughout Years 7 to 11. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of the students very well. The curriculum offered in the sixth form is very good. The opportunities for activities beyond lessons are very good. The school maintains long hours and students can access learning opportunities before and after school, on Saturdays and during their holidays. Learning is further enhanced by the school's investment in e-learning. The school has satisfactory accommodation overall and it has improved for sixth formers following the recent opening of new facilities. Resources for learning are good, as is staffing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 11 is inclusive, flexible and successfully designed to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Support for learning outside the school day is excellent and students' learning further benefits from the school's very strong community work.
- Support staff play an integral role in ensuring the success of the school.
- Though accommodation and resources are continually improving, the library is an inadequate learning area.
- A daily act of collective worship is not provided because of a shortage of space.

Commentary

31. Curricular provision for students in Years 7 to 11 is excellent because of the range of courses and quality of support offered. Students' academic needs are well met and nourished by the open access policy to clubs and extra-curricular enrichment sessions. This is evident in many subjects. In Years 10 and 11 students are able to choose from a broad range of courses and the curriculum has been modified to ensure that the needs for all are catered for. Strong provision is made for students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Equally the needs of gifted and talented students and those who may be disaffected with education are not ignored. The school is strongly committed to the principle of inclusion and promoting a learning culture in all students. To meet this aim the school has used the flexibility of the curriculum in a number of creative and innovative ways to cater for a wide range of individual needs.
32. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Prior to September 2004 students in Year 9 with special educational needs did not study a foreign language. French is now taught to the whole range of abilities. Some students who have been identified as gifted and talented are entered for the GCSE in design and technology at the end of Year 9. There is also the opportunity for these students to study Spanish as a second language. To enable this there is some teaching in twilight classes and additionally students study independently on-line. For students wishing to study Panjabi there are after-school classes leading to GCSE entry at the end of Year 9.
33. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 uses the permitted flexibility to offer a wide range of courses. In addition to GCSE courses there are vocational courses on offer and in Year 11 there are key skills courses in numeracy and ICT. For gifted and talented students in Year 10 there is some early entry for the GCSE and in Year 11 some students begin advanced level courses. The college's commitment to inclusion is seen in the alternative provision made for students who are disaffected or at risk of exclusion, regardless of the impact on published examination statistics. As a result the number of students leaving school with some certification is in line with national levels.
34. The impact of the school's status as a technology college is seen in the extensive use of ICT across the whole curriculum. This is having a positive impact on standards. On-line learning and video-conferencing complement those subjects where direct teaching time is limited.
35. The planning for personal, social and health education is very good. To support the teaching by tutors in Years 7, 8 and 9 the programmes include opportunities for numeracy and literacy, appropriate work for students with special educational needs, assessment and targets. The use of outside speakers and whole 'off-timetable' days enriches the programme. A strength of the subject is the level of monitoring and support from the subject coordinator. The programme for careers education and guidance benefits from the on-site availability of a careers advisor from the Connexions service. The new statutory requirement for careers education and guidance to be given to all years are being put in place.
36. In addition to the extra examination groups that take place outside the normal timetable the school offers a wide range of additional learning opportunities. Many of these are whole day activities which enrich the curriculum. A major strength of this provision is the opportunities available to support students with special educational needs. Every day before school, at lunchtimes and, again, after school, there are designated rooms where staff offer homework help, paired reading and any individual help required. This level of support, together with the number of teaching assistants to offer support in lessons, fosters confidence and contributes to

these students' good achievement. In the summer before new Year 7 students transfer from their primary school they attend a week's summer school to help improve their basic skills. There is also a summer school for gifted and talented students from Year 7 and students joining the school in September. One day of this spent at a local university introduces them to the idea of higher education. Among the range of other clubs and activities there is a 'Bright Sparks' club through which, as a technology college, the school compensates for some of the gaps in specialist technology teaching from primary school.

37. The provision for students for whom English is an additional language is excellent. A comprehensive assessment of their needs and targets is passed to subject teachers. Most of these students benefit from being taught in their normal classes. This is supported by adapted worksheets across a range of subjects and topics. A current development is to offer visual support to understanding through the use of ICT presentations. The extent of the liaison to support subject areas is exemplary.
38. The school ensures that all students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Considerable resources are allocated to ensuring that students invariably have the necessary support. The special educational needs department benefits from committed and well-trained teaching and support staff. Specialist withdrawal groups in Year 7 give students new to the school intensive and effective teaching which enables them to make very good progress in their literacy skills. Similarly, withdrawal work and an amended curriculum for a small group of potentially disaffected Year 10 students are successful in ensuring their commitment to learning. The department is very well resourced, especially with computers. A significant feature is the department's own books which they have produced to support curriculum subjects such as English and religious education. These are of very high quality and play a significant role in the students' success.
39. The school provides religious education for all students in Years 7 to 11 and meets the needs of students of different ability well, but the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not being met because of a shortage of space.
40. Overall, resources for learning are good. Students, staff and the community all benefit from the school as a technology college. This status brings many benefits to most departments. ICT is very good and supports students' learning well. There is good access to and good use made of the interactive whiteboards, which enhances students' learning. Science, geography, history and health and social care all have insufficient textbooks to support individual students. A major deficiency is the absence of a well-stocked library. This limits opportunities students have for independent work.
41. Accommodation is adequate overall to meet the demands of the curriculum but has some weaknesses that affect learning. This is particularly true in science where laboratories are inadequate in condition and facilities. The last inspection reported recent refurbishment of three laboratories, but these are now insufficient in number and quality. Post-16 twilight sessions help to alleviate the situation. In mathematics insufficient rooms results in teachers having to carry books and resources to various areas of the school site and teaching time is reduced in one area to allow preparation for use as a dining area. The school makes the best use of its accommodation and has decorated a number of classrooms and corridors, but some less stimulating areas remain. Opportunities to display quality work from students in health and social care, for example, are restricted. Accommodation for religious education, business, sociology, history and art and design is good; it is very good for ICT and reflects the school development strategy for this area. In English, geography and design and technology it is

satisfactory. The open aspect in design and technology has created more flexibility but students' concentration is adversely affected when adjacent classes are participating in discussions.

42. Display areas in classrooms and around the school are fresh and attractive and often celebrate students' achievements. The library is bright and airy but does not provide a lively learning environment. The school site is compact and well maintained to ensure that it is a safe environment for students. A programme of decoration and the deployment of in-house craftsmen are contributing well to an improved working environment. This team also work hard to ensure that problems with litter are minimised and that the site is clean and the premises welcoming. Their work contributes significantly to the success of the school. The lack of a dedicated performance area for drama, as reported in the last inspection, has been addressed following the transfer of the sixth form to new, but temporary accommodation.
43. Overall, the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. The school has a good range of both experienced and less experienced staff. A strength of the school's staffing is the way that it uses support staff to help classroom teachers. This provision is very good.

Sixth form

44. The sixth form curriculum is very good. The principle of inclusion is extended to the sixth form, where there is a policy of open access. In addition to the traditional range of advanced level subjects, there are also vocational courses and the chance for students who have not succeeded before to gain GCSE qualifications in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. The open access sixth form enables students who had previously shown immature or negative attitudes to their education to compensate. To accommodate some individual needs the sixth form has links with other schools. The sixth form curriculum is flexible both within and beyond the school day.
45. Resources for the sixth form are similar to those of the main school and overall they are good. Students benefit from very good ICT facilities. However, the small library restricts opportunities offered to students for independent research work, which is not a good preparation for higher education.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its students throughout the school. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is very good. Systems to involve students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A high priority is given to health and safety to ensure the well-being of students.
- A multi-agency approach to student care ensures the provision of very good support.
- The caring pastoral staff provide very good care and welfare for the students.
- Students settle quickly into school as a result of very good induction processes.
- Systems of formal consultation with students in the main school are not fully developed.
- Careers education and guidance in the sixth form are good but there are missed opportunities to use the programme to raise aspirations.

Commentary

46. The school has very good procedures in place for child protection and ensures that all staff are aware of requirements. The child protection officer is experienced and named in procedures. The school works well with external agencies and has systems in place to support the small number of children who are in the care of the local authority. The priority given to students' health and safety is demonstrated by the recent appointment of an attendance clerk to contact parents when a student does not arrive at school, without notification, to confirm the student's safety. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and gives good attention to risk assessments.
47. Welfare provision in the school is very good and there is adequate supervision at all times. There is a well-equipped medical room, which is 'staffed' during all break times and at most other times during the day. There are a significant number of trained first aid providers. The school works very closely with all external agencies so that the pastoral staff can direct appropriate support and guidance when it is needed by a student.
48. There is a well-structured pastoral system, where tutors are the key people but with very good co-ordination by the heads of year. Tutors build up close relationships with the students and generally stay with them throughout the school. They have contact with them twice a day for registrations, and in the lower school a weekly tutor period where they deliver aspects of the PHSE curriculum. The series of interim reports produced for each student, as well as data available directly on the assessment system, ensures tutors are well informed about progress and can give appropriate support and advice. Special initiatives, for example 'ACTIVATE', which focuses on students who need extra help and encouragement, are well integrated into the school care systems. Special needs students have clear and well-drafted targets which, together with appropriate strategies, are made available to all staff. A review of the targets shows that their quality has improved significantly during the last two years.
49. Students join the school from a large number of primary schools and there are very good links to ensure smooth transition from the main feeder schools. The induction processes are very good and students in Year 7 who were interviewed during the inspection, which took place in the second week of term, were very happy with the welcome and the help they had received.
50. As well as informal feedback to the staff the students can express their views about school issues through the school council. Whilst this is a good facility, and encourages students to discuss matters of interest, they do not consider that it is very effective in bringing about changes. Formal consultation with students is at present an area that is not fully developed to the extent that students feel that their views are valued and acted on.

