

INSPECTION REPORT

SWANLEY SCHOOL

Swanley

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118786

Headteacher: Mrs Julie Bramley

Lead inspector: Bill Stoneham

Dates of inspection: 17th- 20th January 2005

Inspection number: 268943

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

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Terms used in this report

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

At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to awards in the General Certificate of Education (**GCE**) at Advanced level (**A-level**) or Advanced Subsidiary level (**AS-level**), or the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**).

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

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. The term **SENCO** refers to the special needs co-ordinator. An **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education and **WRL** refers to Work-related learning.

Contextual Statement

Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Wherever possible reference has been made to the 2004 figures, but at the time of the inspection the school's results for 2004 had not all been validated and some were being challenged. For sixth form students, comparisons to national averages are based on the academic year 2002/2003, the last year for which national comparative data is available.

Few comments have been made in relation to improvement since the previous inspection report which was published in November 1998. Since this date, the school has experienced considerable change and uncertainty, which resulted in monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in 2001. As a result of this monitoring a report of the school's work was published, but this report covered only certain aspects of the school's work rather than offering a comprehensive overview. Wherever possible judgements have been made on the progress since the publication of HMIs' report.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 561

School address: St Mary's Road
Swanley
Kent
BR8 7TE

Telephone number: 01322 665231
Fax number: 01322 661006

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Barry Lowe

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Swanley School is a mixed secondary modern school serving the small town of Swanley and the surrounding area. Swanley is located in the London commuter belt and is close to the M25 motorway. Though located in Kent, the town borders the London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley and students are recruited from primary schools in both Kent and Bromley. There are a number of other secondary schools in close proximity, including selective schools and a City Technology College and there is keen competition for places. The school is considerably smaller than average with 561 students attending, including 48 who are in the sixth form. At the time of the inspection, the school was awaiting the outcome of its bid for Specialist Technology College status. This was confirmed during the week following the inspection. The school serves areas of high social deprivation. A significant number of students do not live with both of their natural parents. There is significant mobility in the school's population, with a significant minority coming from families with a traveller background. Many casual entrants to the school have behavioural or attendance problems and some have been excluded from other schools. Standards on entry to Year 7 are well below average, as are standards on entry to the sixth form. Approximately 30 per cent of students in Year 11 continue into the sixth form. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The ethnic mix of the school reflects that of the surrounding area, being mainly of white British heritage. The percentage of students whose first language is not English is low, with five students being at an early stage of English acquisition. There are also small numbers of students from refugee and asylum seeking families.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English Post 16 English
31100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics
20837	Linda Powell	Team inspector	Science Post 16 biology
2048	Doug Masterton	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology Post 16 Information and Communication Technology
27058	Kathleen Cannon	Team inspector	Art and Design
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and Technology
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History
35094	Judith O'Hare	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical Education
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Religious Education
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Music
15277	Chris Vidler	Team inspector	Post 16 Business Education Work Related Learning
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, including a sixth form. Standards rise from being well below average on entry to Year 7 to below average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is good. Standards in the sixth form are average and achievement is good. The school is led and managed satisfactorily and the value for money offered, including in the sixth form is satisfactory.

The school's main strength and weaknesses are:

- The good, enthusiastic and committed leadership of the headteacher is successful in establishing a clear vision and ethos for the school.
- The school is inclusive. Students are very well supported and cared for and staff student relationships are good. Many are now attaining higher standards than predicted when they entered the school.
- In Years 10 and 11 standards are rising because of the contribution made by English and science.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Though some teaching is good, its quality overall is inconsistent. For standards to rise its quality must be raised and unsatisfactory teaching eliminated.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory. At present it does not adequately meet all statutory requirements, or the needs of all students.
- The use of assessment data to raise standards by target setting and monitoring of work is unsatisfactory.
- Though the school is well-equipped with computers, their use in subjects to raise standards and enliven teaching and learning is inconsistent.
- The school is developing some good community partnerships that are contributing to improving standards.

Sixth Form

- Standards are now broadly average and those completing their courses frequently do better than predicted, thereby improving their career and educational prospects even further.
- For standards to rise further attendance and retention rates must be improved and the curriculum modified to reflect more precisely the students' needs and aspirations.
- Sixth formers appreciate the opportunities provided and feel valued and well supported.
- Provision in human biology is very good. Students are taught very well and their achievements are very good.

Good progress has been made since the publication of a report by Her Majesty's Inspectors in 2001. Problems identified then are being addressed. Standards are now higher, the quality of teaching has improved and significant advances have been made in improving provision via the recent successful application for specialist status and the development of the post 16 consortium.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The figures for Year 13 should be used with caution because the number of students involved in the sample is very small.

