

INSPECTION REPORT

STOWUPLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Stowmarket

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124853

Acting Headteacher: Mr C Whyatt

Lead inspector: Romy Markham

Dates of inspection: 27 September – 1 October 2004

Inspection number: 268938

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 13-18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 758

School address: Church Road
Stowupland
Stowmarket
Suffolk
Postcode: IP14 4BQ

Telephone number: 01449 674827
Fax number: 01449 774859

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr I Gallagher

Date of previous inspection: 28 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stowupland High School provides education for 775 boys and girls aged 13 to 18, including 167 in the sixth form. It is smaller than most secondary schools that take pupils from the age of eleven. Numbers on roll have increased slightly since the last inspection and very few pupils enter or leave the school other than at the start of the school year. Pupils come from a very wide rural area and census returns indicate broadly average socio-economic circumstances, although there are pockets of significant disadvantage. There are very few pupils who are not of white British origin, but in the current year there are three pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with some form of special educational need is average, and includes pupils with specific learning needs, physical disabilities and social and behavioural problems. Standards on entry to the main school are slightly above average, but there are few pupils with very high standards in national tests. Standards on entry to the sixth form are broadly average. More than two-thirds of each Year 11 return into the sixth form and additional students join the sixth form from other schools. Almost all students in the sixth form complete their course of study. Stowupland received a DFES Achievement Award in 2001 and 2002. During the term of inspection the school was led by an acting headteacher, pending a substantive appointment. The school achieved specialist school status in mathematics and information and communication technology from September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1387	R Markham	Lead inspector	
19727	E Langford	Lay inspector	
19499	B Baughan	Team inspector	English
23528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
3735	A Webb	Team inspector	Science
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
32785	W Allt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31690	B Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
2740	E Barratt	Team inspector	History; special educational needs; EAL
4223	G Collard	Team inspector	Geography
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art; vocational education
11672	P Harle	Team inspector	Music
20192	T McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education
20877	D Pink	Team inspector	Religious education; citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
 Herringston Barn
 Herringston
 Dorchester
 Dorset
 DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	12
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	19
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	29
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	31
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	66

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. A strong focus on good teaching and learning means that pupils achieve well. Some areas of weakness remain because of budget and staffing difficulties, although overall the school gives good value for money. The acting headteacher and interim senior leadership team are guiding the school well through the transition to a specialist school and in planning for the new curriculum.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has a very good ethos for learning and a strong sense of community; relationships are very good and this helps pupils to be very well behaved, to enjoy school and to work hard.
- There is good teaching in most subjects and some that is very good, so that pupils learn well and achieve above average standards.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils; there are particular weaknesses in the provision for ICT and in the strategic direction of provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, and participation rates are high.
- The school has developed very good links with other schools and with the community and this helps the transition to school and sharing of good practice.
- There is very good provision in music and religious education in the main school and this has a very strong impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is very good.
- The governing body and senior managers have a strong focus on changing provision to further improve teaching and learning, and standards of achievement.
- Leadership in physical education is poor; this is preventing staff from giving their best and pupils from reaching their potential.
- Statutory requirements are not met fully for citizenship, work-related learning and collective worship or for religious education in the sixth form.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards have improved, particularly in the sixth form. The key issue from the last report, to improve teaching and learning, and most minor issues, have been tackled very well. However, interim budget difficulties mean that resources are still weak in some areas; the curriculum, particularly ICT provision, is unsatisfactory. This will be improved as the transition to specialist school status takes effect.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is good. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were well above the national average and those of similar schools. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form and achievement was good overall. In Year 9, standards were above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, standards were at least average, except for physical education, which was below average. Standards in Years 10 and 11 were more mixed and achievement ranged from very high in music to unsatisfactory in physical education. There is insufficient specific provision for citizenship to make a judgement on standards and achievement. Standards in the sixth form were similar to those of recent examinations. Girls tend to do better than boys in tests and examinations, but the gap is narrowing and is less than the gap nationally. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but those with specific learning difficulties do not achieve well enough because of a lack of specialist provision.

The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, as is their attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided is good. Teaching and learning are **good** at all levels and achievements are enhanced by the very good ethos for learning and relationships in the school. The pupils are very well supported, and there are very good partnerships with other schools, colleges and the wider community. Partnership with parents is good. The current curriculum is a weakness; it does not meet the needs of all pupils and some statutory requirements are not fully met.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management of the school is satisfactory overall. The pace of improvement has varied and been affected by staffing and budget constraints. However, the acting headteacher and interim senior leadership team are providing good leadership as the school moves into specialist school status. Governance and management are satisfactory. The school does not fully comply with statutory requirements for aspects of the curriculum and collective worship. This is affecting achievements in ICT, but there are well-developed plans to remedy this in the new curriculum pattern for September 2005.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils and parents think that this is a good school. Inspectors agree with their views that the school helps pupils of all abilities to achieve well. The school provides a good range of information, but does not evaluate the effectiveness of communication with parents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the revised curriculum for September 2005 includes provision to meet fully the National Curriculum for ICT.
- Improve the strategic leadership of provision for special educational needs to make best use of resources available and to provide specialist support when it is needed.
- Improve achievement and leadership in physical education.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve the provision for collective worship throughout and religious education in the sixth form.
- Enhance the programme for citizenship and work-related learning.

THE SIXTH FORM AT STOWUPLAND HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching; standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above average. The sixth form is very well led and students receive very good advice and guidance. The sixth form gives good cost effectiveness.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The subjects offered to external examinations are well organised and led, and students benefit from good teaching.
- Students are very well supported in their work and, in turn, are supportive of younger pupils in the school, willingly taking on responsibilities.
- The curriculum has excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities, but lacks core opportunities for general courses, personal and social education, and religious education.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good provision in English in response to well-planned teaching. Very good provision in French and students achieve very well. A lesson in German saw excellent teaching and very good achievement.
Mathematics	Very good provision in mathematics. Students achieve well in mathematics and very well in further mathematics.
Science	Satisfactory provision in vocational science. Provision is affected by a lack of resources. Good teaching was seen in a sample of physics.
Information and communication technology	The school does not provide a specific course in this area.
Humanities	Good provision in geography and work seen in the samples was well above average in history and above average in religious education.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good teaching and learning were seen in a sample of work in design and technology.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good teaching and learning were seen in the sample of work in art and design, media studies and music.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good teaching and learning were seen in a lesson sampled in travel and tourism.
Business	Good provision is made for vocational business studies.
Health and social care	The school does not provide courses in this area.
General education	The school does not provide general courses.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides very good advice, guidance and support, both formal and informal. Attendance is satisfactory, although monitoring arrangements are informal. Good careers advice is provided for those wishing to go on into higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is very good and management is good. The energetic head of the successful and thriving sixth form provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. There is very good liaison with subject heads, and all staff are focused on ensuring that all students reach the highest possible academic standards.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form, the courses provided and the quality of teaching. In discussions with inspectors they suggested that an improvement would be more general courses and access to sport. Year 12 students would like more advice on choices for those not wishing to enter higher education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form; standards are above average at all levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results are better than might be expected from pupils' prior attainment, both in Years 9 and 11, and are better than at the previous inspection.
- Pupils make good achievement in Year 9 in English, French, mathematics, history, geography, religious education and music, and standards are above average.
- Pupils achieve very well in music and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Achievement is particularly strong in the sixth form in mathematics and French.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in physical education because of poor leadership and in work-related learning (WRL) and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 because of weaknesses in provision.
- Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but those with specific learning difficulties do not achieve well enough because of a lack of specialist provision.

Commentary

Main school

1. The standards when pupils enter the school vary from year to year. Overall, they are slightly above average, with standards in mathematics and science being stronger than English in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6. There is no standardised testing at the end of Year 8, when pupils leave the middle schools. In recent years the standard on entry for those pupils who sat GCSE examinations in 2003 and 2004 was noticeably lower than the pupils taking examinations in 2001 and 2002. In general, boys entering the school have lower standards than girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34 (33.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.7 (36.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.1 (33.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 204 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were above average when compared with those in all schools nationally. They were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Results have been above average since Year 2000, with mathematics consistently performing above or well above

average. Overall, the upward movement in results has been above the national trend. When compared with the results of other schools with similar prior attainment, the school's results were well above average in 2003. Results were well above average in mathematics and science, and average in English. Although girls' results were better than those of boys within the school, the boys did as well as boys nationally in English and above this in mathematics and science. Girls did better than girls nationally throughout. The 2004 results show that this trend of improvement is continuing, but national figures are not yet available for comparison.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (57)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.2 (38.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 191 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11, results were above average in comparison with all schools in 2002 and 2003 – a slight fall from the well above average picture in 2000 and 2001, and a downward trend compared with national figures. However, the 2004 results show an upturn of improvement. When compared with the results of schools with similar intake profiles in 2003, the school performs at a broadly average level for the proportion achieving grades A*-C, although the average point scores were above average. These results did not meet the statutory targets set for GCSE, which were based on the 'best ever' years of 2000 and 2001 but they were as expected for the pupils concerned. When the patterns of individuals' results in 2003 are examined, pupils tended to do significantly better in science, history and religious education than in the other subjects that they took. They did significantly less well in geography and relatively less well in art and design, English, French and mathematics.
4. In response to the previous inspection report the school has supported and monitored the standards achieved by boys. In 2003 girls achieved better than boys, but the gap is decreasing and is less than the gap nationally.
5. In work seen during the inspection standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Standards are above average in mathematics, English and science. In other areas of the curriculum, standards are above average in geography, history, music, religious education and French. Standards are below average in physical education where there is no consistent focus on skill development. Standards are average in ICT, art and design, and technology.
6. Achievement in Year 9 is good. Pupils make better than expected achievements because there is good teaching and pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Achievement is very good in religious education and music where there are high expectations and a powerful work ethic, combined with enjoyment. Achievement is good in English, French, mathematics, science, geography, history and design and technology, and it is satisfactory in ICT and art and design. Achievement in physical education, however, is unsatisfactory and pupils do not reach the standards expected for their age.

7. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall, but there are noticeable differences in standards across different subjects. There are particular strengths in religious education where pupils are challenged to think for themselves about complex issues and to participate fully in debate with the teacher and each other, and they reach well above average standards. The small group of pupils studying GCSE music also reach well above average standards, both in individual and ensemble work. Standards are also above average in English, science, history and design and technology. Standards are average in mathematics, where some potentially higher achieving pupils are not being challenged. In French, standards are average; this represents good achievement for these pupils as the more able linguists tend to study German. Standards in geography are currently below average and reflect the staffing difficulties of earlier years, but are improving. Standards in ICT and physical education are below average. As in Year 9, there is insufficient provision to make a judgement about standards in citizenship in Years 10 and 11.
8. Pupils make good achievements during Years 10 and 11. They build on their success in Year 9 and many achieve better than expected in their chosen subjects. Pupils continue to achieve better in music and religious education than in other subjects. Achievements are unsatisfactory and affected by weaknesses in provision in physical education and ICT. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and science and good in all other subjects.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons; they receive good support from their teachers and from well-trained teaching assistants, some of whom are subject specialists. Pupils' progress in achieving their objectives on Statements of Special Educational Needs is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs include those with physical disabilities or social, emotional and behavioural problems. They achieve as well as their peers in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations. However, the small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties make slow progress in improving their language skills because there is no strategic support and monitoring planned across all subjects. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language. They achieve satisfactorily as they are well supported by LEA staff. The school has not formally identified pupils who are gifted and talented, and their progress is not monitored.
10. Standards of literacy are above average and make a positive contribution to pupils' achievements in tests and examinations. Standards of numeracy are broadly average. Pupils can estimate, calculate, graph and interpret information. Competence in ICT is average overall and in Year 9 and the sixth form, but below average in Years 10 and 11 because provision is unsatisfactory and pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and practise their skills.