Sixth form

51. The care and welfare systems available to the sixth form are common to the main school. Opportunities for guidance are greater as all students spend one hour a week with their tutors. The induction process starts early, with all students in Year 11 having an individual interview with the head of sixth form about their choices and about the sixth form. The high quality of care is also demonstrated by the staff being available to students in school, after the examination results are known, to help with finding suitable placements. Opportunities for involving students through seeking their views are very good and surveys and questionnaires are well used. Good careers advice and guidance are available but there is no provision for a quality work placement programme that might help to raise the students' aspirations further.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents and other educational establishments. Links with the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are numerous opportunities for the community to benefit from the school's provision of educational and social facilities.
- Students benefit from excellent links that the school has built up with the community.
- Parents receive good information about the school.
- The very good links with other schools benefit students with course options and with transition from primary to secondary education.
- Systems to seek parents' views and to act on these are not established.

Commentary

52. There was a poor response to the Ofsted questionnaire and a very low attendance at the pre-inspection parents' meeting. The sample was too low to identify any significant concerns though all the individual views made by parents were considered and contribute to the content of the report. The general view of the responses was that parents are very satisfied with the school, and this is supported by the fact that the school is over-subscribed and has been so for many years.
53. The information provided for parents about their child's progress comprises two interim reports and an end-of-year report supported by at least one parents' evening. The information is well presented and addresses both academic and personal development issues. The series of reports enable both parents and tutors to identify quickly any areas of concern for discussion at the meetings. Whilst the format is very good, the quality of information about what has been studied and the helpfulness of targets varies between subjects; the progress in ICT is not reported for all students in the upper school.
54. There are very good links with local primary schools, which allow the identification and support of students with special educational needs as early as Year 5 in the primary school. There are well-established links with other services such as the Behaviour Support Service and the educational psychologist.
55. The information received by parents about the school is very good overall. The prospectus is well presented and comprehensive but the governors' annual report does not contain all the required information. Newsletters to the community and to parents are of very high quality, being well presented and informative. The school has a very good web site and makes increasingly good use of internet facilities to communicate with parents and to support students' education at home. The school uses a planner to allow parents to monitor work and to communicate with the school – these are checked regularly and consistently by the tutors. Owing to a lack of demand by parents there is no PTA, though a significant number of parents participate in activities provided by the school for the community. The education welfare officer, who is based in the school, has very good links with many families and is a point of contact for many parents. The school has a rapidly growing SHARE group which helps parents understand how to support their child at home.
56. The school has technology college status and has built up very good partnerships with other schools to their mutual benefit. This includes working closely with the local primary schools to raise standards as well as to help with a smooth transition to secondary school. There is an

extensive range of both study and social opportunities provided at Stoke Park for students in Years 5 and 6 at the primary schools.

57. The contribution the school makes to the community is excellent. The high quality regular newsletters identify the many adult education facilities available within the school and many residents visit the school on a regular basis for social events. There are many links with business which benefit the students by providing work experience opportunities as well as providing sponsorship for the school. There are close working relationships with local organisations, which provide services to the school. Students benefit from a range of visitors into school as well as from trips into the community. The school is held in high esteem by the community and all who work with it.

Sixth form

58. Students benefit from very good links with other educational establishments and the community, which supports curriculum opportunities for them. The format of the reviews and reporting of progress to parents is excellent and students enjoy good quality consultation opportunities with their tutors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good and the leadership offered by the headteacher is very good. The governance of the school is satisfactory and the leadership of other key staff is good. Most statutory requirements are met but daily collective worship is not provided, reports to parents about their children do not contain all the subjects they should and the governors' annual report to parents does not meet requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured a clear direction for school improvement.
- There is a very strong commitment from senior managers to inclusion and support for every individual.
- Most areas of learning are well led and managed, including the sixth form.
- A very good performance review system has contributed to the improvements in the standard of teaching.
- The school manages its resources well and provides good value for money.
- The governing body is supportive, and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

59. The headteacher is a very good role model. He and his leadership team and the governors share a commitment to the strong inclusive ethos of the school. It is supportive and caring. The headteacher's leadership has ensured determined strategic development, for example of the school's systems for assessing and monitoring the progress of each individual student. Managers ensure that considerable resources are successfully devoted to supporting vulnerable and disaffected students.
60. The primary strategic aim is to extend the possibilities of this technology status school to make available flexible learning and so enhance opportunities for all. Currently the school most successfully supports a wide range of needs that includes adults wishing to take advantage of the e-facilities and out-of-hours learning. Significant indicators of the effectiveness of the stewardship of the headteacher and his team include very good academic achievement, sustained popularity as a school of first choice for parents, increased numbers entering the sixth form, excellent partnerships with the community, and very good partnership arrangements with local schools and colleges.
61. Overall, the effectiveness of management in the main school and sixth form is good. The school has displayed a strong commitment to appointing high calibre staff. Managers are committed to enabling the school to achieve its vision and strategic aims and objectives. This has resulted, for example, in most departments taking fully on board the analysis of performance, self-review, and setting of targets, all of which have contributed to raising achievement.
62. The HIU is very effectively managed. The co-ordinator has successfully established a unit which fully meets the needs of the students. Her success is reflected in the students' achievements and the credibility she has established with teaching staff, who value her contribution. The provision for students with special educational needs as a whole is also very well managed. This is particularly noteworthy as the department has been managed for a lengthy period by a temporary manager owing to the absence of the co-ordinator. Imaginative and dynamic leadership has ensured that a complex provision which caters for a large proportion of the school's population is highly successful. However, to ensure this continued success decisions must be made about the future long-term management of the department. Currently, the governing body have failed to fulfil the statutory requirement to report on the provision of special needs in their annual report to parents.
63. Financial management is very strong. The school has recently appointed a most competent bursar who is rapidly gaining a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the school's various sources of finance. The school is able to access finances from a plethora of sources, some of which are designed to help the school address social and economic deprivation. Extra funding is also provided via competitive bids, such as the school's designation as a specialist technology college. The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, is excellent. The allocation of resources, including funding, is very well managed, monitored and evaluated. The school stringently applies the principles of best value and ensures that the governing body is appropriately briefed. Underpinning all decisions is a strong desire that any decision made should be linked to educational priorities and have a quantifiable effect on standards. The relationship between spending decisions and the desire for the school to be inclusive is very strong. The governing body strive to maintain a small surplus. At the time of the inspection the surplus was larger than normal because various building works were still in progress and payment had yet to be made.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,796,382	Balance from previous year	126,656
Total expenditure	3,622,888	Balance carried forward to the next	300,150
Expenditure per student	3,232		

64. The governing body, which strongly represents and reflects local opinion, is highly supportive of the work of the school. Governors see themselves as providing the role of ‘a critical friend’. They do this adequately and have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. They monitor the work of the school and are successful in seeking explanations from senior staff about the school’s performance. However, instead of developing their role by challenging and questioning, they tend to leave strategic planning to the headteacher and the senior management team, accepting, quite correctly, that they have a very effective team that is succeeding in moving the school forward.
65. Though governance overall is satisfactory, there are some areas where governors are not completely fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. There is still no daily act of collective worship. Governors acknowledge this and have looked at alternatives but the size of the school and the lack of a suitably large hall present significant logistical problems. Governors also need to review the reporting to parents of progress of all ICT students in Years 10 and 11 and they also need to clarify with the local education authority the correct procedures for reporting to parents the impact of the school’s race equality policy. There are also some small omissions from the governors’ annual report to parents and, in this publication, governors do not seize the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the many successes enjoyed by the school.
66. Managers at all levels are very committed to the objectives of the school. The line management system is effective, and is particularly so in performance management where each individual teacher is seen as central to the process. As a result, senior management have a very good grasp of the strengths and key areas for development. Support staff have well-established procedures for performance management. There are strong links between school development planning, review and staff development and the school has concentrated on developing a learning culture together with an emphasis on teaching and learning for some time. The school has succeeded in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection and this is, in part, a reflection of the very good monitoring and evaluation process that have been established. In addition, there are extensive links with teacher training institutions which include the Open University and Warwick, Wolverhampton and de Montford universities and there is a core of well-established and experienced staff in the school who are very well supported by clerical and technical support.

Sixth form

67. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Enrolment and induction systems are effective and reflect the school’s inclusion ethos. The head of sixth form leads and manages well and her work is having a positive impact on the motivation and attainment of students. There is also a clear vision of how the sixth form should develop. The procedures for monitoring the progress of students are improving and the governors have a satisfactory understanding of the work undertaken. The sixth form is growing and the students enjoy and

value the experiences offered. They appreciate the personal support provided by their staff. Overall, the sixth form offers good cost effectiveness.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

The effectiveness of the school's provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education and guidance is well taught and effective, especially in Years 7 to 11.
- Most students in Years 10 and 11 who follow an alternative curriculum make very good progress; the WRL offered is a significant factor in their levels of achievement.
- A very good work experience programme exists in Year 11.
- Though the provision for WRL has been audited, there are very few examples of where high quality curriculum partnerships, which extend and enliven learning, have been formed.
- The post-16 work placement programme should be reviewed to ensure all advanced level students are offered quality placements that will help to raise their long-term aspirations.

Commentary

68. The school's programme for careers education and guidance, including WRL, has been carefully planned in accordance with national guidance and meets statutory requirements. The programme starts in Year 7, and in all years relevant work is covered. Though no teaching of WRL learning was seen during the inspection, the school was able to offer supporting information that showed the quality of the programme, especially in Years 7 to 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students undertake a number of relevant exercises; some are designed to develop essential personal skills that will, in time, be valuable employment-related skills. Another facet of the programme is the emphasis that is placed on developing enterprise skills in a social context. This emphasis is also contributing to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In Years 10 and 11, students benefit from a very well planned and delivered work experience programme. Preparation for life after Year 11 is good, with students being suitably informed of post-16 education opportunities, both at school and in further education, as well as being given information about employment opportunities.
69. A very good feature of the work undertaken in Years 10 and 11 is the contribution that the school's alternative curriculum makes in helping a group of disaffected youngsters. Not all students enter the full range of GCSE examinations and, each year, a group of youngsters will follow a different programme of study designed primarily to develop their basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as helping them to develop their personal skills. WRL forms a key component of this programme. Most students make very good progress and they successfully develop key employment skills by learning both through, and about, the world of work.
70. The school's work has been audited and the overall programme is regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. The school makes good use of its excellent community contacts to support its careers education and guidance programme and, through its specialist college status, has established links with a local university's engineering department. However, it is rare for departments to work, via the curriculum, to develop partnerships with local firms and businesses that serve to enliven the quality of teaching and learning by setting the students business-related problems to solve for themselves. Another area for development exists in the sixth form. Though the advice offered to sixth formers about further and higher education and the world of work is at least good, there is no established programme for work placements. For a school serving a socially disadvantaged area and where many of its post-16 students will be

first generation university undergraduates, thought needs to be given to how high quality work-related experiences can be used to raise expectations and aspirations.

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 **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The department leads many developments in ICT, which are developing good study skills.
- The performance of boys is weaker than that of girls.

Commentary

71. In 2003, National Curriculum test results for students at the end of Year 9 were average. When compared to their standards on entry in Year 7, these results represent very good achievement. The performance of girls has been consistently better than that of boys, though between 2001 and 2003 the performance of boys improved steadily. In order to improve the performance of boys more rapidly, the department has introduced a range of strategies such as more step-by-step teaching. The unvalidated results for 2004 suggest a fall in standards, but 30 papers have been returned for remarking.
72. In 2003 five out of ten students attained A*-C grades in GCSE English language examinations. In English literature, all students achieved these grades. English language results were average and in English literature they were well above average, representing very good achievement. In 2004, school results show that the performance of students improved.
73. Students join the school in Year 7 with low levels of literacy. By the end of Year 9 the standard of their work meets national expectations. This represents very good achievement. By the end of Year 11, students' work also meets national expectations and their achievement is good. By Year 9 students are fluent speakers and good listeners. They can communicate ideas, give opinions, respond to listeners and speak formally. Most students read accurately and independently. More able students can understand layers of meaning in texts and give personal responses. The writing of more able and average students is organised and clear. More able students use words precisely. The work of less able students is neither organized nor clear. Full stops, capital letters and question marks are not used correctly. Ideas are neither developed nor sustained. By Year 11 students speak fluently and can make significant contributions to discussion. They can make personal and critical responses to what they read. The writing of more able students' is lively and thoughtful. Less able students still have insufficient control of spelling, punctuation and paragraph construction. The very good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that lower attaining students achieve as well as their peers. The achievement of gifted and talented students is well matched to their abilities because their teachers provide intellectual challenge and support.
74. Teaching and learning are very good overall. All lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 were excellent. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Year 11. Teachers have an expert knowledge of the curriculum, how to teach it and how students learn. Teachers use this specialist knowledge to give students a very good understanding of texts and of the features that make writing more effective. The department has a very good system of target setting. Homework is used very effectively to support learning.

75. Leadership and management of the English department are excellent. The dedicated head of department has a sense of purpose and high aspirations. Teamwork is very good. Departmental policy documents are clear and well focused on raising students' attainment. The department is leading in many developments in ICT such as interactive whiteboards, distance learning and developing shared materials on the school's intranet. Such innovative teaching is having a marked effect on the quality of learning, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. The subject has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The department has taken a leading part in Coventry's strategy for Key Stage 3. Teaching assistants have been developed as highly effective members of the departmental team. They contribute to planning, the delivery of lessons and the assessment of students' work. Technology college status has encouraged the expansion of electronic learning in English.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. The literacy framework is in place in English classes. The school has an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy across the curriculum.
77. Speaking and listening are well developed in drama and religious education. There are planned opportunities for students to acquire and use technical language in art, design and technology and geography. Teachers consistently place a strong emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary. Consequently, students are accurate in its use. In religious education, for example, teachers strongly emphasise the value of appropriate terminology for discussing religious ideas accurately. In modern foreign languages, teachers highlight the application of correct grammatical structures. Writing frames are provided in science and support students well in their written work. However, the school has rightly identified writing skills as a priority for development. Inspection evidence confirms that there is a need for greater consistency between teachers in developing students' writing.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current staff have raised the image and status of the subject.
- ICT is used extensively to support teaching and learning.
- The time allowance for the subject is inadequate.
- Lesson planning does not give sufficient emphasis to speaking skills.

Commentary

78. The results in the 2003 GCSE examination were the best for several years. The percentage of students with higher grades was above the national average, and for girls, well above. Achievement is good but not always as good as in other subjects, because many of these students did not have consistent teaching lower down the school.
79. By the end of Year 9 standards are below national expectations, reflecting the school's intake. The timetable allowance is insufficient to reinforce new work with the practice of skills and limits the opportunity to challenge higher attaining students to extended writing. Achievement is satisfactory because the teaching is good. Listening and speaking are noticeably better where teachers sustain the use of French and higher attaining students show a good recall of vocabulary and speak with confidence. In writing, the worksheets used with students with

special educational needs give them the chance to succeed. There are no marked differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Students from ethnic minority groups are frequently among the more able linguists. By the end of Year 11 there is good achievement and standards are in line with national averages. Students show a good recall of previous work and as a result their reading comprehension is good with challenging texts. Their increased confidence shows in pair work where they converse with good pronunciation and some fluency. Students feel less confident in listening tasks but observations noted good attainment.

80. Teaching overall is good. Teachers challenge students by teaching largely in French. This accustoms students to the pace of the language to support their listening and speaking skills. A strong feature of the teaching is the relationships with students. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage students of all abilities to participate without concern for failure. As a result students respond to the high expectations of behaviour and learning is good. Lessons are well planned but do not always give enough opportunities for oral work, which teachers identify as a major weakness. There is extensive use of ICT for variety and motivation. The use of interactive whiteboards adds pace and quality to presentation and enhances students' perception of the subject. Teachers regularly assess students' work but National Curriculum levels are not used sufficiently to inform students of their attainment or to set subject-specific targets for improvement.
81. Leadership and management of the department are good. Staff in the department share good practice and contribute to the drive for improvement. More frequent monitoring of teaching and students' work would support improving standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and has raised the status and image of modern foreign languages. There are now increased numbers for GCSE and students on sixth form courses. Creative timetabling and the use of ICT enable students to study Spanish as a second language. In this inspection the department has shown the capacity to continue to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and careful management are improving provision.
- Achievement is very good because of good teaching and learning and the range of additional support activities provided.
- Records of attainment are used very effectively to identify students needing additional support.
- Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to students' learning.
- Marking is inconsistent and not used sufficiently to help students improve.
- Students are not always given enough time to consolidate their learning through independent activity.

Commentary

82. In national tests for Year 9 students in 2003, standards were well below average, but when measured against the standards that the same students reached in Year 6 gains in learning were above average. Provisional results for 2004 show that most students reached or exceeded the target set for them based on prior attainment and that standards have improved. Those with high attainment did particularly well. GCSE results in 2003 were average overall with an above

average number of students gaining A*-C grades. Provisional results for 2004 show that these standards have also risen and are better than they have been for six years.

83. Standards on entry to Year 7 are consistently well below those expected. There is also an above average number of students with particularly low standards. Many students find it difficult to remember many of the skills they have covered in Year 6 by the time they start in their new school. Despite there being a larger than average number of students with special educational needs, inspection judgements are that standards are just below the national average in Year 9 and average in Year 11 in mental skills, number, algebra, shape and space and data handling. Students are less competent at linking several skills together to solve problems systematically. Over the five years spent in the school, achievement is very good for students regardless of their standards on entry. The small number of students not making at least satisfactory progress in learning is identified through careful checking of attainment in tests over time. These students are given additional support to help them improve.
84. The quality of teaching and, therefore, learning is good throughout the school although there are some areas for further development. It is the consistently good teaching, coupled with additional support activities and access to teachers beyond lesson time, that enables students to achieve very well. The National Numeracy Strategy is used as a basis for teaching and is raising standards. Teachers ensure that students know what the target is for each lesson. Control is good and students understand what behaviour is expected of them so little time is wasted. In many lessons students learn to work together in pairs or groups to help each other, also developing their social skills. Teachers use a variety of strategies, including ICT, to support learning. Mathematical vocabulary is usually identified, explained and emphasised in lessons so that students recognise and understand these words. In the most effective lessons question and answer techniques are used to make students think and explain their work, thus reinforcing learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and match the work to the majority of students in the class. A key weakness, however, is the inconsistency in marking and its use to identify individual misconceptions to help students improve. Students mark too much of their own work, leading to bad work habits. In students' books it is also clear that they do not always get sufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning through independent activity. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to students' learning, particularly that of students with different types of special educational needs.
85. This department has undergone considerable recent change but provision and standards are improving because of astute leadership and strong management. Where there are weaknesses in teaching and provision these have been carefully identified and are being addressed through well-planned observation, support and training. The mathematics department, including the designated support assistant, work as a team and are committed to further improvement. Since the previous inspection standards have fluctuated. Recent improvement is good and there is very good potential for further improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. A very concise numeracy policy has been developed and work with a limited number of departments has taken place to improve the use of numeracy in other subjects. This is in the early stages of development, but targets are clear and numeracy co-ordinators have a clear vision for what is required. Numeracy skills are usually sufficient to support learning in other subjects and are developed satisfactorily in subjects such as geography, design and technology and science. On occasions students do not have the number skills necessary to progress in

another subject and are taught, for example, how best to manage percentages in business studies.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, leading to good learning.
- The leadership and management are very good.
- The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very good.
- Accommodation is insufficient to meet fully the needs of the curriculum.
- Book resources are poor and hinder learning.