Sixth form

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	86.2 (93.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.5 (37.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	271.2 (256.5)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 65 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

11. In the Alevel and AS-level examinations taken in 2003, results were above average for the average point scores and the higher grades A and B. Female candidates did noticeably better than male candidates. Students did significantly better in art and design, history, mathematics and drama than in their other subjects and results were relatively weaker in business education and chemistry. The upward trend in results is better than the national trend. Results in 2004 continued this improvement. In the AVCE examinations in 2003, results were broadly average in art and design and travel and tourism, but below average in business and well below average in science.
12. Students entering the sixth form need a minimum of five higher grades at GCSE. Overall, standards at entry are average. In work seen during the inspection standards were above average and achievement was good. Standards were at least above average in all the subjects inspected in detail except for business studies, where standards were average. In this subject, students are starting a subject new to them, as no provision is made for this subject in the main school. In subjects that were sampled, standards were above average overall, with particular strengths in history and religious education philosophy.
13. There are no taught courses in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT in the sixth form. However, students' use of language in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Most of them are confident and highly articulate speakers. They express opinions clearly and persuasively and are able to negotiate ideas effectively, as they do, for instance, in the sixth form council, which they run themselves. In a wider context, a group of boys from Year 12 led a series of impressive assemblies in a local middle school. Class and group discussion is an important element in all sixth form courses and very good classwork was seen during the inspection, particularly in German, English and drama. The quality of students' writing develops very well. Teachers in subjects such as English, philosophy and geography, where the skills of essay writing are particularly important, spend a good deal of time working with individuals on their written style. This too becomes confident and assured, with clear structure and appropriate use of the subject vocabulary that is developed in class discussion.
14. Standards in the application of number are above average. By the end of Year 13 pupils can handle information quite skilfully and use a wide range of statistical methods and graphical techniques. Students in Year 12, however, need more support in statistical analysis, for example, in geography or business studies. Students in the sixth form have the benefit of a resource area with 11 computers in the library, which support independent learning. They also have access to computers in the main ICT room, although the room is frequently shared with a class of younger pupils. Although this is not ideal, the compromise works and, as a result, the use of ICT to support other subjects is satisfactory overall and students develop broadly average skills and competencies in this area. Word-processing is well used to present work in English, religious education and the vocational courses. Media studies relies heavily on ICT for some editing of video clips. Advanced features of spreadsheets are used in mathematics and business studies lessons. In geography lessons students use word-processing and Internet research to support their learning and simulations; for example, coastal erosion software.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning and school life are very good. Behaviour is very good. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are excellent. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupil attendance is very good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. Punctuality across the whole school is very good. Relationships across the school are excellent. These aspects of the pupils' time in school show improvements over the findings of the last inspection report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are excellent at all levels and contribute to the positive ethos of mutual care and respect within the school.
- The very good behaviour and attitudes to learning have a positive impact on the good standards achieved by the pupils.
- Very good attendance and punctuality in school have a positive impact on the pupils' learning.
- Very good opportunities are provided to help pupils build confidence, raise their self-esteem and develop a sense of personal responsibility.
- There is no formal governor involvement in the regular monitoring of absence.

Commentary

15. The pupils' attendance is very good and has maintained a trend of improvement over the past three years. Attendance in Year 11 is very good and much improved over that reported in the last inspection. Punctuality in school is very good and lessons were seen to start on time. Unauthorised absence has reduced over recent years and is now broadly in line with the national average. However, there is no formal governor involvement in the regular monitoring of absence to ensure that this trend is maintained. The low level of pupil late arrivals is mainly due to transport delays.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.1
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	1.0
National data:	1.1

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

16. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the great majority display very good attitudes to their learning in school and their home environment. They listen well, demonstrate high levels of commitment to their work and show themselves to be well motivated and keen to learn. The very positive approach to learning is amply evidenced by the very high number of pupils involved in the wide and varied extra-curricular activities organised by the school. Inspectors were impressed by the high levels of enthusiasm and time commitment pupils brought to these activities, and the high quality standards they achieved. In particular, the very high numbers of pupils pursuing the Duke of Edinburgh Award demonstrates well the very positive attitudes pupils have to their own personal development.
17. Most are able to sustain very good levels of concentration during their lessons and collaborate well with each other in both group and paired activities. In the great majority of lessons observed pupils were seen to co-operate well with each other, share ideas in a positive way and celebrate the achievements of their peers. In a couple of lessons observed the disruptive actions of a few less-motivated pupils were ignored by the other pupils and effective teacher management strategies ensured that subject learning in those lessons was maintained.
18. The great majority of pupils display very good standards of behaviour in and around the school, which serves to enhance the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and adults. The very good, and sometimes excellent, behaviour to be seen in the school is very much a product of the overall good teaching being delivered in the classroom. However, there exists a small minority of pupils who have difficulty in behaving sensibly, lack self-discipline and their silly immature behaviour can slow the progress of other pupils in the class. Teachers who know their pupils well are able to utilise effective teaching skills and minimise this potential disruption to whole-class learning.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Chinese
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
634	43	1
11	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
106	0	0

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

19. Pupils display a very good level of commitment to the school ethos of care and respect for others. This is well evidenced by the very low level of exclusions for misbehaviour. Bullying is not an issue in the school. The school has zero tolerance towards bullying and pupils

and parents agree that the school deals effectively with any incidents that occur. The inspection team was particularly careful in investigating the concerns raised by some pupils and parents about poor behaviour in school. However, following checks of records and many observations and talk with pupils, staff and parents, the inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

20. Pupils work together constructively, form good friendships and settle their differences amicably. They like their teachers and think they are fair, listen to their ideas and are very approachable. Many pupils, in conversations and questionnaire returns, expressed many positive features of the school. The school's well-structured system of behaviour rewards and sanctions is clearly understood and owned by pupils and is proving to be effective in supporting the overall very good behaviour and self-discipline observed during the inspection. Such incidents of inappropriate behaviour that do occur are judged by pupils to be swiftly and fairly dealt with by staff to the satisfaction of all involved.
21. The excellent relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils, students and staff engender a positive learning environment and are a notable strength of the school. These contribute in a significant way to the calm and considerate atmosphere that pervades throughout the school. During lesson, lunch and break times the school presents as a calm and respectful community made possible by the orderly manner in which pupils conduct themselves. During the inspection pupils were often seen offering to help others, to hold doors open and regularly say "please" and "thank you" in a natural way. Inspectors were impressed with the courteous and polite manner in which the vast majority of pupils responded to them during the inspection week.
22. In general the school provides a very good range of personal development opportunities for pupils within their individual year groups and through the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. However, there is no formal practice for pupils to be offered whole-school responsibilities. The year council structures offer pupils regular opportunities to show enterprise and improve aspects of their time spent in their year group. There is no pupil suggestion scheme, however, the proposal to set up a whole-school council should enable greater pupil input and influence in the running of the school. Responsibilities offered to pupils are willingly accepted and undertaken with vigour and obvious pride.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are very positive about their learning. They work hard in lessons and take pride in their success. Those with behaviour difficulties respond well to firm behaviour management and high expectations for their behaviour.
24. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The contribution of religious education to pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. All pupils are given valuable opportunities to reflect on complex ethical, philosophical and religious issues in contexts that are motivating and enjoyable. However, little of a spiritual nature was observed in other lessons. Pupils' very good social development is reflected both in their attitudes and behaviour around the school and in the way they are able to learn effectively in groups and pairs. In French and German lessons pupils work very well together and respect other pupils' contributions in the foreign language. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the Duke of Edinburgh Award has the highest number of pupils participating in the country, which ensures that those pupils contribute both to the school and the wider community. The personal, health and social education programme gives good emphasis to pupils' understanding of right and wrong as well as a range of other issues, such as teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol awareness. Overall, cultural development is good. Projects

such as the mask project in art and design, the drama curriculum, European awareness in modern foreign languages and topics in history and geography ensure that pupils appreciate both their own and some aspects of other cultural traditions. However, the school's provision for pupils to live in a multicultural society is more limited and overall, the contribution of all subjects to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not sufficiently monitored.

Sixth form

25. There is no formal procedure to monitor and report attendance in the sixth form, however, anecdotal evidence suggests attendance to be at least satisfactory. Observations during the inspection showed punctuality to lessons to be very good.
26. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are excellent. Students are enthusiastic and positive about school life. They feel that they are treated as adults and enjoy the freedom and trust placed in them. Students' behaviour is seen to be excellent. They act in a mature way and present very good role models to the rest of the school. A minority of lower sixth students do not feel that bullying or racial abuse is always dealt with sufficiently by the school. Inspectors took the time to examine this view and, while not doubting these concerns, could not find any current evidence to support this.
27. Most students considered they are well advised and have made an active choice to come into the sixth form. Students in Year 13 willingly volunteer for a wide range of opportunities to work with, and support the learning of, younger pupils. Many are involved as peer mentors to younger pupils, helping them develop homework strategies and learning skills and how to best integrate within the school community. Others use their specialist subject knowledge to provide valued support to pupils in lower school lessons. Many more run lunch-time clubs at the neighbouring primary school or lead assemblies. These wide-ranging responsibility opportunities provide both the students and younger pupils with quality learning and personal development experiences.
28. Sixth formers take pride in the school. In discussion they talked in a mature way about their plans when they leave school and are clearly thinking sensibly about their futures. Most are polite and friendly; they engage readily in conversation with visitors and enter into discussions in lessons. Relationships are excellent and a strong feature of the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education offered is good overall. Teaching and learning are good. Many aspects of welfare and guidance, and of the partnership with the wider community, are very good and the partnership with parents is good. Despite an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in provision, particularly for ICT, and because not all statutory requirements are met fully.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good at all levels. Assessment is also good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good or better in four-fifths of lessons seen. This is a key factor in the good achievement made by pupils. Teaching is particularly strong in the sixth form.
- The school has maintained this high quality of teaching overall since the last inspection and improved areas of weakness despite staffing and budget difficulties.
- In most lessons work is very well planned to provide interesting activities as well as challenge.
- Good assessment is producing better targeting of work.
- Teaching and learning are enhanced by the very good attitudes pupils bring to their work.
- Weakness in resources, particularly in ICT, is limiting the range of activities pupils can use in their learning.
- Weaknesses in leadership are affecting teaching and learning in physical education, and specialist provision for some pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 142 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (6%)	41 (29%)	61 (43%)	29 (20%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0

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

Main school

29. Teaching and learning are good in all years in the main school. A strength of the school is that very good teaching was seen in almost all subjects inspected in detail. Nine outstanding lessons were seen in mathematics, religious education, German, media studies, drama and music, and this indicates the breadth of high quality teaching in the school. Teaching was very good overall in music, which provided challenge, a strong work ethic and fun, and in religious education where teachers enabled pupils to think for themselves, to discuss, debate and reflect on complex issues. Teaching was satisfactory in ICT in Year 9 and mathematics in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in physical education was unsatisfactory in all years because there was insufficient emphasis on skill development. Teaching was good in all other subjects inspected except for citizenship, where there was insufficient discrete teaching to make a judgement.
30. Most subjects use a clear three-part structure to lessons. Pupils are quickly engaged in learning with a starter activity and learning objectives are made clear. New information and skills are presented and practised and time is reserved to review progress at the end of the lesson, often involving homework tasks as further practise or preparation for the next lesson. As a result, most lessons make very good use of the time available, not least because most teachers plan a good range of activities that interest and involve the pupils. For example, a Year 11 French lesson introduced the future tense using the topic of 'Winning the Lottery', which provided good motivation.
31. Another major strength of the school is that almost all lessons demonstrate high expectations of what the pupils should be able to do, and learning is enhanced by pupils' good behaviour and willingness to participate. This was seen in a very good history lesson in Year 9 on the Industrial Revolution where whole class, group and individual activities engaged pupils at full stretch throughout the lesson. In most lessons, teachers and pupils enjoy good and productive relationships. Pupils also work well together, and many lessons were marked by lively, but thoughtful, participation, for example, listening carefully to each other and asking each other questions in whole-class work.
32. In a few cases, most notably in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, teachers do not cater enough for the spread of abilities in a class. Whilst lower and average attainers tend to get good support, higher attainers are not always stretched enough, for example, by giving them different work. A weakness across the curriculum is that there is relatively little use of ICT, because facilities are so limited.
33. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in most subjects. Pupils are well known and they are well supported and guided individually in lessons by both teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and most

progress as well as their peers because of good teaching. However, while there are good arrangements for assessing pupils' progress in subjects, there is insufficient systematic testing to measure the progress of those pupils with specific learning difficulties. This means that learning and progress in reading and writing for this small group is not as good as it should be. Pupils' progress in reaching their objectives in Statements of Special Educational Needs is assessed in annual reviews, but their individual education plans lack targets that can be measured more regularly to assess improvement.

34. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is broadly satisfactory, but is inconsistent across the school, as there is no overall planning. For instance, in history and geography guidance is given on the use of vocabulary and technical language structures in essay writing, however, in design and technology there is less focus on individual language expression and a heavy reliance on use of worksheets. The mathematics department uses the National Numeracy Strategy and science, geography and design and technology to support a broad range of numerical experiences.
35. Teaching is satisfactory in the discrete ICT course in Year 9 and throughout the main school pupils practise their skills in design and technology, geography, English and music using specialist software. However, teachers have few opportunities to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning because of the limitations in equipment.
36. Assessment is good in the main school; it is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 where teachers use guidance produced by examination boards. Since the last inspection a working party involving staff, pupils and parents has produced a whole-school assessment policy. As a result, teachers' assessments are thorough and effective and pupils have a good understanding of what they have to do to improve in most subjects.
37. Marking in most subjects is good; it is particularly good in religious education. Good feedback responds well to individual needs, giving helpful advice to pupils on how to improve their work. In English, marking in Year 9 is inconsistent across the department, although the practice improves considerably in Years 10 and 11 where comments are far more focused and GCSE grades are realistically used. In design and technology assessment varies across the material areas, but is good overall. Every week pupils write their own targets based on work that has been returned and marked. Formal assessment takes place at the end of each unit of work in science and design and technology. In modern foreign languages pupils' work is, in most cases, thoroughly marked with targets and constructive comments for improvement. There is good feedback in class on oral work focusing on accuracy and pronunciation. In geography and history assessment is not always used systematically. It is more thorough in Years 10 and 11 and where used it informs curriculum planning. In physical education and ICT assessment is not systematically applied and pupils do not have a target and are not informed about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Sixth form

38. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teaching was good or better in 90 per cent of the lessons seen and very good or excellent in almost 40 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. There are particular strengths in teachers' subject knowledge and in their planning of interesting and challenging activities. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection, despite budgetary and resource constraints, and

standards in national examinations have improved to above average. In focus subjects, teaching was very good overall in English, mathematics and French, and good in science, geography and business studies. Teaching was at least good in all the subjects sampled, indicating the strength of teaching across the curriculum.