Commentary

87. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well below national averages and there has been a steady decline in the attainment over the last three years. Results for 2004 indicate a continuation of this decline in comparison with national standards. However, there has been a steady fall in the level of attainment of these students on entry to the school and in fact the achievement of the students in 2003 was good.
88. At the end of Year 11 the proportion of students attaining grades A* to C in double science was above the national average and this represents very good achievement. In 2003 there was a vast improvement in the percentage attaining A* to C and this new standard appears to have been maintained in 2004.
89. Standards on entry are below average and the standards seen in Year 7 were below the national average. Standards in Year 9 were higher than this but were still just below the national average. This suggests a steady improvement in standards during Years 7, 8 and 9, which reflects the good achievement indicated by the results in 2003. Literacy skills on entry are well below average and this affects the students' understanding in science. By Year 9 higher attaining students are able to follow and present a scientific argument and to research independently. By this stage middle attainers are able to set up, observe and make deductions from a scientific experiment and lower attainers have developed an understanding of fair testing, which they can explain orally but have difficulty in writing about their investigations. There is a sharp improvement in standards in the work of Year 10 students and this is continued into Year 11. By Year 11 the standards seen were at least up to the national average. Higher attainers were able to hold a mature discussion about aspects of genetics and to defend opinions with confidence while lower attainers were able, in a lesson on space travel, to produce a good selection of ideas from their own knowledge. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs achieve well and hearing-impaired students are very well integrated into the classes.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are very well prepared and teachers' expectations are high. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and are committed to the raising of standards. The lessons are suitably challenging and there is a good range of support material for those students who find the work difficult as well as extension material for the higher attainers. A variety of teaching methods was seen in the observed lessons and all contribute to effective learning. The

learning support assistant provides a good support for the teaching staff and is well integrated into the department. The level of technical support is good and this team provides an invaluable service for the teachers and students. The students' behaviour and attitudes in the classroom were generally good. However, there are a small but significant number of students whose attitudes are negative and who can disrupt the learning of others. This was particularly noticeable in some Year 9 and 10 classes.

91. The department is very well led and managed, with all the teachers working as a cohesive and effective team. New teachers are well supported and work schemes are in place for all years. The new and forward-looking team is well placed to continue to raise the achievement of students. The laboratories provide satisfactory working environments, enhanced by good displays, but they are insufficient in number to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The access to ICT is improving all the time. The presence of interactive whiteboards in five laboratories is an asset still under development. The teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are made more demanding for the teachers and less rewarding for the students by the existence of large teaching groups. The teaching of the full range of ability in the Year 8 groups hinders the progress of the higher attaining students in particular. The book resources available to the students are poor, with no students from any year having textbooks to refer to at home, although revision guides are issued to students in Years 9 and 11. The teachers also help by issuing a lot of handouts to students but these are at best an inadequate substitute. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very good and the department follows the development of students very closely with a well-organised system of regular tests to indicate the levels of performance, and these are communicated to students with suitable targets also being issued. Examination and test results are analysed carefully and these analyses are converted into action plans to improve performance. This is well illustrated by recent work on the science investigations assessment which led to an immediate improvement in results.
92. The department has successfully tackled all the criticisms of the previous report. Teaching is good, students are challenged, there is more practical work, results and tests are analysed effectively and ICT is developing well. Overall this is a good improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and in Year 11 examinations.
- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good, leading to good achievement overall in ICT lessons.
- Resources are very good and used effectively in all subjects.
- The very good curriculum is innovative and provides opportunities for all students.
- Students are not involved enough in the assessment of their work.

Commentary

93. Teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 as well above the national average. There is no data available to provide an accurate analysis but, on the basis of general standards on entry, this represents a remarkable achievement and a very good improvement since the previous inspection. A small number of Year 11 students entered for GNVQ examinations in 2003. All students passed, including a high number with merits and distinctions. There are no

official data to provide a national comparison but the results appear well above average and achievement is good. This examination is no longer available so, in 2004, about a third of the Year 11 students took a new double-award applied GCSE examination and the examination board's figures show that they did well in this compared with other schools. As is the case nationally, girls do better than boys in assessments and examinations. At the time of the previous inspection students took a different examination and were much less successful.

94. Current standards in Year 9 are above average and achievement is good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The school does not have examples of students' work to confirm the teachers' assessment of the 2004 Year 9 students, but the work seen of students in the present Year 10 is above average. Students enter the school with generally average knowledge and understanding of ICT and make rapid progress in the first two years. The curriculum is demanding and teachers' expectations are high. Students learn to create web pages, devise ICT systems for hotel management, measure, log and analyse data and make imaginative presentations. This year, all Year 9 students are beginning a certificated online course: the European Computer Driving License (ECDL). In Years 7 to 11 students achieve well at all levels as teachers ensure that both lower and higher attaining students and those with special educational needs are equally challenged.
95. Current standards in Year 11 are around average for the students on the GCSE course. This represents good achievement for these generally lower attaining students. Both Year 10 and Year 11 students are embarking on the ECDL and achieved well in their first lesson. Girls are generally more focussed and better organised than the boys, so they achieve higher standards. The remaining students in Year 10 and 11 (around a third) have no discrete ICT lessons and are currently not assessed in this area. They are able to maintain their skills effectively in other subjects such as design and technology, English and science.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers have high expectations and use the very good resources imaginatively to inspire and challenge the students. In a very good Year 8 lesson the teacher controlled the sophisticated computer display and the lights remotely to draw students into the complex task of exploring the ICT requirements for a country hotel. By the end of this, their first lesson of the year, students were inventing control systems, proposing accounting requirements and imagining the hotel website. As in all lessons, students with special educational needs, such as hearing difficulties, were supported effectively and kept up with the others. Teachers expect and receive high standards of behaviour and the students' positive attitudes and enthusiasm make a big contribution to the progress they make.
97. Teachers assess the students' attainment and progress regularly to support and stretch the students. In Years 7, 8 and 9 other subject departments contribute to the assessment of achievement in their lessons. However, it is not a process which involves the students sufficiently. Many of them do not know their current National Curriculum level or what they need to do to improve. The GCSE course demands a high level of literacy and students are helped to develop good analytical and reporting skills as well as using their considerable expertise on the computers. Coursework is marked regularly and the feedback they receive helps them improve. Again, however, students are not always certain what they need to do to get a higher grade.
98. The leadership and management of ICT are very good. As a technology college the school has taken an imaginative approach to developing ICT resources and the curriculum. Students benefit from ready access to the schools' extensive network and a demanding but rewarding

programme of study. The school has built a strong team of well-qualified and energetic teachers and the head of ICT is part of the senior management team with a whole school approach to raising standards. The use of ICT is embedded in all subjects and enhanced in many areas by online resources, including whole lessons, video and homework assignments. The school is continuously evaluating the students' progress and responses to meet their demands. The ICT department recognises the need for realistic practical qualifications and also the need for learning to be exciting and challenging. The school has partnerships with local businesses, school and colleges, and the university, so the level of expertise it can draw on in developing its resources is very good.

99. The school has made very good improvements in standards and provision since the previous inspection and is well placed to raise achievement even further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. The school ensures its students make a good start by offering classes and summer school opportunities to Year 6 pupils from its feeder schools. A high proportion of youngsters are able to take advantage of this offer and most begin their life at Stoke Park with knowledge and skills which match national expectations. In their first lesson, a Year 7 class all managed to log on to the system and produce a simple presentation with only a few instructions from the teacher. This means that students are able to cope with the wide range of opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning in all subjects of the curriculum. This includes students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students as well. By the end of Year 8, students are able to tackle a wide range of tasks, with higher attaining students able to suggest appropriate software for the job. Not all students study ICT separately in Years 10 and 11, but their competences are developed through imaginative and challenging work in subjects such as English, design and technology, music, art and science. However, the school does not meet its statutory requirement to check and report on the progress of all its students in ICT during Years 10 and 11.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, high expectations and enthusiasm for the subject and this aids learning.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well from Year 7 to Year 11.
- GCSE students' work is not sufficiently monitored to ensure improvement in results.
- The range of activities and tasks is, at times, not wide enough to meet the needs of all students, especially the higher-attaining students.