39. The strengths of teaching in the main school are developed further in the sixth form so that there is a shared commitment to learning, high expectations and students are enabled to develop a mature approach to their work and very good learning skills. This was seen very effectively in French, where strategies included independent research using ICT, creative writing and the use of authentic resources. In mathematics, work is intellectually challenging and students are required to question, speculate and think for themselves. Teaching in science makes good use of small group tutorials to meet individual needs, but achievement in this subject is affected by deficiencies in resources. In geography, students benefit from the department's close attention to study techniques and coursework planning, which enables them to meet the challenges presented by the different work patterns required in the sixth form. Teaching in business education makes good use of real life contexts for study as well as simulations, but there are difficulties in the restricted access to ICT facilities.
40. Students respond very well to this high quality teaching; they make good gains in their knowledge and understanding, and demonstrate this in lessons, in discussion and debate, as well as in their written work. Learning is considerably enhanced by students' mature attitude to their work and their concentration and productivity. Relationships are very good and this enables them to work very well together.
41. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. Work is marked very thoroughly and teachers provide helpful comments for improvement. Teachers use examination assessment criteria so that students are very clear about how well they are doing. Teachers know students well and monitor their work carefully to ensure that they are making at least satisfactory achievement against their previous standards. The small group sizes mean that teachers respond well to individual needs identified by assessment and they give freely of their time to provide additional support and coaching.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in resources mean that the school cannot meet the National Curriculum requirements for ICT and statutory requirements are not met in all subjects. However, the school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation is good, but learning resources are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes excellent provision for enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- ICT provision is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because there is insufficient equipment.
- The programme for citizenship and work-related learning does not fully meet statutory requirements and is, therefore, unsatisfactory.
- Resources are poor in science and this impacts on the practical activities for learning.
- The school offers a good range of academic and vocational subjects in the sixth form.
- The school does not provide religious education for all sixth form students as it should.

Commentary

Main school

42. The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements in citizenship, ICT or work-related learning so that pupils can make the achievement they should in these areas. In all other respects it is broad and balanced. There are significant strengths in English, drama, mathematics, history, geography, art and design, music, religious education, drama and modern foreign languages. The extensive opportunities outside the mainstream curriculum in which many pupils take part, impact very positively on their learning. The school recognises that provision is inadequate for some pupils, including lower ability boys in Years 10 and 11, and has devised an innovative and exciting new curriculum that is to be introduced from the beginning of the next academic year. Timetabling does not always support efficient curriculum delivery, for example, there are split classes in mathematics, and a significant proportion of groups where there are two separate lessons on one day.
43. The school provides an excellent range of enrichment activities. A quite outstanding range of outdoor and adventurous activities is meticulously planned and carried out by a small and dedicated team under the direction of an energetic and very enthusiastic expert. Over 130 pupils gained the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in 2003-04, 31 at gold level, and the school organised its sixth biannual World Team Challenge taking 15 pupils to Bolivia for the whole of August. A very good range of sporting activities are planned and timetabled by the physical education department to extend learning opportunities for all pupils. Almost all pupils are involved in competitive inter-school and intra-school major traditional games, special interest recreational clubs and minority sports, which are co-ordinated throughout the school year and monitored by specialist staff. Every term, the school takes its music into the community, with pupils giving regular band or group concerts in the smaller surrounding villages, playing on successive evenings in the churches that are often the focal points of village life. Drama and musical productions are staged annually to enrich the artistic milieu of the area. In addition to this vast range of physical and creative activity, nine academic subject areas operate extension or homework clubs to complement and support the learning that takes place in lessons. Work experience for the whole year group, which takes place at the end of Year 10, and participation in the Young Enterprise programme, give a good foundation for work-related learning.
44. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the whole curriculum and their access in many lessons is enhanced by the good support of teaching assistants. Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and the curriculum for most, together with good teaching, enables them to achieve well. There is, however, no specialist provision planned to meet the needs of pupils who have specific learning needs. This results in unsatisfactory progress, for example, in improving their writing skills. Whilst most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, this group of pupils would benefit from specialist accommodation and resources to help with their learning.
45. Personal, social and health education is provided through the core studies programme, and all statutory requirements are met. Some teaching is through class tutors, and some areas such as sex education through specialists. There is currently an audit taking place, as part of the planned improvements in provision for citizenship.

46. There is generally a good match of teachers to the curriculum and where provided the deployment of support staff is effective. The school continues to experience difficulty in the appointment of a well-qualified science teacher.
47. Teaching staff are well supported by efficient administrative, premises and other domestic staff who contribute particularly well to the smooth running of the school. The provision of support technicians in science and design and technology is very good, but there is no ICT network manager. Teaching assistants to help pupils with special educational needs are well deployed into departments, where they develop considerable subject expertise. However, their work is not co-ordinated centrally and support lacks strategic direction and monitoring. This is not making best use of available resources.
48. The overall quality of accommodation is good. The school shares a large open site and buildings are well maintained both inside and out. The general display around the school is good and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning by providing a stimulating and pleasant environment. Most subjects benefit from suited rooms. The school makes the best use of its accommodation at lunch-time where classrooms are used and well managed to offset the demands placed on the small dining areas. The specialist accommodation for physical education is very good and includes the on site sports centre, which is also well used in the evenings and weekends by a range of community groups.
49. Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall. They are poor in science and this impacts on the opportunities available for individual practical work. Most subject departments lack computer equipment and cannot gain ready access to the specialist facilities. The last inspection report identified the lack of equipment and insufficient opportunity for all subject areas to have immediate access to ICT facilities. The school has a very limited number of interactive whiteboards. They are well used in modern foreign languages and religious education.
50. The library is a good resource, an oasis of calm, and is well used by pupils. It is spacious, attractive, and user-friendly. It is well managed by an enthusiastic librarian and open to pupils during lunch break and after lessons, with a late night opening to coincide with school transport arrangements. It provides good support to pupils with special educational needs and there is good liaison with the English department to promote reading further. There is a good induction programme and the pupils engage in a range of activities and have opportunity to meet successful authors.

Sixth form

51. Curriculum provision in this small sixth form is unsatisfactory since religious education does not fully satisfy legal requirements. However, provision has improved since the last inspection. Basic academic subjects are covered, and the school has very good relationships with West Suffolk College designed to resolve any gaps that might effect students. Provision is good in English, drama, mathematics, science, history, geography, art and design, music, philosophy and modern foreign languages. Provision for vocational and work-related subjects in the sixth form is satisfactory. Careers provision is closely linked to opportunities in further and higher education. The good levels of specialist expertise across a wide range of academic subjects are strong features of the overall sixth form provision.

52. The current accommodation including the students' common room and balcony study area are good, but the open aspect restricts the social use of the common room when the study area is used for class teaching.
53. Resources are again unsatisfactory. The dedicated sixth form ICT suite, sited alongside the library is fully utilised and used sensibly for independent focused study. However, the lack of adequate whole-school computer facilities is restricting the use of ICT in most specialist subject areas. Resources in science are poor, restricting teaching and hindering learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision to ensure pupils' care and welfare and health and safety during their time in school. It provides them with very good support and guidance and makes good provision for their involvement in aspects of the school's work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality child protection and related procedures ensure pupils' best interests.
- There is very good pastoral support for pupils, who feel valued by staff.
- Very good induction systems enable a smooth transition into school routines.
- There is good involvement of pupils in the life of the school.

Commentary

Main school

54. Very good child protection and care procedures are in place. Staff have received training in child protection and are aware of, and familiar with, the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their care. Risk assessment techniques are well established and embedded into school routines. Very good health and safety procedures embrace the whole spectrum of the pupils' time in the school. Governors are fully involved on a regular basis in the school's health and safety audit and monitoring processes.
55. Pupils feel safe in school. Teachers know their pupils well and provide them with a high level of pastoral support. They are kindly and sensitive to their needs. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and value highly the advice and guidance they receive from staff. The effective use of systematic assessment systems, to track and report on the pupils' personal development, enables personal targets to be agreed with pupils, shared with parents and regularly monitored to show progress being achieved. The work experience and vocational opportunities provided to pupils is good. Career guidance formally starts at Year 10 and is well organised with on site external agency staff being the main provider of advice to the pupils.
56. Very good and effective induction procedures ensure that new pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. Staff link up with pupils in their primary schools and phased visits are organised for the pupils to visit and become accustomed to Stowupland High prior to starting at the school. A series of meetings and information packs are prepared, all of which prepare pupils and parents well for life in secondary education. The close collaborative working between pupils in Year 9 and their sixth form student mentors has a significant impact on how well the younger pupils settle into the routines of school life.

57. Good and developing systems are in place to canvas pupils' views and involve them in the work of the school. Year councils are well used to enable pupils to comment on and influence their day-to-day experiences in school. Plans are well advanced for the establishment of a school council, which will greater involve the pupils in all aspects of the school towards improving the overall school facilities and learning environment.
58. Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs are appropriately supported and guided through the annual review of their progress. Subject teachers know pupils well across the whole range of special educational needs, but whole-school procedures to monitor progress are not robust enough to be fully effective, particularly for those with specific learning problems.

Sixth form

59. Students value the very good quality support provided and readily approach subject teachers to discuss concerns and seek advice. Teachers are generous with their time in helping with any problems or worries and students feel well supported as they pass through the sixth form. Subject retention rates are very high and students expressed great satisfaction with the quality of teaching they receive. They readily support and contribute to the sixth form council, and current plans for a whole-school council will enable the student body to better influence how the school is run.
60. There is a very good practice for self-assessment amongst the sixth form students with targets being agreed and reviewed with their tutors on a regular basis. A number would like more access to personal career guidance to better inform their future employment decision making, particularly those not going on to higher education studies. The inspection team agrees that informed career guidance to sixth form students is limited.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school is oversubscribed and parents remain supportive and involved in their children's learning. Parents continue to be provided with a good level of information and the partnership with them is good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good community links are of great mutual benefit to pupils and the wider community at large.
- Very good working relationships with other educational partners enrich the pupils' learning opportunities.
- Parents are supportive and have confidence in the work of the school.
- A good level of information is made available to keep parents up to date with school activities and pupils' successes.
- The school does not review the effectiveness of home communication systems.

Commentary

Main school

61. The school is popular and oversubscribed and reflects the high satisfaction expressed by the majority of parents in a recent questionnaire. However, only some 17 parents attended the inspectors' meeting with parents prior to the inspection and just over half have agreed to sign the home-school agreement. Most parents consider staff very approachable and responsive, and are pleased with the school's high expectations for behaviour and their

children's good progress. Discussions with staff and pupils show there are good arrangements for regular communication opportunities with parents, in particular relating to less able and under achieving pupils.

62. Most parents value the pupils' day planner system as a good means of monitoring how their child is progressing at school and there is evidence that many are well used by the teachers and parents for the exchange of information and to raise any concerns and queries. There is good practice in organised meetings for parents and teachers to discuss pupils' progress. The good level of summary progress reports ensures that parents can regularly monitor how well their children are doing in their subjects. End-of-year progress reports provide good levels of information on what pupils have achieved and outline areas for improvement. However, there are mixed views amongst parents over the frequency and clarity of the information they receive and the school needs to review with parents the effectiveness of its school-home communication strategies.
63. During the inspection many examples were provided of teachers and parents working together as partners in the development of strategies to help improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning in the home and school environment. Most parents are happy with the way the school is run, however, a few parents expressed concerns over the way work experience placements are organised. In recognising that a few unexpected problems occurred in the last academic year, the inspection team is satisfied with the arrangements the school has to provide all pupils with access to meaningful work experience opportunities.
64. The school benefits greatly from the active Stowupland Parent and Teachers Association, PTA, a small and dedicated group of parents who organise regular fund-raising social events that are well attended by parents and the local community. The pupils' learning environment has been greatly enhanced by the many donations of quality learning resources received from the PTA. In particular, the PTA was influential in helping the school secure its recent bid for special school status, due to the size of its financial commitment to the school. The school is very much a community resource and well used to benefit adult learning groups and a wide range of local social and sporting associations. The sports centre and school fields are well used by the local community.
65. The very good partnership working with feeder schools enriches pupils' learning and provides them with quality social links through a wide range of shared learning and sporting activities. The planned cross-phase curriculum activities have a significant impact on the ease with which Year 9 pupils are successfully integrated into the high school routines. Older pupils gain significant benefits from the very good links and work experience opportunities organised by the external agencies and the local further education college. Appropriate liaison with parents of pupils with special educational needs ensures that they are fully involved in the annual review of Statements of Special Educational Needs. There is also effective liaison with middle schools to ensure that pupils make a smooth transfer, and with a local college to arrange vocational courses.
66. The very close working relationships developed with a number of local business and industrial partners have a positive impact on the further development of the pupils' learning environment.