Commentary

101. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were average, which represents very good achievement from their prior attainment. Similar examination results were gained in 2004. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. From Year 7 to Year 11 achievement is good, showing that the department adds good value.
102. Students join the school with a wide range of geographical experiences, but standards are well below average overall. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and given their starting base, students are making very good achievement from Year 7 to Year 9. Year 9 students begin to understand simple environmental issues, with the higher attaining students understanding how problems can be reduced. They successfully use a wide range of terms like those associated with mapping, population and the rain forest. However, lower attaining students take time to grasp temperature and rainfall graphs. By the end of Year 11, students' standards in the GCSE course are average, which shows achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The very good rate of improvement and achievement in Years 7 to 9 slows down in Years 10 and 11. This is partly a consequence of the trebling of students opting for geography, plus the fact that monitoring procedures have not given sufficient thought to how students of all abilities can be best challenged in their work. Many students make good use of computers to present quality work in assignments. Boys and girls perform equally well, while students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.
103. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers show very good geographical knowledge and apply it well in their teaching with high expectations, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on volcanoes. In most lessons good questioning challenges students; this was well exemplified in a Year 11 lesson about hurricane Ivan. Students usually know what is expected of both their behaviour and work. Overall, they respond well to the support and encouragement they receive in the most lessons, consequently the quality of learning is good. Lessons are well prepared with suitable resources. Teachers make good use of ICT to bring the subject to life. However, at times, the range of activities and tasks is not sufficiently wide enough to meet the needs of all students, especially the higher attainers. Students' work is regularly marked, showing both evaluative comments and encouragement; consequently students know what they need to do in order to improve. Students' books and home learning show that they produce good quality work and assignments and many students successfully use computers in presenting their work. Students with special educational needs receive very good support from teachers and learning support assistants.

104. The subject is well led and managed. The department works well together as a team and has a commitment to improving standards. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject. Since the previous inspection good improvement has been made, particularly in the curriculum, assessment procedures, and the use of computers, and the numbers of students taking GCSE has trebled. The subject is inclusive and caters for the whole range of students. However, GCSE work is not sufficiently monitored to ensure students gain the higher grades. The development plan needs improving to include success criteria based on student outcomes in order to measure success.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment.
- The experienced team of teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise and plan their lessons effectively to engage students.
- Good relationships with students contribute to good learning.
- A shortage of text resources limits students' learning opportunities.

Commentary

105. Department data show that standards of students in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were below national averages. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in GCSE in 2003 was above the national average, as were standards overall. School prior attainment data show that students achieved very well in history through Years 7 to 11.

106. Students' standards are well below national expectations on entry to the school in Year 7. By the end of Year 9, students have achieved well, and standards are just below national expectations. Most students by this time demonstrate the ability to work with historical sources, and to write accounts and explanations of historical events. Standards seen through the inspection of students in Year 11 studying for GCSE were in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement from Year 9. For example, in their work on the western trails in the USA in the nineteenth century, all students were able to identify from a range of sources significant factors which ones opened up the West. Higher attaining students went on to give complex explanations about the impact of economic forces on human migration.

107. Teaching and learning are good, and were often very good during the inspection. The experienced and knowledgeable team ensure they involve students in their own learning. They support all students through regular monitoring, tracking of progress and encouragement. They know their students and develop good relationships. All students achieve well, including those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, and boys and girls. The teachers successfully provide support for all learners, for example guiding students through entry level examinations when the demands of GCSE are too challenging. There has been a steady increase in the use of ICT and students are able to access some learning plans and materials through the school intranet. Opportunities for supporting literacy and numeracy are planned into new schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9. Lessons have clear objectives and time and resources are sensibly planned to good effect.

108. Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department shares the vision and strategies of the school. There has been effective management of change, for example the developing use of ICT, teaching and learning styles that have an increasing emphasis on the direct engagement of students in their own learning and the steady maintenance of standards of attainment and achievement throughout. The principal teachers work well as a team. Students would benefit from a more consistent approach to marking their daily work and a wider bank of supporting textbooks.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a generally well-balanced approach to all strands of the subject but students have limited written work in statutory religious education in Years 10 and 11 to support their future learning.
- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are well matched to students' needs, engaging and encouraging everyone to think deeply.

Commentary

109. Increasing numbers of students now follow GCSE courses. In 2003 roughly three-quarters of candidates obtained grade C or above, but the group size was not large enough for comparisons with national standards to be made. In 2004 a similar proportion of students obtained grade C or above. Given the students' levels of prior attainment, these results indicate good achievement. Students who choose not to take GCSE meet the expectations of the Coventry Agreed Syllabus through a system of modules within the PSHE programme. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when requirements were not fulfilled.
110. At the beginning of Year 7, students' knowledge, skills and understanding are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. By the end of Year 9 most students achieve well and meet these expectations, with higher attainers going beyond them. Students explain what it means to belong to a particular faith community but have not investigated variations within individual religions. They respond to views on a range of contemporary issues although their reasons for supporting one view rather than another are not always fully developed. In Years 10 and 11 about a quarter of students, particularly higher attainers, choose to take GCSE. Their standards are above average and they achieve well, particularly in their skills of evaluating their own and others' views of religious and non-religious values and commitments. Those following the statutory religious education modules also achieve well but their views, though stated, are not always coherently argued and explained. Interviews and displayed work confirm that these students discuss matters and work together well but tend not to do much individual written work which might support revision and future learning.
111. The key to the good achievement of all groups of students lies in good teaching which makes them think hard, reflect and apply their learning. Tasks are set to challenge and stimulate. Discussion is particularly effective because courtesy and consideration are paramount. These help to sustain constructive relationships where everyone works together to try to find answers to the most fundamental questions of life. A "balloon" debate for Year 9, for example, explored the perceived priorities in children's rights: surely fresh air, food and drink would be vital? Yet without love and affection or the freedom to be an individual, is life really worth living? Such tasks help both boys and girls equally develop their own ideas and values. Classroom assistants, along with teachers, provide very well for students with special educational needs, ensuring that they play a full part in all activities and keep pace with their classmates.
112. Good subject management has assured well-planned and consistent teaching and good assessment to help meet students' needs well. Statutory requirements are now met. Achievement has risen. The innovative inclusion into the curriculum of special events such as "Amnesty International Day" and "Human Rights Day" has enhanced the studies of students in

Years 7, 8 and 9, but similar additions to the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 are currently in abeyance. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have remained consistently high in design and technology, food, graphics, systems and control and engineering.
- Good teaching and students' good attitudes to work promote good learning.
- Leadership is good and has provided a clear vision for the continual development of the subject.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work.
- Standards in 2003 GCSE examinations in resistant materials and textiles were unsatisfactory.
- Planning for development should include clearly identified measurable outcomes.

Commentary

113. Students enter the school with variable skills, knowledge and understanding in designing and making and make good progress, achieving well by the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments show students to be attaining similar standards to the national average and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. Good teaching and management of the subject develop students' understanding of the principles and processes of designing well. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
114. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with national averages, but the unvalidated results for 2004, indicate an improvement in many areas. During the last two years there has been a very mixed pattern of results across of the subjects. In design and technology, food, graphics, systems and control and engineering they were well above average, but in textiles and resistant materials they were below and well below average respectively. These variations are a reflection of the staffing difficulties faced by the school. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is greater than that found nationally, with girls doing better than their male colleagues. Overall, the results gained indicate good achievement.
115. Presentation, researching and graphical communication skills, along with electronic circuit design and construction, are exceptionally good. Students research their work well using the Internet and the school's intranet and there is a good balance between computer-aided design (CAD) and freehand drawing. Examples of high standards of students' past work are used well to guide and support their work. Students, including those with special educational needs, are able to make good progress because of the high level of supportive work by teachers and classroom assistants, who have a clear idea of their individual needs. Teacher student relationships are good and this is reflected in students' attitudes towards the subject and behaviour in class.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but in some instances students did not learn fast enough because of a lack of precision in teacher explanations. Here the focus for the lesson was directed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected and students were rarely asked to look critically at their work. Good and very good teaching was characterised by well-organised lessons with appropriately high expectations so that students fully understood what was expected of them, with clear deadlines. In the one instance where teaching was less than

satisfactory, inappropriate management of students' immature behaviour spoilt the concentration of others; as a result little learning took place. Teachers work well with classroom assistants, technician and administrative support, all of whom are extremely effective in the smooth running of the department. The department has been beset with staffing issues, which in part still exist, and with a lack of technical support in resistant materials development has been hindered.

117. Leadership and management are good and have enabled good improvement since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for development and staff show a strong commitment to working as a team. Technology college status has been exploited and an extensive range of appropriate courses are now available to meet the needs of individual students, including the establishment of numerous industrial and further education links. The application of ICT has improved significantly but developments in computer-aided manufacture are limited, following the initial installation of one machine.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus subjects were art and design and music, but two **drama** lessons were also sampled. One lesson was unsatisfactory because the teaching did not sufficiently engage all students, some of whom were unco-operative. The second lesson was stronger and the students participated well.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good: lessons are well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships and students benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- Further development of assessment procedures in Years 7, 8 and 9 relating to National Curriculum levels would further improve learning.
- Insufficient time and size of groups in Year 9 limit the range of materials students can use.

Commentary

118. The overall GCSE results in 2003 were average, with the proportion of students gaining higher grades A* - C also average. There were no discernible differences in the results of boys and girls and these outcomes represent good achievement in relation to prior attainment.
119. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many students in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. These standards are achieved because students apply themselves purposefully to their work and are supported well in lessons. Students of all abilities are able to observe from direct observation and use line and tone effectively in their drawings. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement over the two years of the course. Middle and higher attaining students are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists.

Sketchbooks are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well. Students demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Lower attaining students achieve well and benefit from much encouragement and individual attention.

120. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Where very good lessons were observed, very good pace and a variety of activities which maintained students' interest were evident. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is very sharp teacher questioning which ensures the participation of all students. Teachers use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is very good. When students were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their immediate learning objectives, their responses were very positive. The full potential of ICT as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed. Assessment procedures relating to national levels in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not sufficiently shared with students in order that they can understand what to do next to improve their work. Large class sizes and insufficient time, especially in Year 9, restrict the range of materials used and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. For example, insufficient use is made of working with clay for three-dimensional study.
121. The leadership and management of art and design are good. Staff have very good subject knowledge and expertise and work well as a team. Departmental meetings and the monitoring of lessons are used well to share ideas and good practice. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive impact on the quality and range of students' work. The present very good technical support is essential for the development of a wider range of media experimentation. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in the use of sketchbooks for research and the emphasis on direct observational study. Assessment has been refined in Years 10 and 11 and schemes of work and departmental policies provide good guidance for staff, so that consistency is ensured throughout the department.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good achievement.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- The innovative curriculum, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, successfully integrates visiting music staff.
- The scheme of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not link closely enough to National Curriculum programmes of study.
- The activities of performing, composing and listening are not sufficiently integrated in the scheme of work.

Commentary

122. The number of students entered for GCSE music in 2003 was too small for national comparisons to be made, but many students who were entered for the examination gained grades in the A* to C range. School data indicates that these students achieved very well. Results in 2004 maintained the high standards of the previous year. There is a flexible and imaginative approach to the music curriculum for students aged 14 to 19. Thus GCSE music can be taken by mixed year groups but it was not possible to judge current standards in Year 11

during the inspection. Teacher assessments for 2004 at the end of Year 9 were too high but during the inspection standards were judged to be good and improving with students achieving well in Years 7, 8 and 9. Students work mainly in small groups and all have the opportunities to learn the recorder, keyboard, steel pans and guitar. Work is well matched to students' abilities and very good use is made of ICT to support learning.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with the team of visiting music staff used very effectively to help deliver varied and stimulating activities for students. The curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 is delivered through small groups working on a common theme each term. These groups are rotated each half term. This innovative approach to the curriculum is reflected in the curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 where music GCSE is offered in twilight, mixed year sessions. Students show good attitudes overall in music and teaching shows sound musical knowledge with clear expectations and planning. Assessment includes the videotaping of students' work to supplement their marks and grades, but students are insufficiently aware of the standard of their work and what they must do to improve.
124. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum innovation is excellent and the use of visiting music staff to assist in the delivery of the curriculum is a real strength of the department. The flexible approach to examination classes for students aged 14 to 19 means that students from Year 10 onwards can access GCSE music and GCE music technology. The scheme of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 needs to be tied more closely to the National Curriculum programmes of study and since the curriculum is delivered in small groups, the activities of performing, composing and listening should be integrated wherever possible.
125. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with reporting to parents much improved. The curriculum now includes listening and opportunities for singing and standards have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Students do not consistently know what levels they are working at and how to improve.
- Extra-curricular provision and take-up are very good.
- There is insufficient use of learning targets and teacher expectations in Years 10 and 11 are too low.

Commentary

126. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below national averages. In core physical education, standards are also below national averages. The 2003 GCSE results indicate that the students' achievements were unsatisfactory in relation to their prior attainment.
127. This department is in a state of flux and there have been recent staff changes, the impact of which has still to be felt fully. For this reason there are variations in the students' achievement. For present students on entering the school, standards were broadly average. Standards are above national averages at the end of Year 9 and this represents good achievement. For present Year 11 students, standards are below average, which represents unsatisfactory achievement. In GCSE some students' achievement in theory work is restricted by the lack of good literacy,

numeracy and ICT skills. However, in work seen in Year 10 the impact of strategies to raise standards has been to produce satisfactory achievement. There are clear systems and procedures to ensure that students remain on task. Students are now maintaining the quality of basic skills already developed. They are able to successfully transfer them to game situations. This was seen in badminton lessons where they used the overhead clear to successfully defeat their opponent in a conditioned game.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is good In Years 7, 8 and 9 and students particularly benefit from knowledgeable teaching. Teachers target the work well to the standards students have reached, with students often working with different equipment and on different tasks. Where teaching is less effective, students do not know at what level they are working and how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 students do not consistently remain on task. They are not aware of what level they are at and do not have targets for improvement. Teachers' expectations are too low. In lessons seen, teachers were challenging students' behaviour so that they are now more focused on learning. Strategies are in place to improve the level of activity with more time for students to consolidate learning.
129. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department is developing a clear vision for raising standards more quickly. She is addressing the unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11 and evidence from lessons seen shows that this is already having an impact. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place with issues being dealt with through good support within the department. A very good extra-curricular programme enhances an appropriate physical education curriculum, which has been reviewed in order to meet the needs of all students. There has been improvement in assessment procedures since the last inspection. However, students do not know which level they are working at and the department does not analyse data in order to assess the achievement made by different groups of students. The accommodation and resources for physical education are satisfactory. However, some students miss part of lessons through travelling to the off-site facilities for major field games. This has a negative effect on their learning.
130. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- Teachers have high expectations so students achieve well and behave very well.
- Students respond well to probing questions and the challenge of independent investigations.
- Teachers do not use assessment data sufficiently to ascertain achievement of individual students and groups.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

131. In 2003 there was no group taking business studies at the end of Year 11. In 2004, the first students took the new dual award GCSE in Applied Business. All students passed with grades

A*-G, and 46 per cent obtained A*-C grades. Boys performed slightly better than girls did. Comparison of results with national averages is not yet available. As this is a new qualification it is too early to determine a trend.

132. Standards of work seen are broadly average and in relation to earlier standards, students' achievement is good. Students acquire investigative skills to obtain first-hand information that they analyse to understand aspects of business; for example, the human resources department and customer services of a local supermarket. Higher attaining students include much detailed evidence that they evaluate carefully. Weaker students only partially cover the required areas of investigation and fail to evaluate in order to reach valid conclusions. Some do not realise the importance of using word-processing to present their business assignments.
133. Strengths of the good teaching include very good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements, probing questions used to assess students' understanding and excellent use of ICT resources that give all students opportunities to work at their own pace. Well-planned lessons help students to know what they will learn and they have very good resources to use. A computer program provides instant comments so students cannot proceed until they have corrected wrong answers. The teacher assesses their portfolio work carefully using the examination board criteria, so they know how they may improve their standards.
134. The co-ordinator has introduced the new GCSE Applied Business course successfully and is gaining further experience as an examiner. He has used funding wisely to install a computer program that supports students' learning very well. Teachers do not use assessment data to assist with measuring the achievement of individual students or of groups. The co-ordinator has established helpful partnerships with a local supermarket and a car manufacturer so students gain an accurate understanding of business. A 'Young Enterprise' scheme provides opportunities for students to experience the excitement and responsibility of running their own company. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning benefits because leadership and management are good.
- Students' achievement is good because of good teaching.
- Off-timetable days are effectively integrated in the citizenship schemes of work.
- Students need to develop their written work to show how well they are developing skills of citizenship.

Commentary

135. Standards are average by the end of Year 9, and above average by the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement through Years 7 to 11. Knowledge and understanding are developed in both citizenship and religious education lessons and through the school's personal, social and health education programme. Good use is made of off-timetable days, which enhance learning by using people from industry and the wider community.

136. The school has developed many opportunities for students to explore their rights and responsibilities, especially through active participation. The school council is a powerful vehicle for the development of knowledge and understanding about responsibility and enhances the skills of participation and communication. There is a good list of activities which encourage real participation in community aspects. These include work for local and national charities and peer mentoring.
137. Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons featured motivated students who were engaged in enjoyable and stimulating activities. The citizenship curriculum is delivered through an integrated course involving religious education and PSHE. The programme has been carefully crafted so that the overlap between the three components is fully exploited, enabling students to see the separate aspects and their contribution to the whole. This represents good practice. Students' written work does not yet mirror the standards of their participation in citizenship.
138. The schemes of work cover a broad range of issues affecting the life of young people. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson students discussed the appropriate allocation of public funds. This exercise helped them to understand the need to prioritise and to develop skills of communication and compromise. They did this with a mature confidence, with some youngsters supporting and encouraging their peers. Year 8 students were enthusiastic when discussing the implications of their move into their new year group. They identified the need to respect others and set targets based on Year 7 reports.
139. Leadership and management are good. Many aspects of management are very good. The school is committed and enthusiastic about the development of citizenship. An assistant deputy headteacher has the role of co-ordinator and both deputy headteachers form part of the planning group. Procedures for consultation and evaluation are good. A very good central resource is now supporting teachers with materials that can be amended to meet the needs of both the teachers and students. The planning team is aware of opportunities for citizenship across the curriculum. However, many staff are still unaware of how these can be developed and taught in order to reinforce the citizenship curriculum.

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 (the latest year for which national comparisons are available).

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Literature	6	100.0	85.9	23.1	20.8	33.1	31.2
Mathematics	8	50	61.9	12.5	17.1	15.0	22.1

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	6	100.0	98.6	66.7	50.2	96.7	87.5
Biology	5	100.0	96.4	20.0	39.2	76.0	78.6
English Literature	12	100.0	99.5	16.7	46.5	71.7	86.5
Design and Technology	9	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	55.6	77.9
History	5	80.0	99.0	0.0	44.6	44.0	84.6
Other Social Studies	7	100.0	97.4	14.3	42.7	71.4	81.8
Sociology	7	100.0	98.2	14.3	44.3	77.1	83.6
Business VCE	24	95.7	65.0	4.3	14.6	59.6	60.1
Health and Social Care VCE	12	100.0	67.7	0.0	14.5	68.3	63.5
Information Technology VCE	34	100.0	77.9	47.8	23.4	88.4	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English Literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is improving because the quality of teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- The department has devised a fresh approach to raise standards in the sixth form and this is contributing to very good achievement.
- A level English literature results in 2003 were well below average.