Sixth form

67. The good provision made in the main school to develop partnerships continues into the sixth form. The development of vocational courses includes partnership arrangements with local business and commercial organisations. The very good assessment procedures in the sixth form mean that students and their parents are kept well informed about progress.
68. Sixth form students are mostly positive in their views, feel they are well supported, that teaching is good, and that their tutors are helpful and supportive. A number would like more access to sporting activities during their time in school. The inspection team agrees that recent curriculum changes have significantly reduced access to physical education activities and general studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the acting head and senior staff is good, and the management of the school is satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory. However, statutory requirements for WRL, citizenship, ICT, the daily act of collective worship throughout the school and religious education in the sixth form are not fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the acting senior team is implementing new initiatives and maintaining standards in a transition phase of the school's life.
- Managers and governors are working together to promote school improvement.
- Curriculum leadership is poor in physical education and in special educational needs.
- There is very good leadership and good management of the sixth form.

Commentary

Main school

69. Leadership is good overall. The acting headteacher and acting senior staff are widely respected throughout the school for their efforts to modernise the curriculum, improve teaching and learning, and raise standards. They have a clear vision of where they see the school going. Collectively, they have an accurate picture of what the school does well, and they know the areas in which the school needs to improve. They have a clear picture of the actions that must be taken to secure continuous improvement, and they have the determined support of the very large majority of the staff team. Best value analysis recognises good practice within the school, and this is then shared internally to maintain and improve the quality of learning.
70. The leadership of other key staff is good, both in the curriculum and in pastoral care. A modern and innovative curriculum has been developed to dovetail with the very recently gained and newly implemented status as a specialist mathematics and ICT college, although the impact of this has yet to be fully felt. Curriculum leadership is good in most subjects. It is very good in science, music and religious education. It is poor in physical education and in some aspects of special educational needs. Where leadership of a subject is good or better, there is a clear focus on raising standards and this ensures that pupils achieve well. When leadership is less than satisfactory, work is not planned

strategically to meet the learning needs of pupils, and there is a lack of aspiration to raise standards. Pastoral team leaders provide good support for their teams of tutors and pastoral support is well organised.

71. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is appropriately constituted, meets regularly and considers the full range of its responsibilities. Governors are fully involved in the school development plan, working with senior members of staff in developing the original five-year plan, the annual priorities and in the bid and implementation plan for specialist school status. All governors are members of the school effectiveness group, which has a single agenda item to review school performance through test and examination results and departmental reviews. Through this group governors have a satisfactory overview of the key strengths and weaknesses of the school and they provide challenge by questioning published data and school actions for improvement. However, governors have not yet developed regular links with departments that would give them more detailed information about the work of the school.
72. Governors have approved a wide range of policies, including those promoting racial equality and ensuring access for all. The governors report that accommodation restrictions prevent the school providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. This is a serious omission, but inspectors found that this did not have a detrimental effect on pupils' personal development or achievement. All pupils attend collective worship twice weekly, they follow a course in religious education where their standards are at least above average and their personal development and relationships are very good. The governors have done all that reasonably could be expected to improve provision, given the deficit budget situation. They decided to maintain staffing levels and this helped to improve standards. Provision has been made for citizenship and WRL, but the organisation of provision across the curriculum is not yet robust enough to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
73. Management is satisfactory overall. The majority of staff in leadership positions at all levels have a strong commitment to moving the school forward academically, whilst maintaining its deserved reputation as a very caring institution. However, both senior and middle level leaders, and governors, have been distracted recently from their monitoring and evaluation roles by the urgent need to control and balance a significant budget deficit. This was successfully achieved one year ahead of schedule, but meant that the leadership team was undermanned and curriculum developments were postponed. The application for specialist school status took almost two years and delayed curriculum reforms and developments.
74. Performance management is well established and the school is working hard in the current year to improve the rigour with which it monitors and evaluates itself. A number of heads of department, as very good subject leaders and expert classroom practitioners, represent an invaluable resource to be exploited for the overall benefit of the school. However, training to improve the leadership capability of middle managers has been delayed by secondment, illness and recruitment difficulties.
75. The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is poor, and its management is unsatisfactory. The SENCO ensures that administrative functions are carried out satisfactorily. The SEN policy and register are kept up to date and all essential functions such as the annual review of Statements of Special Educational Needs and liaison with parents and external agencies proceed as required. However, there is a lack

of clarity of vision, and of knowledgeable and innovative leadership in identifying and making provision for the many forms of pupils' special educational needs. Monitoring and evaluation of provision is not rigorous enough, and there are no systematic procedures for testing and recording of pupils' progress. Subject teachers and teaching assistants are not sufficiently well supported and there is a lack of coherence across the curriculum. This means that, whilst at the moment pupils with special educational needs are taught well in most subjects, this is because of the individual efforts of teachers and teaching assistants. Their continued progress is not secure because there is not a systematic and well-monitored approach devised by the leadership of special educational needs. In addition, pupils with specific learning difficulties, for example, in reading or in writing, are enabled to achieve in other subjects because of the care those staff take, but they make too little progress in improving the specific difficulties they have.

76. The school runs a very tight and balanced budget. The financial affairs of the school are now managed and controlled well and monitored very closely by governors. However, since the previous inspection, this was not always the case. Salaries were significantly in excess of the local authority notional funding benchmark due to staff remaining in post for many years. The school applies the principles of best value with rigour, and uses its resources well to support pupils' and students' learning. There is very little virement of monies between the main school and the sixth form. Overall, the school provides good value for money, and the sixth form is cost effective.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,932,319	Balance from previous year	14,948
Total expenditure	1,860,520	Balance carried forward to the next	86,747
Expenditure per pupil	3,773.77		

Sixth form

77. The energetic head of the successful and thriving sixth form provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. There is very good liaison with subject heads, and all staff are focused on ensuring that all students reach the highest possible academic standards. The sixth form provides access to a good range of mainly academic courses that meet the needs, ambitions and aspirations of the students.
78. The same management systems that ensure that the main school runs smoothly also operate within the sixth form. The sixth form provides a range of courses to meet the needs of students and is cost effective.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum leaders are insufficiently aware of the requirement to plan opportunities for work-related learning into their schemes of work, so provision in departments is unsatisfactory.
- The school's planning for increased flexibility has been delayed, so there is insufficient provision for vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision for careers education is good.
- The management and organisation of work-related learning are unsatisfactory.
- The planning of personal, social and health education and the citizenship programmes takes too little account of the new requirements of the work-related curriculum.

Commentary

79. The school's current provision for work-related learning is unsatisfactory. Pupils' understanding of this area of the curriculum is weak and standards are below average. The implementation of plans to introduce a vocational range of options was significantly delayed because of budget constraints. There are currently no school-based vocational courses in Years 10 or 11, although seven pupils go to a local college on some days each week for a variety of work-related learning courses. The narrowness of curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 means that the learning needs of all pupils are not met.
80. The incorporation of work-related learning across the curriculum is also unsatisfactory. Teachers and subject managers lack awareness of the need to include this area of learning in departments' schemes of work and planning. On occasions where reference is made to the links between subjects and the workplace, these are incidental, not planned cohesively and lack co-ordination. No subject, therefore, contributes significantly to pupils' achievement in understanding this area of learning. The unsatisfactory nature of the citizenship curriculum means that this does not contribute satisfactorily either. Pupils' very positive attitudes and general maturity, however, lend themselves well to good responses to any opportunity provided.
81. The absence of the work experience co-ordinator in both recent years has caused delays to pupils' work placements and has resulted in justified parental concern. Another member of staff was able to step into the co-ordination role, and almost all pupils were eventually placed, but anxieties related to this experience were not fully resolved in all cases. Post-work experience debriefs and subsequent school based work, some led by the English department, are satisfactory. The school recognises that this area of its organisation and management needs improvement.
82. Pupils have good careers guidance. The careers agency representative is frequently on site, able to give advice and help at least once to all pupils in Year 11, with some pupils seeing her several times. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported, sometimes receiving home visits from the careers officer. The school also has a centrally located, dedicated careers library and other resources, and its own careers teacher.
83. The management of work-related learning is unsatisfactory. The acting headteacher has taken over this role and has necessarily prioritised other urgent issues. The school again recognises that this situation needs improvement. All areas of work-related learning across the school require proper co-ordination, management and leadership.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus subjects were English and French and work was sampled in German.

84. Three lessons of German were seen and some work was scrutinised from Years 10 and 11. Overall, teaching is very good and in one Year 11 lesson excellent teaching was observed. Pupils start learning German at the beginning of Year 9 and 2003 GCSE results were well above average, which represents very good achievement for that year group. At the beginning of Year 11, pupils are already able to talk accurately and with some fluency about work experience. German is a strength of the modern foreign languages faculty.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are good. Pupils respond well to teachers' clear expectations of behaviour.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is thorough.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what they must do to improve, and they achieve well.
- Strong leadership of the faculty supports commitment and enthusiasm in the teaching team.
- There is not enough structured observation of classroom teaching within the faculty and so opportunities for sharing good practice are missed.
- Pupils of higher ability need to be more effectively challenged.
- The department is not teaching the ICT skills that it should.

Commentary

85. Pupils reach above average standards in the subject. Results of the tests taken at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last five years and are now above the national average; they are in line with schools that had similar standards in the earlier tests for 11-year-olds. Girls do better than boys, but both do better than boys and girls nationally. In 2003, GCSE results in English and English literature for pupils in Year 11 were above the national average in the range A*-C, although they were below average in the highest grade. The work seen during the inspection confirms these standards.
86. These results represent good achievement overall in all three years. The reading and writing levels reached by pupils entering the school in Year 9 are very close to national averages, but by the end of their first year they are above average. Pupils are more confident speakers and attentive listeners, increasing their range of structures and vocabulary. Their reading skills develop well through the literature they study in class and

through their use of the school library. Written work is well presented and they learn to draft and redraft their work, paying attention to spelling, punctuation and grammatical structure. By the time they reach Year 11, pupils have considerable independence in reading and interpreting texts; their writing is confident and, for the most part, accurate in expression.

87. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all three years. Teachers expect and are given high standards of behaviour and commitment. Pupils respond well to the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and to the high quality assessment of their work, which is the practice of most of the department. Much of the progress they make individually is the result of teachers' comments on their writing, giving, as it does, clear advice on strengths and weaknesses and points for development. However, more structured attention needs to be given in lessons to challenging pupils with higher attainment levels, and to supporting those with specific learning difficulties who make less progress in writing and reading than others.
88. Leadership of the faculty, and within it of the department, is good. The head of faculty is committed to the school and ambitious for the success of its pupils. She leads a team of well-organised and enthusiastic teachers, supporting them well and playing to their individual strengths. Management of the subject is satisfactory, but there needs to be more rigorous and structured monitoring of teaching and learning so that standards are consistent and good practice is shared. Although there are good book resources in the department, the school's resources do not currently make it possible to teach the ICT skills that are appropriate to the subject.
89. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Results in national tests and GCSE examinations have risen. All teaching is now at least satisfactory, and much of it is good or better. Assessment and marking of pupils' work is systematic and clear. However, the need for careful monitoring of teaching and learning remains.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

90. The school does not have a central literacy policy and there is no literacy co-ordinator in post. Although standards of literacy are generally good across the curriculum, support for progress in reading and writing is inconsistent. There is no whole-school approach to developing literacy skills. For instance, in history and geography guidance is given on use of vocabulary and technical language structures in essay writing, however, in design and technology there is less focus on individual language expression and a heavy reliance on the use of worksheets. Pupils with specific learning difficulties related to language rely on the support given by individual teachers or teaching assistants as there is no systematic provision by the leadership of special educational needs. The school librarian gives strong support to reading through her work with the English department and through activities that she devises independently.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good resulting in a shared commitment to raise standards.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 9 to 11 because of good teaching.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to language learning.
- Assessment in Years 9 to 11 should be further developed so that pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- There are too few opportunities for ICT and independent reading.

Commentary

91. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below average in French and the results in 2004 were similar. However, students who study French in Years 10 and 11 do not represent the full ability range as many of the more able pupils choose to study German. Therefore, although results at GCSE are below average, this represents good achievement for these pupils.
92. Standards seen in French in Year 9 are above average. Pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 9 with average standards in French and so this represents good achievement. Most pupils in Year 9 speak confidently with good pronunciation and have good listening skills. Higher attaining pupils are already starting to use the past tense. Scrutiny of work from the end of Year 9 shows that higher and average attaining pupils can use the past tense in writing and use language creatively. Pupils understand and respond well to explanations and instructions in the foreign language and are developing good grammatical understanding. In Year 11, standards seen are average and achievement is good. Pupils are already preparing coursework tasks for the GCSE writing component and in speaking all pupils can express opinions. Higher attaining pupils are starting to use the future tense accurately. Some weaker pupils, however, have less confidence in speaking and their responses are more limited. By the end of Year 11, pupils have produced a variety of coursework tasks on topics such as advertising their school, their region and past holidays. Higher attaining pupils write at length using a range of tenses and can give opinions with reasons. Average and lower attaining pupils produce shorter and less accurate texts using simple language.
93. Overall, teaching in the department in Years 9 to 11 is good. All teachers have very good subject knowledge providing a good model for pupils' own language. They have high expectations and place good emphasis on pupils' accuracy and pronunciation. Due to teachers' good class management, pupils work effectively in pairs and groups and listen well to each other. As a result, pupils have good listening skills and speak confidently. Teachers plan a range of activities so that all pupils learn at a good pace. Homework tasks reinforce the language pupils learn in class and include speaking as well as written tasks. Marking is thorough with comments on how to improve individual pieces of work and oral feedback is good. However, the assessment of pupils' work needs to be developed further so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In Year 9, assessment is not related closely enough to National Curriculum Levels. Although teachers provide a range of opportunities for both collaborative and independent learning, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT and independent reading to support their language learning.
94. Leadership and management in the department are good. The department works well as a team with a shared commitment to raising standards. Departmental documentation and policies are very good, and they are reflected in consistent classroom practice. However,

the schemes of work, although very detailed, do not show sufficient opportunities in all units of work for the most and the least able pupils. The department needs to use data more effectively to devise strategies for raising standards at the end of Year 11, particularly for average attaining pupils. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good; teachers are aware of the next steps in the pupils' learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of the pupils.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The pupils' learning is undermined because teaching strategies do not meet the needs of a broad range of ability.
- ICT is underused as a resource for learning.

Commentary

95. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were well above average compared with all schools and similar schools, with girls performing better than boys. The pupils' achievement was good compared to their standards on entry to the school and represents, since the last report, year-on-year improvement at a greater rate than that nationally. Standards in the 2004 tests indicate a continuing improving trend with a significant proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. Current standards of work seen in Year 9 are overall above average and pupils achieve well.
96. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were above the national average with boys performing significantly better than the girls. However, the pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment in Year 9 for the same cohort of pupils was unsatisfactory. Comparing 2003 GCSE mathematics results with other school subjects indicates overall underachievement particularly with respect to the pupils achieving the highest grades. Standards for both boys and girls in the 2004 examination improved slightly compared with the previous year and achievement was overall satisfactory. Current standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are overall average and achievement is overall satisfactory.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and in Year 9 is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils' learning is well organised into units of work. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are planned well and take account of the differing learning styles of pupils. Pupils benefit from mental exercises at the start of lessons as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, although teachers do not always share lesson objectives with pupils and end of lesson reviews are not common. There is a good balance between theory and practice with the current focus on investigational work. For example, in one lesson all pupils were able to examine the relationship of 'squares within squares' with the higher attaining pupils able to consider the concept of a non-linear relationship when the results are represented graphically. The use of 'bite' size activities that would benefit the lower attaining pupils are infrequent, although teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and homework is set regularly and marked up to date. Relationships between teacher and pupil are very good. Overall, pupils' attitude and behaviour are very good. Pupils listen well and contribute much in lessons keeping the pace brisk. Where teaching is satisfactory opportunities for pupils' personal development,

such as group work and demonstrating taught skills at the whiteboard are overlooked with a heavy reliance on the use of the textbook. As a result, the pace of some lessons is slow. Overall, ICT is underused as a resource for teaching and learning.

98. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is overall satisfactory. Teaching reflects well the scheme of work and planned Programmes of Study and there is good continuity and progression following on from Year 9. Pupils make good use of previously taught skills. The start of lessons often includes a review of previous work and teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their exposition and explanation. However, the teaching methodology used in the majority of lessons is unimaginative. In the lessons observed, there was a heavy reliance on the textbook for much of the time with pupils working independently. Teachers neglect the opportunity for pupils to consider completed work at the end of lessons. Consequently, higher order skills, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, are not discussed and key words or statements go unrecorded. As a result, pupils' achievement and the quality of learning are overall only satisfactory. Homework is used to reinforce the learning in lessons, although opportunities to extend the more able are overlooked. Resources that are available are used well.
99. Leadership of the faculty is good. There is a commitment to raising standards at GCSE level and the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. There is clear vision for the future development of the subject and documentation is up to date. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed. Standards since the last inspection are improving year on year particularly by the end of Year 9. Very good analysis of assessment data and test and examination results has led to a review of schemes of work and strategies for raising standards. Management of the faculty is satisfactory, although monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the implementation of policy is not formalised. Staffing is satisfactory, but management would be improved if positions of responsibility were identified.

Mathematics across the curriculum

100. Overall, pupils' basic numeracy skills are sound without having to rely on the calculator. Pupils can estimate, calculate, graph and interpret information. The National Numeracy Strategy is inconsistently applied in Year 9 by the mathematics department. Units of work are shared with pupils at the start of modules, although learning objectives, including key words and skills, at the start of lessons are not. Pupils benefit from the initial 'quick-fire' questions that are sometimes linked to the main topic as part of the strategy. However, the end of lesson review to give some understanding of how well pupils have progressed is often ignored. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants in mathematics lessons ensuring that they make similar progress to their peers. Other departments, notably science, geography and design and technology, support a broad range of numerical experiences, but there is no systematic planning across the curriculum and opportunities that exist within schemes of work are not being taken advantage of. Currently no action has occurred to conduct an audit and evaluate the quality of provision. There is a school numeracy policy, but in-service training for new teaching staff to raise awareness is long overdue. National test and examination results indicate that pupils' competence in mathematics across the curriculum remains satisfactory compared to the previous report and is not a barrier to learning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are enthusiastic and committed.
- Regular assessment keeps pupils aware of their progress and attainment.
- Resources are poor; shortages of apparatus mean that pupils have few opportunities for individual experimentation.
- Additional material is needed for Year 9 to extend the faster workers and to make understanding easier for lower attaining pupils.

Commentary

101. In 2003 national test results in science for pupils in Year 9 were well above average compared with all schools, and compared with similar schools. The trend of these results is an improving one over five years. At GCSE, both A*-C and A*-G grades were better than national averages, and 2004 results improved further. Usually all pupils gain a grade in the A*-G range every year, and the trend for A*-C grades is an improving one. 'Science Plus' course certificates were also gained by 20 of 21 pupils, including 13 at gold level.
102. Inspection evidence shows that standards of work are above average by the end of Year 9 and achievement is good. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils have extended their scientific vocabulary and use correct scientific terminology in answering questions and in discussion. Both knowledge and practical skills have increased and written work shows good understanding; pupils' answers in class confirm this. Many pupils use the Internet extensively to augment the very good library resources, to widen their knowledge and for research tasks. There are few differences between the work of boys and girls in their classwork. In all three years, pupils with special educational needs match their peers in practical and oral work, and cannot usually be identified except by the quality of their written records. They progress as well as the rest, especially when supported by a non-teaching assistant. However, this support is rare.
103. No automated data capture was witnessed, due to lack of equipment. Although the faculty has no literacy policy, and no special emphasis on literacy, written work is good and the standard of spelling above average. However, some pupils would benefit from extended key word lists combined with word walls. Pupils have sufficient numeracy skills for their work in science.
104. The standard of teaching is good. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers interest and motivate pupils. Teachers work around shortages of equipment by planning group activities, rather than individual tasks. Lessons have a good pace and contain plenty of challenges. The lesson objective is clearly stated at the beginning and is evaluated in the final summary. Class control is firm but fair and only a tiny minority of pupils lacking in self-discipline behave inappropriately and disturb their classmates. These few are well known to staff, but there is insufficient non-teaching support in some classes to totally prevent these minor disruptions. Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly good and this in general, results in very 'light touch' class control. These factors result in good learning, which follows the good teaching. Marking is regular, but pupils would benefit from more written comments on how to improve. In the mixed ability classes in Year 9 more graded materials are needed to ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment can understand and cope with the work.

105. The substantive head of the faculty is on a year's leave of absence. The acting head of the faculty has identified a backlog of issues that need addressing, and a good start has been made in the first three weeks of term. Vision, drive and enthusiasm are all abundantly present and changes are already under discussion to improve the faculty's results. She is backed by a first-class team of teachers and technicians, and the collegiate spirit in the faculty is clearly a great support. Leadership is, therefore, very good and this is matched by very good management. These qualities are reflected in the way that the faculty is coping with a further absence due to sickness, and the fact that standards have not been allowed to suffer in any way.
106. The laboratories are ageing, but teachers make good use of the space available for display. Resources, particularly in physics-based topics are insufficient and group work must often replace the preferred individual or paired working.
107. Since the last inspection the only outstanding issue is that of automated data capture. The standards of teaching and examination results have improved. However, the resourcing situation has deteriorated, largely due to age and six years additional wear and tear. Improvement can only, therefore, be said to be satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Strategy has been introduced into Year 9 and has been well supported by a local educational authority strategist.
- There are not enough computers so pupils do not have discrete ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11 or sufficient opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum.
- The success of the specialist school status bid means that more money is now available to provide resources, giving pupils greater access to ICT facilities.
- Pupils' work is not well marked and they are given no guidance about how they can improve.

Commentary

108. Teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 show that the majority of pupils have well above average standards, however, portfolio evidence shows this to be over generous.
109. The standards of work observed during the inspection were in line with national averages in Year 9. During Year 9 lessons, learning is supported by the Key Stage 3 ICT National Strategy materials. Pupils find out about planning and sequencing events, using flow charts and Gantt charts. They are able to identify input, output and processes in systems and evaluate the results of their own and other pupils' problem solving. Lower attaining and physically impaired pupils are well supported by a learning support assistant enabling them to achieve well. Although there is insufficient challenge for higher ability pupils, achievement taken as a whole is satisfactory.
110. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. There is no specific course in ICT and insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop and use their skills. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards and achievement in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

111. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9. Planning of ICT lessons is sound as is the teacher's knowledge of the subject. A data projector is used to engage the interest of the pupils, however, the unusual shape of the room makes it difficult for all pupils to see projected images. The teacher uses group work, individual work and focused questioning to involve all pupils in lessons. Pupils are encouraged by praise. As pupils are working they are supported by their teacher and there is a good repartee that develops pupils' understanding of tasks, enabling the teacher to assess the level of learning during lessons. Written work, however, is not thoroughly assessed, with little evidence of marking and no feedback about what the pupil must do to improve standards.
112. Current leadership and management of ICT is satisfactory, but improvement in ICT since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The school is in very early stages of transition to a specialist school for ICT and mathematics. Improved accommodation and resources are scheduled so that there will be specific courses in ICT in all years. The ICT management team has a departmental development plan that gives detailed plans for the development of the subject. The management of ICT as a discrete subject in Year 9 is satisfactory overall. Planning of lessons is sound and the support of the LEA strategy consultant has had a positive impact on the delivery of ICT, but the thoroughness of assessment needs addressing.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

113. The use of ICT to support subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The ratio of computers to pupils is well below the national average and recent technical problems have exacerbated the situation. This has led to problems in accessing ICT equipment to support learning in most other subjects. When equipment is available, teachers and pupils make good use of it, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills over time.
114. In design and technology very good use was made of ICT in Year 11 lessons to present the 'design and making' brief, incorporating a good use of digitised images, inserted tables and text boxes, with a good use of Corel Draw to develop a logo. Systems diagrams were used effectively to demonstrate manufacturing process, systems and control. The pupils' ICT skills were well developed in these lessons and they were able to use appropriate software that they had selected, making good use of the relevant features. Year 9 pupils also used Corel Draw in their design and technology lessons to copy a logo, using tools with confidence. Pupils of all abilities are challenged because of the high expectations of their teacher. In one lesson the achievement of two pupils, at a very early stage of speaking English, was outstanding due to the very effective work of a teaching assistant.
115. Pupils in Year 9 also used ICT in their geography lessons to find out about volcanoes using the Internet. Teachers made good use of the interactive whiteboard in religious education lessons. There is also some ICT use for research and word-processing in art and design and English. ICT is used very well in music for composition, using specialist composition software.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current curriculum leadership is visionary and management strategies are effective.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features.