Commentary

140. In 2003 the performance of students in AS Level English literature examinations was average. Although all students entered for the GCE A Level English literature examinations in 2003 gained grades A to E, results were well below average. Fewer than one out of five students entered gained the higher grades of A and B; this represents unsatisfactory achievement. The school's results for 2004 show an increase in the number of students gaining the higher grades of A and B in GCE A Level.
141. For present students the picture is different. Standards in Year 13 are average and the students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is very good. The writing of most students is evaluative and analytical. More able students have a detailed knowledge of the themes and narrative structure of texts. They evaluate the contemporary values that influence authors and comment astutely on how interpretations of texts change over time. Most write accurately and persuasively. The written work of less highly attaining students shows some flaws in expression and accuracy and their analysis of the author's use of language lacks detail. In Year 12, students are beginning to develop analytical skills in lessons. This marked improvement in standards is because of more settled and competent staffing.
142. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very experienced and well read. As a result, students make very good progress in improving their skills of analysis and their argumentative writing. Challenge and high expectations are features in all lessons. Learning is highly interactive, with many opportunities for whole class and small group discussion. Students are expected to work independently through research and delivering presentations, as well as through their note-taking and written assignments. The variety of learning activities encourages and motivates students. Students of all abilities carry out their essay work with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Marking is very good. Teachers use written and spoken comments to clarify what each student needs to do to improve.
143. Leadership and management are now excellent. The department has successfully devised a fresh approach to raise standards in AS and A Level English literature. A fast paced course, backed by the newest and best e-learning experiences, has been introduced to encourage students to accept responsibility for their own learning. Students receive lectures, play an active part in electronic conferences and contribute to seminars and tutorials. Overall, improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

144. Students' communication skills in writing and speaking are average in all sixth form subjects. Their general expression is clear. Research skills are average. Teachers provide very good support for students' communication skills. Students write well to communicate information, ideas and opinions to intended audiences.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was on provision for AS and A-level mathematics. Further mathematics AS level in Year 12 and the two year Use of Mathematics AS level in Year 13 were also sampled. In the two lessons seen, of discrete mathematics and the application of statistics respectively, teaching and learning were good.

AS and A level mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Weaknesses in previous provision have been identified and are being rectified.
- Students are very keen to take mathematics because of the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Marking and assessment are not used consistently throughout the year to track attainment.
- Too many students in Year 13 have not reached the target grade based on GCSE results.

Commentary

145. In 2003 only four students took A level and all gained A to E grades. Numbers are too small to make comparisons against national statistics. At AS level results were below the national average and too few students reached the target grade based on GCSE results. Provisional results for 2004 show unsatisfactory achievement and reflect both problems of provision out of control of the school and insufficient care taken to track students' attainment. This led to approximately half of the students opting to discontinue the course into Year 13.
146. Standards on entry to Year 12 are currently below average because of a change in policy to make mathematics at AS level accessible to a wider range of students. In the small amount of work covered at the time of the inspection, students achieved at least satisfactorily. During the inspection little work from Year 13 was available for scrutiny. That seen demonstrated that the courses had been covered, but about half of the students have major weaknesses in at least one of the three topic areas covered, mostly mechanics.
147. The department has experienced considerable recent problems in recruiting and retaining suitable staff. Happily these problems now seem to have been largely overcome and the quality of teaching and learning is now good although there are still some weaknesses. Teachers plan well and mostly demonstrate good subject expertise. Where teaching is weakest, teachers are not able to react quickly enough to students' responses and use these to move learning on. Teachers have good relationships with the students with the result that students are very attentive in lessons. Suitable homework tasks are provided but previous work and students' comments show that marking has not been used sufficiently by all teachers throughout the past year to track and remedy conceptual problems. Although test results are recorded, not enough has been done to ensure students stay on target for their optimum grade in each module.
148. Leadership is good. Management has been satisfactory in the past year, but there is a clear vision for development and structures are already in place to remedy weaknesses in provision. In order to improve both provision and standards a new syllabus has been adopted and more teachers are involved in delivering the course. This has yet to impact on attainment. Where there are weaker aspects of teaching, these are being addressed. The management and organisation of the course and teaching are due to be focus areas for development following necessary concentrated and successful work on provision for mathematics in earlier years over the last year. The number of students opting for the courses in Year 12 has suddenly increased to well above average numbers. Students say that this is because they have enjoyed the varied teaching strategies experienced when studying GCSE and the approaches of different teachers. Since the previous inspection standards have fallen and staffing problems have been encountered. Recent improvement is satisfactory, leading to the present satisfactory provision. There is good potential for further improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

149. Specific courses in numeracy skills are provided for students who require them although these were not sampled during the inspection. Standards of numeracy are average and used appropriately to support learning in other subjects. As yet links between subject needs and specific numeracy development have not been developed.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn well because of consistently good teaching.
- The positive motivation of the students enables them to achieve well.
- Well-structured and well-organised courses enable students to achieve well.
- There is insufficient use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning.
- Students' opportunities for independent research are limited by the lack of biological reference texts and scientific periodicals.

Commentary

150. Results in 2003 were in line with national averages but, based on the below average prior attainment of the students, this represents good achievement. Owing to the small group size no analysis based on gender was possible. Unvalidated A level results for 2004 show an improvement on those gained in 2003. For current students standards are above average. The school's own data shows that they entered the sixth form with average prior attainment and, therefore, achievement is good. Students were able to talk confidently about their work, their knowledge was good and they are developing good practical skills.
151. Learning is good because of good teaching. Lessons are well prepared with a variety of challenging tasks that stimulate student interest and encourage learning. Objectives are clear and well understood by the students. Students are positive and well motivated; the good rapport between students and teachers encourages them to participate actively and explore new ideas. Work is clearly marked to indicate standards and strategies for improvement, but little use is made of national data for the prediction of performance at A level. Opportunities to challenge students and enhance learning are missed as there is no system of target setting in place to monitor actual performance against expected, but good use is made of past examination papers to assess individual progress. Students show good independent learning skills, but opportunities to work and learn independently are limited by lack of access to biological reference texts and periodicals.
152. Leadership and management are good. Teachers liaise and cooperate well and less experienced teachers are well supported. The AS level and A level courses are well organised. Textbook provision is good and ICT material is being developed to enhance learning further. The learning environment is good and the work of the department is well supported by capable laboratory

technicians. As no judgement on provision was made in the previous inspection, no judgement on improvement can be made.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

AVCE ICT

The provision for ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement on the AVCE course is very good.
- Teaching is very good overall; teachers have produced some excellent resources.
- Students are very well motivated but sometimes need to take a more active part in the lessons.

Commentary

153. The results in the 2003 vocational A level were well above average, nearly half of the 34 students entered gained an A or B grade and all students passed. The girls' standards were very high. The 2004 results appear to be similar. Students sitting their A level examinations in 2003 achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment.
154. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average. This represents very good achievement since students begin the course with a wide range of qualifications. The course is very popular and many students combine it with business studies. They are usually highly motivated and are able to develop the necessary high level skills in language and communication that many do not have at the start of the course.
155. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and never less than good. Teachers have very high expectations of the students and make their demands felt from the start. In return, students are offered expert support from the very knowledgeable teachers and very good access to powerful hardware and software. Teachers have developed excellent learning materials and these are available to students at any time. As a consequence students learn fast and develop independence. The best lessons are both lively and demanding, with the students interacting well with the teacher and each other. Sometimes, students can be passive in lessons and in these cases the teacher has not devised strategies to involve the less vocal students, or generate interest and ideas through debate. The nature of the course means that students get regular feedback on their performance. Because teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the requirements, this support is a major factor in the very good achievement.
156. Leadership and management of ICT are very good. The course is expertly managed by well-qualified and experienced teachers who constantly strive to improve the programme of study and the resources. The leader for ICT inspires and promotes very good teamwork, which is important as different teachers teach different modules concurrently. The sixth form students enjoy access to a sophisticated computer network as well as benefiting from the school's very good business and higher education links to provide case studies for their projects. Overall, the school has made very good improvements in standards and provision since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

157. The students' competence in ICT is above average across the sixth form. Most students have no difficulty meeting the demands of their advanced courses for a good level of ICT skills. In addition, many departments, including sociology (which has an integrated learning system), health and social care and mathematics, extend these skills by providing powerful online resources and expecting work to be produced using ICT. In English, for example, students have access to online lessons by their own teacher and can log on to the course from home. The powerful resources in music, design and technology and art and design enhance the creative side of the curriculum. The school has also set up opportunities for students to take a key skills course, which includes an element of ICT.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history and sociology, though one Year 13 geography lesson was sampled. In this lesson, standards were above average. Very good teaching led to very good learning and achievement by students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject knowledge and support from enthusiastic teachers aid learning.
- Achievement is good.
- Teachers should explore opportunities to extend students' experience outside of the classroom and the school intranet.

Commentary

158. Results in the GCE examination for 2003 were very low. Results in recent years of small numbers of students are not easily measured against national averages, or compared with the previous report. Department data for 2003 shows that students achieved broadly in line with their prior attainment.