- Positive relationships create a good working atmosphere.
- GCSE results are below average, but are improving.
- Limited access to computer facilities restricts the opportunities for pupils to undertake independent enquiries.
- The range of fieldwork opportunities is a strength of the department.

Commentary

116. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above that expected for pupils' age. Standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection were above average and achievement was good. Pupils achieve well because of the high quality of teaching and the effective use of pupil target setting linked to pupils' individual learning needs. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average and achievement was unsatisfactory. There were signs of significant improvement in 2004 and achievement was satisfactory. Considerable staffing difficulties over the past two years directly contributed to this fall in standards, and this is reflected in the standards seen in Year 11, which are below expectations. However, pupils are working well and their achievement in lessons is good. The subject is now fully staffed and the leadership has implemented effective measures to raise standards. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good, there is a strong focus on improving examination techniques and pupils' coursework is more closely monitored. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or of those pupils with special educational needs.
117. The effectiveness of good, and sometimes very good teaching and learning, is a key factor in raising standards. Teachers plan very carefully, have a very thorough knowledge of their subject and make good use of a wide variety of teaching resources. Sensitive questioning allows pupils of all abilities to play a full part in lessons and most work is closely matched to individual needs. In the few lessons where teaching was only satisfactory, teachers provided too few opportunities for pupils to play an active role in their own learning. Limited access to computer facilities limits important aspects of geographical enquiry. Good classroom relationships encourage pupils to respond positively to new challenges. A strong emphasis is placed on literacy so important vocabulary is learnt when new themes are taught. This, together with the use of structured frameworks, gives most pupils the confidence and expertise to write more extended pieces of work. However, subject literacy and numeracy strategies need to be implemented in a more uniform way across the whole department. Pupils are fully aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Progress is very closely monitored to ensure that individuals achieve well.
118. Since the last inspection leadership and management is satisfactory overall, but there have been considerable staffing difficulties in Years 10 and 11 because of the ill health of the head of department. However, the substantive leadership is now very good and management strategies are effective. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities for geography and has established a strong team ethos. Review of pupils' progress, through close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' achievement, is a strength of the subject. Very good liaison with the librarian to build a stock of high quality resources enables most pupils to undertake their own research enquiries. Fieldwork is very popular and has led to high numbers of pupils opting for the subject at GCSE. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good and much is very good.
- Work is marked regularly and gives very good specific guidance for improvement.
- Enthusiastic leadership and good management are resulting in a strong department deeply committed to achieving high standards.
- More rigorous procedures are needed to monitor pupils' progress.

Commentary

119. The Year 9 National Curriculum teachers' assessment results were average over the last three years. GCSE results were well above average in 2002 and 2003. In 2004 results dropped, but remained above average. The 2004 results were lower than those in the previous two years because of the underachievement of some girls, and the lower prior attainment of the cohort as a whole.
120. Pupils enter the school with average standards in history. Current standards in both Years 9 and 11 are above average. Pupils' achievement including that of those with special educational needs is good. Boys and girls achieved equally well in the work seen during the inspection.
121. The improved standards in Year 9 reflect improvements in teaching and learning resulting from recent staff and curriculum changes. In all years pupils respond very well to the challenge and high expectations of their teachers, and make good progress in developing their historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Most have good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Year 9 pupils, for instance, empathised with 19th-century mill workers from a very secure knowledge base, and Year 11 pupils had a good grasp of Hippocrates' contribution to medicine. Higher attaining pupils often show a remarkable depth of understanding in their comments and questions, drawing on wide background knowledge. Pupils develop a good range of historical skills including the use of historical sources to find evidence, and become increasingly confident in judging their reliability. This was particularly evident in Year 11 pupils' analysis of evidence about the Easter Risings in Ireland. Written work develops well with higher attaining pupils especially, producing well-structured accounts analysing, linking and explaining factors. The work of average and lower attaining pupils is sometimes less detailed especially in explanation and the development of points. Their knowledge is usually at least sound. Literacy skills are good, but relatively little use is made of numeracy and ICT skills.
122. Teaching and learning are good and much is very good. Lessons are clearly focused, brisk, purposeful and very well planned to sustain good pace and challenge. Teachers' good subject knowledge, clear presentations and innovative approaches enable pupils to deepen their understanding. Role play by the teacher, for instance, was highly effective in helping Year 10 pupils to understand the reasons for the opening up of the American West. Pair work is used effectively to enable pupils to explore issues in depth. Year 11 pupils engaged enthusiastically and knowledgeably together, exploring differences between Christian and Islamic medicine. Approaches are often highly interactive with skilled questioning testing pupils' knowledge and understanding, but sometimes missing opportunities to enable them to develop their points fully. Learning thrives as a result of very good classroom relationships, which foster good, productive group work. This is used very effectively to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Historical skills are promoted strongly and literacy skills are well supported.

Pupils are very well prepared for GCSE examinations. Homework is set and marked regularly. Very high quality marking provides detailed and specific guidance for improvement. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are systematic, but the use of Year 9 teachers' assessment data to assess progress in Years 10 and 11 is not consistent. The involvement of pupils in self-evaluation is a significant strength.

123. Leadership is satisfactory. The newly appointed acting head of department has a clear view of the quality of provision to be made in history and is already focusing upon improvements in the Year 9 curriculum. She is too new in post for her leadership to have yet had a full impact, but already there are signs of improvement in standards in Year 9. Management is good. Well-established procedures are effective in ensuring smooth delivery of the curriculum and promoting good teamwork. Monitoring includes regular and systematic lesson observation and good support for teachers. There is, however, a need for greater rigour in procedures for monitoring and mentoring pupils' progress, especially those on the borderline of GCSE grades C and D, and in the action following the analysis of examination results. Good progress has been made since the last inspection especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Year 9.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved in GCSE examinations are very high.
- The quality of the teaching is very good and, consequently, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning.
- ICT is used effectively by teachers to stimulate and reinforce learning for all pupils.
- The very high quality relationships between teachers and their pupils result in trust and confidence that enhances pupils' learning.

Commentary

124. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above those expected. By Year 11 standards are well above average, in core religious education and optional religious studies. Pupils achieve very well in Years 9 and 10 and 11 because they are fully engaged in their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning because of the constant challenge and reflective opportunities provided by very good teaching. The effect of this is to make a very significant contribution to the spiritual, social and moral experiences of the pupils.
125. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well because the teaching fully involves the pupils in questioning their ideas and in debate. The expectations of teachers are high and pupils respond enthusiastically to the ethical and moral dilemmas presented to them. In Year 11 pupils explored the Christian and rationalist views of the origin of the universe. They were encouraged to seek gaps in the arguments and appreciate that 'faith' has an important part to play in the beliefs of some people. In Year 9 pupils considered a simple object, a paper clip, and were asked to define it using appropriate language to explain its qualities and use. From this pupils were enabled to realise that people see the same phenomena in different ways. From these activities pupils gained a deep understanding of self, faith and belief.

126. The quality of teaching and learning is very good; often the teaching is excellent. Enthusiastic, thoughtful and well-planned teaching challenges pupils to think, ask questions and to understand the beliefs held by themselves and others. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are excellent and teaching is able to build upon this basis of trust. Pupils become confident in their learning. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to use and develop their verbal language skills in debate. Teaching is very effective in including pupils of all abilities in learning. The management of pupils' behaviour is very effective. On the few occasions when pupils behave inappropriately they are skilfully checked by teachers using the immediate group in such a way to allow all pupils to keep their respect. Very effective use is made of whiteboards and laptop computers to focus pupils' attention on aspects of learning and to remind pupils of what they are learning in the lesson.

Example of outstanding practice

Pupils in a Year 11 mixed ability, compulsory religious education class were inspired through the quality of the teaching.

The lesson began with pupils looking at images from nature illuminated on the whiteboard. Pupils viewed them in respectful silence. After a short while the teacher stopped at a picture of a rocky coastline and recounted a personal story of experience and loss. Pupils then enthusiastically expressed in their own words their feelings in response to the presence of nature. The teacher began to explore why people have a sense of 'awe', and suggested that some people relate this feeling to a belief in God. Pupils had the confidence in themselves and sufficient respect for others to begin to relate their personal feelings to the wider questions of self, being and the universe. The teacher then channelled the discussion to thoughts on the origin of the universe. Pupils volunteered the Christian view of the Creation, but were then challenged to consider 'God's intentions'. This involved pupils in the idea of 'Man created in God's image'. Pupils then moved on to consider the creationist and scientific explanations for the origins of the universe. They began to seek the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments. Pupils were left with more unanswered questions at the end than they thought possible at the beginning of the lesson. These provided the basis for the next lesson.

127. The head of department provides a clear direction for further development of the subject and provides very good leadership. Management is also very good and this ensures the consistency of high quality teaching. Progress since the last inspection is very good. One of the teaching rooms is small and restricts teaching especially with a large class of older pupils and the area lacks adequate storage facilities.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 9 to 11.
- Achievement is good in Years 9 to 11.
- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work, but limited resources hamper further developments.
- Graphicacy and presentation skills in the development of a design need more systematic development across all areas that collectively deliver the National Curriculum.

Commentary

128. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that standards are broadly similar to the national average and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils 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. This is because good teaching develops pupils' understanding of the various disciplines within design and technology. Design and making skills are well developed through a broad range of projects. Designing is often imaginative, but sketching and presentation as elements in the development of a design are comparatively weak and this slows design fluency. The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work, for example, in the use of the computerised sewing machine in textiles, but limited resources overall hinder development across all areas. Teachers provide good additional support for those

identified with special educational needs ensuring that their performance matches that of others in the class.

129. GCSE results have remained consistently above both the school and national averages at the higher grades A*-C and this represents good achievement. Textiles was introduced for the first time in 2004, results were creditable and close to the national average. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is similar to that found nationally.
130. Standards seen in Year 11 were above average and achievement was good. Some examples of particularly good work were seen in all specialist areas. In textiles, for example, there was good research into wraps and Japanese cultures and the Hipparri project. Some of the investigative work on modifications of recipes to increase dietary fibre content in food was of a high standard with good evaluation. Pupils research their work well using the Internet and produce high quality computer generated designs in both resistant materials and graphics.
131. Literacy skills are supported including oral contributions with good attention paid to the correct use of technical language. Grammatical errors are not consistently corrected. Numeracy skills are satisfactory, but all opportunities are not grasped in the development of weight and volume, for example, in food.
132. Pupils show a positive attitude towards learning and good independent learning skills in response to this good teaching. Clear constructive comments inform pupils of what they need to do to improve and this is reflected in the very recently introduced individual student target setting record. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this initiative as it has yet to be consistently applied across all areas, but early signs are promising.
133. Good and sometimes very good teaching was characterised by well-organised lessons; pupils were well managed, lesson objectives were shared and understood with the class and there was a good mix of activities. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but in some instances the focus for the lesson was directed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected, and pupils were not asked to look critically at their work as it progressed. Teacher-pupil relationships along with pupils' behaviour were rarely less than very good.
134. Leadership and management are good and have enabled good improvement since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for development and all staff show strong commitment to working as a team. A good opportunity to work in a broad range of materials is provided, but financial restrictions have slowed developments in extending courses, for example, those often associated with students in the high and low ability bands. Although the use of ICT has improved, a lack of resources and a history of whole-school networking issues have limited further developments both in the use of computers generally and also programming a computer to manufacture a product. The commitment of staff to running extra-curricular activities is highly commendable and has a positive impact on standards. Technician support is effective in the smooth running of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus subjects were art and design and music, and drama was sampled.

135. Results in GCSE drama examinations are well above the national average. Standards seen in the two lessons sampled reflect these results and indicate very good achievement by pupils who join the school in Year 9 with standards that are average. Teaching seen was very good in one of the lessons and excellent in the other. Pupils are highly motivated and they respond very well to the very skilful class management and organisation of the teacher. Assessment of work in lessons and of GCSE coursework is of very good quality.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils are achieving well.
- Short single lessons limit provision, particularly for GCSE, but teachers use the time well.

- Standards in Year 11 are improving on last year.
- Students use ICT too little in their work because the department lacks resources.

Commentary

136. GCSE results in 2003 were average, with fewer A* and A grades than usual. Results dropped in 2004 to below average, but with more A grades. The performance of a few boys with little motivation accounted mainly for this fall in standards. Pupils generally achieve grades somewhat below those of their other GCSE subjects.
137. Pupils have average standards on entry. Achievement overall is satisfactory; it is good in the option groups in Years 10 and 11. Single 50-minute lessons, frequently eroded by travelling time across the school, provide a difficult length of time to allow for good practical learning. Standards remain average at the end of Year 9. Revised schemes of work are having a beneficial effect on improving pupils' core skills, especially in painting and drawing. Other, messier media are difficult to incorporate into the time available, so three-dimensional work improves less well. Curriculum liaison with middle schools ensures that pupils experience a proper curriculum balance across Years 7 to 9 overall. The department lacks enough ICT equipment to fulfil curriculum requirements in this regard, so insufficient creative ICT work appears in pupils' work. Sketchbooks do not present an imaginative journal of learning across Year 9. Pupils generally achieve satisfactorily, given time and other resource constraints.
138. Standards in the current Year 11 are higher than last year and are average at present. GCSE pupils are achieving well. Year 10 pupils have made a good start to their course, with some standards here above average, especially in two-dimensional work. Some higher attaining pupils, particularly girls, have well-annotated exploratory sketchbooks by Year 11, but very little use is made of ICT except for research, because department provision is unsatisfactory.
139. Teaching and learning are good overall and are particularly strong in GCSE courses. Teachers manage the short lessons well to provide a satisfactory range of activities in lessons within the time constraints. Experienced, full-time staff provide a good knowledge base. One-to-one sessions with pupils are an important method of transmitting high expectations. A few higher attaining pupils are stretched well in GCSE classes, but potentially gifted artists are not identified early enough to challenge them from Year 9. Teachers deal very well with the needs of pupils with special educational needs, but require more support in some classes to enable all to remain fully included. In GCSE classes, pupils work well independently of staff. The subject is managed well in the design faculty. Subject leadership is good. Standards are similar to those at the last inspection and improvement has been satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management in music are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.

- Extra-curricular provision provides an exciting and high quality extension to the curriculum for a significant number of pupils.
- The working atmosphere in the music department is inspiring, and pupils respond with an enthusiasm to match that of the teacher.
- The assessment system does not yet reflect the specific needs of music, and links to National Curriculum criteria and levels are not established in all topics.

Commentary

140. Standards in the end of Year 9 assessments are above average, but they are not firmly linked to National Curriculum criteria or levels. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average, and the 2004 results maintained this level. Standards have been steadily improving over the last four years, and the current Year 11 group are already working at well above average standards. Pupils with special educational needs attain as well as their peers, and there is full equality of access with boys attaining better than girls at GCSE. Instrumental work is of high quality, and extra-curricular groups play very well. The jazz band concert tour to Berlin was very successful, and one of the staff was from a local middle school, which is indicative of excellent inter-school relationships. ICT is well used as a compositional tool, and jazz-based improvisation is fluent and idiomatic. Pupils arrive to lessons expecting to succeed - they are not disappointed.
141. Achievement is very good in Year 9 and excellent in the option groups in Years 10 and 11. Pupils work at their own level, and the focus is on individual development. Expectations are very high, and response is very positive. Working in pairs and small groups, pupils develop their own skills and aural awareness as well as learning the sensitivity necessary to good quality ensemble work. There is a powerful work ethic in lessons combined with a strong sense of 'joie de vivre'. Music is fun, hard work and thoroughly enjoyable.
142. Teaching and learning are both very good. They are founded on high-level teacher expertise linked to an enthusiasm and passion for music and music making with young people. Planning, preparation and target setting are very good, and linked to very good feedback inside lessons, which helps pupils to develop further. Above all, relationships are excellent, and a powerful sense of community and working together is created. Pupils learn through skill development, aural analysis, and above all by doing - subsequently refining what they are doing and their understanding of it.
143. Leadership and management are very good; they are based on commitment, enthusiasm, efficiency and confidence in success. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and the overview of the Years 7 to 9 curriculum formed jointly with the middle schools is an excellent feature. Assessment is already good, but needs refinement to link National Curriculum criteria and levels in all topics to pupil self-assessment. Opportunities are regularly given for the most able to shine and to develop their skills further. School concerts take place in venues across the community such as the very fine churches, building community links and giving pupils more opportunities for inspiration and satisfaction. Instrumental teaching provision is very strong, and staff concerned are also involved in school performing groups.
144. There was only one issue at the last inspection concerning access to examination courses at the end of Year 11; this has been fully resolved. Improvement in provision since then has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is poor and management is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils show very good attitudes in lessons.
- Teaching is inconsistent; some examples of very good teaching were seen.
- Standards are too low by the end of Year 11. Improvements in standards are not maintained over time.

Commentary

The school does not enter pupils for GCSE examinations in physical education.

145. Standards seen in lessons during the inspection are below average. In relation to pupils' average standards on entry to the school in Year 9, this represents unsatisfactory achievement overall. In general, girls achieve better than boys.
146. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments provided by the school clearly demonstrate that standards are below average. Inspection evidence of lessons seen very early in Year 10 supports this view. In a good mixed basketball lesson, pupils learned well. All could catch and pass with confidence, and could understand the terminology of the game, but their dribbling skills were limited, their shooting was uncontrolled and inaccurate, and very few technically correct lay-up, or set shots, were made. Girls competed equally with boys.
147. In Year 11, inspection evidence indicates that standards are below average. Boys engaged with enthusiasm in soccer lessons, but the conditioned games they played lacked fluency because their ball control and ball striking skills were not embedded, tactical awareness was missing and competitive tackling was absent. Girls played netball with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Higher attaining pupils played with pace and accuracy, and all girls played, officiated or coached correctly.
148. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They arrive promptly in lessons and are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative. They are well turned out, and demonstrate a real desire to engage in physical activity. They are attentive, and listen closely to the guidance and instruction given by their teachers, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good, and pupils are encouraged and trusted to work independently and collaboratively, often not under close supervision. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, and to undertake supportive and advisory roles with their peers, are a common feature of all lessons.
149. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Teaching lacks consistency and learning suffers in consequence. In the lessons seen, teaching varied from good to poor. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is high, and teachers set demanding tasks that challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers balance specific skill-building activities with good questions that test and secure learning, and allow pupils time to recover from strenuous work. When pace and challenge are not maintained, pupils quietly disengage and wait politely and respectfully. Teaching loses focus and opportunities to develop skills to the highest possible levels are lost. This results in reduced learning and declining standards. The department provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities for both elite and interest groups, and runs various internal activity groups and sports tournaments, along with external competitive fixtures.
150. Leadership of the department is poor and management of the department is unsatisfactory. There is no leadership vision of continuous improvements in standards, and there is, therefore, a restricted capacity to make things happen. There is no robust method of reliably measuring pupils' standards on entry to the school. Assessments of pupils' work are not made with sufficient rigour, or securely tied to any recognised national standards. They do not permit pupils' progress to be measured objectively. There is little evidence to show that these assessments influence curriculum developments, although

they do loosely inform the planning of some teaching. Schemes of work are detailed, but do not focus sufficiently on the development of skills. The subject development plan lacks clarity and precision; it does not contain measurable success criteria, evaluation processes are not specified and actions to secure and embed improvements are not explicit. The departmental handbook does not identify how standards will be improved or maintained. The department benefits from excellent accommodation and is well resourced. The staff team lacks balance in terms of expertise, experience and innovation.

151. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Some areas identified for improvement have not been addressed, and some strengths, notably standards and the link between assessment and curriculum development, have been eroded.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

152. The school does not offer courses in business education in the main school. A small number of pupils follow courses in motor vehicle maintenance and construction at the local college. These were not inspected.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

153. The school does not enter pupils for examinations in citizenship. The present course, which is included in a core studies programme of personal and social education, does not meet statutory requirements. There is insufficient coverage of the statutory content, too few opportunities to carry out research and a lack of active participation. The present arrangement does not allow for pupils to build upon knowledge and skills already learnt. Assessment is inadequate and progress is not reported to parents in Year 9, as it should be. There is insufficient provision to make judgements on standards and achievement.
154. In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Topics in Year 11 included 'road rage' and environmental issues; teaching and learning were satisfactory and provided satisfactory opportunities for pupils to consider the responsibilities of being a citizen.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	100	80.1	66.7	23.7	46.7	29.9
Biology	2	50.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	10.0	20.6
Business studies	5	60.0	76.4	0.0	16.3	14.0	26.2
Chemistry	5	60.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	14.0	24.1
Communication studies	8	100	86.4	37.5	23.8	42.5	32.0
Drama	3	100	86.5	100	19.6	50.0	30.6
English literature	8	50.0	85.9	0.0	19.1	16.3	30.2
French	2	100	78.2	0.0	18.9	25.0	27.6
Geography	20	40.0	74.3	5.0	19.8	13.5	26.5
German	3	66.7	81.5	0.0	19.3	20.0	28.9
History	13	84.6	80.7	15.4	19.5	29.2	28.6
Mathematics	4	75.0	61.9	50.0	17.1	37.5	22.1
Physics	5	20.0	68.6	20.0	14.4	10.0	22.7
Religious studies	12	58.3	80.2	0.0	22.6	14.2	29.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	6	100	87.5	83.3	50.2	100	87.5
Biology	8	100	96.4	25	32.9	77.5	78.6
Business studies	10	100	98.7	30.0	36.8	74.0	80.1
Chemistry	11	100	97.6	36.4	49.0	70.9	84.9
Communication studies	12	100	99.4	50.0	37.8	86.7	82.1
Drama	9	100	99.5	88.9	40.1	104.4	83.6
English literature	24	100	99.5	45.8	46.5	89.2	86.5
French	8	87.5	98.8	50.0	51.5	80.0	87.6
Design and technology	3	100	97.8	100	35.0	113.3	77.9
Geography	20	100	98.7	35.0	44.5	82.0	84.0
German	5	100	98.4	40.0	47.9	80.0	84.8
History	6	100	99.0	83.3	44.6	103.3	84.6
Mathematics	18	100	96.7	66.7	55.6	98.9	88.8
Music	3	100	98.8	0.0	38.9	73.3	81.1
Philosophy	1	100	97.4	0.0	42.7	40.0	81.8
Physics	10	100	96.7	40.0	44.6	82.0	81.7
Religious studies	13	92.3	98.8	23.1	46.7	76.9	85.6
Spanish	1	100	98.3	100	50.2	100	86.9
Business VCE	9	76.5	65.0	11.8	14.6	51.8	60.1
Science VCE	8	75.0	44.8	0.0	3.7	37.5	58.5
Travel and tourism	7	100	71.8	0.0	14.5	65.7	62.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were English and French; German was sampled.

155. A Year 13 lesson in German included excellent teaching; the use of ICT ensured that students were able to discuss political figures in Germany and to acquire new language to talk about complex issues. The teacher provided an excellent model of language and students responded to a range of instructions and explanations in German. At the beginning of Year 13, students already have a high level of fluency and are achieving very well.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are good. Staffing of the GCE A-level course is well organised and well co-ordinated.
- A-level results in 2003 were above the national average.
- Very good teaching and assessment procedures result in very good achievement by the students.

Commentary

156. Standards at A-level were in line with national averages in 2002. In 2003 they were above average, when all students passed the examination and nearly half of them reached the high A and B grades. This represents very good achievement compared with attainment on entry to the school and with students' GCSE results. English is a well-established sixth form course and retention rates are good.
157. These standards were reflected in the work seen during the inspection, both in lessons and in the students' written work, and students were achieving very well. Over the two-year course students gain confidence as literary critics. The discussion that takes place in class is lively and vigorous, guided but not dominated by the teachers. Students know their set books well and they rise to the constant expectation that they must find their own view and support it by close reference to the text. The skills that they develop orally are translated well into their writing; by the second year of the course, the language of their essays is appropriate and mature, making a very good foundation for those who will continue their studies at university. They use ICT skills appropriately to word-process their work and for research tasks.
158. Teaching and learning are very good. The course is carefully planned by the teachers concerned to ensure that the students experience a range of approaches within a consistent framework. Assessment at this level is very analytical, with close marking not only of essay content, but also of individual students' prose style. In addition to written comments and commentary on their essays and to feedback in class, students are offered one-to-one tutorials in their free time. Assessment objectives are highlighted and discussed with each assignment, and students are expected to analyse their own writing and to check that objectives are met.
159. The faculty, and within it the English department, is well led and managed. The head of faculty leads by example through her own good classroom skills and she provides good support to her team of teachers as well as to the students. English in the sixth form has made good improvement since the last inspection.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching that challenges students over a range of interesting topics.
- Students are very motivated and have a high level of independent learning skills.

- Strategies to support students with weaker language skills need to be developed.