159. Standards seen during the inspection showed that students in Year 13 were working in line with national expectations, their AS results indicating good achievement from Year 11. The Year 13 students confirmed that they had a sound grasp of significant theory gained from their AS study. For example, many were able to employ their understanding of the role and implications of class theory gained through their Year 12 Russian study to their introduction to reform of the franchise in Britain. Students showed a familiarity with key areas of their course.

160. Overall, teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. Teachers are knowledgeable, lessons are appropriately planned and there is a strong emphasis on engaging students through ensuring regular small group and whole class interaction. This was used to good effect in an introductory lesson on the background to the Russian Revolution with Year 12, where students' discussions and feedback to the class allowed all to arrive at a sound understanding of the vastness of Russia and the potential significance of demographic, economic and political factors. ICT is productively used to allow students to access to lesson plans, presentations and syllabus and assessment data from out of school.

161. The department is well led and popular. Numbers choosing to study history are now significantly higher than two years ago. Students' progress is carefully monitored, results thoughtfully analysed, and good support given, as students acknowledged. There is, however, a shortage of textbooks, little use of the library and little contact with the world outside of the school. This serves to limit the scope for learning.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, often excellent, teaching inspires students to learn very effectively.
- Standards show a rising trend, and achievement is very good.
- Leadership of sociology is excellent and innovative; management is very good.

Commentary

162. Examination standards in 2003 A-level were below average for all students, but for girls (six of the seven candidates) they were average. Unvalidated results from the 2004 A-level examination indicate very good improvement, with 80 per cent of students gaining B grades. For the large majority of 2004 students, achievement is very good. The recent trend has been rising, and 2003 results were uncharacteristic. No judgement on improvement since the last inspection is possible as sociology did not feature as a subject.
163. Most students start sociology in Year 12, with below average levels of prior attainment. By the end of Year 12, standards are broadly average. Standards in work seen of Year 13 students are above average; thus achievement is very good over the two-year course. Students in Year 12, in their second week of studying the subject, have acquired an admirable grip of subject terminology and theories. Quality of writing improves through the course and students in Year 13 have very good skills of applying a range of evidence to construct their essay answers. For example, a student compared the Functionalist with the Marxist view of education concisely and clearly, concluding that both linked education with the economy for different reasons.
164. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and he understands the requirements of the course very thoroughly. Consequently, students are confident learners and prepared well for examinations. Students respond positively to the teacher's high expectations. They think deeply, and draw on their learning impressively in order to answer probing questions. They display independence of thought in linking evidence from several sources to new topics, and use contemporary examples to illustrate sociological theories. Year 13 students participate very well in class discussion and already Year 12 show developing skills because the teacher adopts a highly inclusive approach. For example, in a lesson on religion and social change with Year 13 students he used a student's first-hand knowledge of Islam to confirm women's role in that religion. He encourages, gives praise, and uses humour to create a collaborative ethos for learning. Students receive very helpful comments on their essays that indicate how they may improve their standards. The teacher has written a workbook for each unit so they can follow the progress of the topic and use their note-making skills to extend information and understanding during discussions and from answers given by other students and the teacher.
165. The subject co-ordinator is the sole teacher, yet he has impressive leadership skills in subject innovation, and he manages the subject very well. He has produced a computer package that

integrates teaching, learning, homework, and assessment. Current students will have access to the whole course that includes links to appropriate web sites, such as examination boards and advice on how to mark essays. This is essential because students mark some essays as a learning task. The co-ordinator has inspired other teachers to investigate its use in their subjects.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, the ethos for learning and teacher student relationships are all good.
- High level individual support and guidance aids learning.
- There is no skills programme to enable those students who do not follow a similar course of study at GCSE to catch up.
- Grades in the unit tests are well below those in the coursework.

Commentary

166. Students enter the sixth form with both variable grades and related courses of study at GCSE. The courses available in the school in Years 10 and 11 provide very useful preparation for the A level course of study. Most students have a good range of basic skills in design methodology, but those associated with materials technology and construction are less well developed.
167. In 2003, of the nine students entered for the A level examination only one achieved the higher grade C. These results are well below the national average. The number of entries has increased and in 2004, four of the ten students achieved A or B grades. These results are a good improvement on 2003.
168. Standards of work seen were extremely variable and included work from those students who have recently joined the school. In Year 12, attainment is closely related to their previous GCSE performance and achievement is satisfactory. During the inspection work was seen from students in Years 12 and 13. At AS level the standard of work is above average for those in the fast track group compared to, at best, average for those in Year 12. The A level group includes both fast track and Year 13 students; this grouping is especially effective and a significant number of students were observed working at above average standards. Students were enthusiastic about the course and spoke highly of the teaching and level of individual support the received. The creativity of the work is wide and promoted through stimulating teaching. For a very mixed group, overall achievement is good.
169. The quality of teaching and learning is good and all lessons featured very good aspects. Teachers are confident in their work and understand the subject content well. Students generally have good attitudes towards their work and most are keen to do well. Much time beyond the classroom is spent completing project work, design folders or general research. This time is well spent. Within the sixth form students learn effectively, principally through a mixture of practical project work and taught theory sessions. The balance of this is appropriate but more attention is needed to address the deficiency in test results compared to coursework marks. The use of ICT supports the development of project work well.

170. Leadership and management are good. Different teachers are involved in delivery of the courses and although this provides a broader technological platform, matched to the individual teacher's experiences, joint planning and review should be more formalised. Insufficient reference to the sixth form was made in the last report to make a valid comparison on improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

171. No subjects were featured in this curriculum area, but one lesson was sampled in art and design. Standards were above average owing to the very good teaching offered. All students are achieving well. Community links are excellent and have a positive impact on the work achieved. One Year 13 music lesson was sampled. Standards were above average because of the good teaching offered. The two students were achieving well. One twilight session of mixed year groups from Years 10 to 12 was sampled in music technology. Standards were average but the teaching was good and students were achieving well.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

BUSINESS

Vocational business courses are offered at both advanced and intermediate level. This inspection focused on the advanced level course.

AVCE business

Provision in business is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well because they are keen to improve.
- Learning is well supported by ICT resources and partnerships with local firms.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment data to measure achievement.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

172. The standard in the AVCE course in 2003 was average. However, for higher grades A and B it was well below average. Girls performed better than boys and by a bigger margin than that seen nationally. Overall, these results suggest that the students achieved well in relation to their prior learning. Unvalidated results for 2004 show some improvement over those gained in the previous year.

173. During the inspection standards of work seen were broadly average and achievement was good. Year 12 students are new to the course but they were able to identify factors that may help a firm to expand, though their understanding of technical language and words such as 'oligopoly' and 'duopoly' is less assured. Standards of work in Year 13 are above average. Students conduct independent investigations using skills they have learned. For example, they analyse the accounts of a specialist shop for athletes in order to identify ways of expanding the business using e-commerce. Weaker investigations did not include detail such as how the Sale of Goods

Act applies to the business. For some students, their standard of work is let down by their poor written English.

174. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, allied to their understanding of course requirements, helps the students to learn well and fosters their confidence. Lesson planning is thorough and learning is enhanced through the appropriate use of ICT and other resources. A local supermarket, a car manufacturer and a confectionery producer collaborate to provide case study evidence that successfully supports school-based studies. Company representatives visit to talk to students about aspects of production and customer service. In a minority of lessons, teaching does not sufficiently challenge the students and their role is too passive. This inhibits learning. In the most successful lessons, students are challenged and encouraged to work independently and collaboratively.
175. Leadership and management of the department are good, as is the level of improvement since the last inspection. New courses have been successfully introduced and a new member of staff is being inducted well into the department. Though much assessment data is available, it is not consistently used to set the students challenging individual targets. Improved use of such data will help to improve standards further.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Although the focus was AVCE health and social care, lessons at intermediate and foundation level were sampled. All students are achieving very well owing to the very good teaching offered. Many students made very good progress from foundation to intermediate levels and some to advanced level.

Health and Social Care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as they are well motivated and there are excellent classroom relationships.
- Very good teaching engages students and promotes independent learning.
- Effective use is made of external specialists to extend learning.
- There is no distinct area to allow displays of work and resources to stimulate student interest.

Commentary

176. Standards in 2003 were in line with the national average but because of the well below average prior attainment of the students this represents very good achievement. Unvalidated data for 2004 shows that students' achievement continues to be very good. For current students standards are average. As the school's data shows that standards on entry were again well below average, these students too are achieving very well.
177. Learning is very good as very good teaching and effective assessment and monitoring of students' work, especially coursework, enable staff to set challenging tasks that meet each student's needs. Students are set realistic targets for improvement and they have the opportunity to act on suggestions and redraft coursework to improve standards. They use ICT effectively to develop research skills and to improve their literacy and presentation of their coursework; they

work and learn independently most effectively. Lessons are very well prepared and organised with clear objectives that are well understood by the students. The students are extremely positive about their learning and because of excellent classroom relationships and a strong vocational ethos, all students achieve very well.

178. Leadership and management are very good. The course has been very well developed and organised. However, there is no subject base, so the opportunity to celebrate students' work and stimulate interest further is missed as there are few visual displays. Teachers co-operate well together and with other relevant subjects to share expertise. Very good links have been developed with the community and work experience placements are arranged that enhance students' understanding of the course material. A bank of specialists has been developed to work with the teachers to deliver sections of the course and to promote wider understanding. As AVCE health and social care was not reported on in the previous inspection it is not possible to make a judgement on improvement since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	2
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2	1
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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