Commentary

160. In 2003 A-level French examination results were broadly average and the results in 2004 indicated a trend of improvement. The numbers of students who only studied up to AS level were too small for national comparison, but were in line with predictions, and 2004 again saw a trend of improvement.
161. Standards seen during the inspection are well above average and students' achievement is very good. In Year 13 students are already able to discuss complex issues and express opinions quite fluently. Scrutiny of work showed that by the end of Year 13 students write extended essays accurately and with a range of structures and have very good reading and independent research skills. In Year 12, students are already able to talk confidently about complex issues to do with family relationships. Overall, French contributes very well to the development of students' communication skills.
162. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Teachers provide very good models of French so that a student's own language is of a high standard. Opportunities for independent research using ICT are encouraged from the beginning of Year 12. Creativity is developed through the study of literary texts and students write creatively themselves, including poetry in French. The range of authentic resources used ensures that students gain a very good knowledge of social and cultural issues in France and the French-speaking world. Assessment is very good. Marking is very thorough and gives students a clear direction on how to improve. The use of examination assessment criteria helps students know how well they are doing. However, although teachers know their students very well, specific strategies to support weaker students' learning, particularly their grammatical progression, need further development.
163. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear vision and teachers work very effectively as a team and plan the sixth form programme together. Very good documentation, including a detailed scheme of work and student guidance, supports both teachers and students. The leadership provides a very good model for students reflected in the take up for French in Year 12. All students are extremely positive about their AS and A-level language experience and the number of dual linguists is a strength. Although overall retention is good, this year the Year 13 group is very small and the retention of students into Year 13 needs to be kept under review. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is very good.

MATHEMATICS

The focus subject was A-level mathematics and further mathematics was sampled.

164. Current standards in further mathematics are overall well above average and students are achieving very well. Students' background knowledge was considerable in the three lessons observed. Students can work independently and investigate aspects related to their studies using ICT. The 2003 GCE further mathematics examination results are very high. The 2004 examination results continue to be very high.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Lessons are very well planned and teachers are aware of the next steps in students' learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teachers are committed to raising standards and have high expectations of the students; as a result, students work hard and make very good progress.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

Commentary

165. In 2003, GCE A-level results were very high. All students entered for the examination achieved a pass grade or better and more than half entered achieved the highest grades. Students' achievement overall was very good. In 2004, A-level results improved further in comparison to the previous year and student achievement continued to be very good. Current standards of work seen are well above average and students are achieving well compared to their GCSE results. Year 12 students are well into the new courses making good use of their past GCSE work to move into new areas of learning. For example, students used previously taught skills to good effect when discussing the geometry of straight lines and also used algebraic skills effectively when introduced to factorising polynomials. In Year 13, student exercise books are well organised with much work included, and provide a good record for revision. Students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in lessons and in their written work. In a mechanics lesson, for example, students made very good use of their ICT skills to investigate displacement and relative velocity data of a bouncing ball measured against time.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject effectively and are aware of the next steps in students' learning. Lessons are planned well and, as a result, students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves. Work is always intellectually challenging, deepening students' understanding. During lessons, students ask questions, speculate outcomes and contribute a great deal, maintaining the brisk pace. There is a good balance between theory and practice and good use is made of ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding further. Relationships between teachers and students and students themselves are very good. Homework is set regularly and students are retested should they not achieve the high standards expected of them. Teachers are approachable and prepared to use their time outside lessons to provide additional quality support. In response, students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and individual teacher support is much appreciated. As a result, the increasingly growing numbers of students who embark on post-16 mathematics courses complete them successfully.
167. Leadership and management are very good. Issues raised at the time of the last report have been addressed and standards have improved. Strategic planning reflects and promotes the department's ambitions of achieving excellence. There is a range of appropriate courses available, which meets the needs of every student entering the sixth form. Procedures for assessment are secure and analysis of students' performance is closely monitored. Resources that are available are used well and accommodation is good.

SCIENCE

The main focus was AVCE science course, and A-level physics was sampled.

168. In the A-level physics course, four lessons were seen and the standard of teaching was good or better in each lesson. Recent examination results have been very variable. In 2002 results were above average, but they were below average in 2003.

Vocational science

Provision in vocational science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed.
- Students are highly motivated and this enhances their learning.
- Small group, tutorial-style teaching supports and extends students' learning.
- Regular assessment and feedback keeps students informed of attainment and progress, and are valued by them.
- A lack of resources and access to computers is affecting how students develop their skills.

Commentary

169. Entry requirements of the course are two C grades in the double award GCSE. Results in 2003 were well below average, although numbers are too few to be statistically reliable. In the work seen, standards are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. There is little difference in the standard of work of male and female students in either year. Students have learned to meet deadlines, to check their portfolios for completeness and compliance with the examination board rules and have become efficient researchers, using their ICT skills to good advantage. Few leave this two-year course before the final examination as there is no accreditation for those who do so.
170. In the first year of the course, students learn to combine research results from a variety of sources and to produce individual versions for submission or presentation to their peers. Standards of accuracy rise and sources and sizes of errors are identified and accounted for. By the end of Year 13 students are generally competent investigators, handling equipment carefully and competently, and analysing and evaluating results accurately. Standards of communication, application of number and ICT are good and are reflected in the quality of portfolios. Written work is neatly presented with diagrams of a good standard. Portfolios are word-processed and illustrated, and are impressive in both content and appearance.
171. Students' attitudes are excellent. They work together well, and motivation is high. Male students outnumber females in both years, but all students have equal access to both staff and equipment. Relationships between staff and students are particularly good, and raise motivation. Students view the course positively and value the frequent assessment and feed-back that keeps them informed. They particularly enjoy the informal, but well-ordered and good humoured, atmosphere of lessons.
172. Teaching and learning are both good. However, limitations on resources inhibits teaching and often requires students to share equipment in larger groups than is normal. This, coupled with the necessary use of improvised equipment, depresses potentially higher standards and limits students' achievement. Teachers' subject knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm all motivate students well, and are strengths of the department. Small teaching groups with high quality relationships result in tutorial-style lessons in which individuals can be unobtrusively supported or extended, and this is a further strength. Independent learning is demanding, but is well supported and all these factors combine and result in good learning.
173. Leadership and management are both satisfactory in the absence of the course leader. The remaining staff, helped by experienced supply science teachers, and supported by the acting head of faculty, have ensured that standards have been maintained. The library, ICT and book resources are particularly good and are well used by students. Vocational science was not in place at the last inspection, therefore, improvement cannot be judged.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school does not provide specific courses in ICT in the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

Work was sampled in history, philosophy and religious education; geography was a focus subject.

174. GCE A-level results in history over the last two years have been well above average. Similar standards are evident in the work seen during the inspection. Students are achieving well as a result of very good teaching and good curriculum management. Their attitudes to learning are mature and very positive.
175. Standards at AS and A level, in religious education philosophy are above average and this been maintained over recent years. A relatively large number of students select this subject, which builds very effectively from the religious education in Years 10 and 11. Students enjoy their learning, achieve very well and retention rates are good. The quality of teaching and learning seen in the sample were very good.
176. The provision for religious education for all in the sixth form, however, is unsatisfactory. Although a single conference is planned for later this year this is not sufficient to meet the full requirements of the agreed syllabus.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and thorough assessment underpins the good achievement that students are making in their study of geography.
- Relationships are very good and students feel well supported in their studies.
- Very good leadership and effective management are raising standards.
- Opportunities for independent enquiry need to be further developed.

Commentary

177. In 2003, GCE AS-level geography results were well below average; results were similar in 2004. However, achievement was good in relation to students' standards at the end of Year 11. Students from the middle and lower ends of the ability range are encouraged to study the subject and retention rates are good. GCE A-level results in 2003 were average and this represents good achievement since students starting the course were of below average ability. Current standards in the AS course are close to the average, and at A level standards are above average. Students achieve well over two years of study in Years 12 and 13 and there is a rising trend in standards. This good achievement is the result of effective teaching, close staff attention to course planning and very good systems of assessment. Geography teaching in the sixth form was not affected by the staffing difficulties experienced in the rest of the school. There are no significant differences in achievement by gender or those with special educational needs.
178. By the end of Year 13 students can handle information quite skilfully and use a wide range of statistical methods and graphical techniques. Many can read fast and synthesise detailed text quickly. Higher attaining students listen carefully to issues in class discussions and make good quality notes. The majority of students can draw upon a wide variety of case study examples to support their arguments in extended pieces of writing. However, weaker students in Year 12 still miss out essential points from their notes and

find statistical analysis difficult. Access to computers has been limited and this has reduced the opportunities to develop the skills required for independent enquiry work.

179. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. The teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and pass on their enthusiasm to their students. Students benefit from the department's close attention to study techniques and coursework planning, which enables them to meet the challenges presented by the different work patterns required in the sixth form. Students are challenged to tackle issues independently as well as collaboratively. Some lower attaining students find difficulty in achieving the correct balance between the narrative and analytical demands of extended writing. Teachers help to reduce this problem by providing them with lists of geographical terms and structured writing frameworks when a new unit starts. Fieldwork gives students a strong evidence base for individual research studies and most are improving their skills in the handling of statistical data as a result of the confidence gained from their investigations. There is still a need to ensure that opportunities for individual enquiry work are equally accessible to all students since some teaching is still too teacher directed. Teachers assess students' work regularly and they feel supported in their studies. This support engenders a high level of trust between the students and the staff.
180. The subject is very well led and effectively managed by the head of department and this is a major factor in promoting achievement. There is a strong team ethos and clear educational direction. The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress is a major strength of the department and students are fully aware of how to achieve their targets. Students have access to a comprehensive range of resources and these are supplemented by good library facilities. Computer access has improved this term and students' learning is already benefiting from a superb range of new geographical software. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

181. Work was sampled in design and technology. Results at A level compare favourably with results nationally and with those generally in the school. Teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed and students achieved well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Work was sampled in media studies, music and art and design.

182. In 2002 results in A-level media studies were average and in 2003 they were above average. The course is popular and the faculty accepts a wider than usual range of GCSE standards. Students' achievement on the course is good. Teaching is well planned and effective. Students respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm and the lessons seen on the inspection were lively and productive. Expectations are clear from the start of the course; students in a Year 12 lesson were already using appropriate terminology to analyse film extracts, drawing on knowledge acquired during the first three weeks of term.
183. Teaching and learning in the music lessons seen were good. Achievement was good and standards were at an appropriate level for this very early stage of the course. Of the eight students taking AS and A levels over the past four years, all have passed, a quarter gaining the higher grades, which matches the national norm. In addition to lessons, sixth

formers who are musicians play a full part in the musical life of the school and, consequently, the programme for those in the main school is significantly improved.

184. Work was sampled in AVCE and A-level courses in art and design. A-level results in 2003 were well above average for all candidates and above average for females. All art and design courses have included small numbers of students, so comparisons are statistically unreliable. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen in both courses were good. Standards are generally in line with expectations, or better.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Work was sampled in travel and tourism.

185. Recent examination results at A level are average. Students make good progress based on their attainment at GCSE. From the lesson and sample of coursework seen teaching and learning are good.

BUSINESS

AVCE business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching provides students with activities that promote good learning.
- Assessment is good and students are given clear guidance on how to improve.
- Resources are unsatisfactory, particularly ICT and work-related provision, but teachers manage resources well.

Commentary

186. Numbers of students on the AVCE course have been small, so comparisons with national statistics are unreliable, but in 2004, those who finished the course achieved well. Data for 2003 shows students finishing the 6-unit course (one A-level equivalent), attaining an average range of grades from B to E, achieving as expected. Some boys on the 3-unit award (one AS-level equivalent) underachieved, with U grades, but most students who finished achieved the range of grades predicted.

187. Standards in Year 13 match the expected range. Units so far completed show the full range from A to E grades and all are achieving satisfactorily. Students in Year 12 have made a satisfactory start to their studies. Almost all students who enter this course have come from the main school, none has any prior learning of business studies and they are slower in making progress than in other subjects. Standards are broadly average and achievement overall is satisfactory. Standards in the use of ICT are satisfactory, when there is access. Standards in students' oral and number competences are also average, although a few are currently encountering difficulty with the mathematical aspects of the finance unit.

188. Teaching and learning are good. Students learn best, and enjoy their learning from active, applied experience. Such a lesson in Year 13 gave students a role play/simulation, which

contextualised notions of budgeting well. The real costs of living independently from parents were explored effectively and decisions reached. Similarly, the department's links with a local port authority provide a good context for the business at work units. However, teaching and learning are less productive when students have to work in an ICT suite alongside pupils from the main school; in these circumstances, learning is not as productive as it could be. Assessment is good, with plenty of advice about how to improve units to match higher grade requirements. Students themselves say that if they fail to respond, they deserve to achieve lower standards than they might. Students currently on the course are very satisfied with provision, but retention in recent years has been below average.

189. Subject leadership is good. The parity of esteem between the AVCE and the A-level routes in the subject is commendable and provides students with courses to match their needs. Business studies is satisfactorily managed as part of the humanities faculty. Better access to ICT, and more vocationally oriented resources are needed to provide students with a work-related learning environment and to raise achievement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not provide courses in this area.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

The school does not provide these courses in the sixth form.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	Sixth form grade	School grade
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		2
Attendance	4	2
Attitudes	1	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	4	4
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	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
The effectiveness of management	3	4

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