Overall, achievement in the school is good. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were well below average when compared to all schools nationally and were well below average when compared to similar schools. Results improved significantly in 2004 and the unvalidated data available indicates that standards rose to below average when compared to all schools nationally, but were well above average in relation to similar schools. In relation to students' well below average standards on entry in Year 7, this represents good achievement. Students with special educational needs also achieve well. Standards in the sixth form have been in the lowest five per cent nationally in recent years. The small size of the sixth form, low retention rates and unsatisfactory attendance all contributed to low standards. Evidence is now emerging that standards are beginning to rise. For present students, standards are average and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In Year 9, standards are average in English, well below average in mathematics and below average in science. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but it is well below average in ICT and below average in French, music and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, geography, history and design and technology. Students achieve well in German, science, religious education and art and design and very well in English. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Achievements is unsatisfactory in music and physical education, is satisfactory in mathematics, geography, design and technology and ICT and good in both English courses, German, history and art and design. Achievement is very good in science.

The students' personal qualities are satisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, as are attendance and punctuality, though attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, but it is good in the sixth form. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. Throughout the school, learning is helped by the good relationships established with students. There are, however, too few very good and excellent lessons and strategies for improving teaching and learning are only just developing. The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall as there are too many statutory infringements. Enrichment opportunities, however, are good. Community partnerships are good and improving. Links with parents are satisfactory. Students receive satisfactory academic support and their views are taken seriously. The arrangements for welcoming new students into Year 7, including those with special educational needs, are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is **satisfactorily led and managed.** The leadership of the headteacher is good. Though only in post for a short while, there is a clear vision for improvement and development. The leadership and management offered by other key staff are satisfactory; they work effectively to raise students' attainment. The governors are most supportive and proud of the school and its ethos. They undertake their duties responsibly. They are aware that there is no daily act of collective worship and their awareness of other statutory requirements has been awakened and issues are now being addressed. Overall, however, though the governing body's role in shaping the direction of the school is satisfactory, governance is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Owing to the small numbers of replies received from both parents and students to the inspection questionnaires, no clear views of the school can be presented. However, those parents and students who did express an opinion believe that the school is improving, that it is safe and that the new headteacher is having a beneficial effect on the work of the school and its reputation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Ensure the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets statutory requirements and the needs of all students.
- Use assessment data to set all students, including those in the sixth form, challenging targets and to monitor their progress against such targets.
- Use information and communications technology more effectively in all subjects to raise standards.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Ensure reports to parents meet requirements.

THE SIXTH FORM AT SWANLEY SCHOOL

A very small but growing sixth form where opportunities are improving.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The sixth form is far smaller than average but is starting to grow, partly because of consortium arrangements. Standards have been well below average but are improving, though they remain below average. There are issues relating to attendance and course completion rates. The students commence their A level studies with well below average levels of prior attainment and the achievement of present students is good. Teaching and learning are good and the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. There is a new leadership team in place and no judgements can be made about their effectiveness.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Though standards are below average, students are now achieving well and those who complete their courses frequently do better than predicted and improve their career prospects as a result.
- Attendance and retention rates are not high enough and the curriculum does not adequately reflect the needs and aspirations of all students.
- Sixth formers are well taught. They appreciate the opportunities provided and feel valued and well supported.
- Provision in human biology is very good. Students are taught very well and their achievements are very good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English. The quality of teaching and learning is good and students achieve well.
Science	Provision in human biology is very good . The quality of teaching and learning is very good and students' achievement is very good. Leadership and management are good.
Information and communication technology	Provision is satisfactory . Students are taught well, but achieve only satisfactorily because of too much absence.

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

Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. Induction into the sixth form is good and is improving. Once their courses have started students are given good advice about planning their futures. Assessment data is used satisfactorily to set targets and to monitor progress, but such procedures are not consistent and rigorous at departmental level. Students are offered satisfactory advice on their futures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

A new head of sixth form was recently appointed and he was in his second week of office when the inspection took place. Thus, it is not possible to form any judgements. However, there is a strong desire to improve opportunities and the quality of the sixth form experience and planning to work more closely with the local post 16 consortium is developing well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The students are appreciative of the opportunities offered to them and regard the teaching they receive as being challenging and helpful. Some are critical of the advice they receive about courses in the sixth form and higher education, though the inspection team does not fully concur with these views. The students believe that the sixth form is improving, it is a harmonious community and they are consulted and listened to.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The overall achievement of students in the main school is good. Students enter the school with well below average standards of prior attainment. By the end of Year 9 standards remain well below average and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11 standards rise to below average and the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good. Achievement in the sixth form is also good in relation to prior attainment; standards are average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are below national averages but most students are doing better than expected.
- By the end of Year 11 students, including those with special educational needs and other identifiable groups, achieve well overall because of some good teaching, especially in English and science, and the quality of support offered.
- Sixth form students achieve well because the quality of teaching provided is good.
- Not enough use is made of assessment data by teaching departments as a tool to challenge students and improve their learning.

Commentary

1. The school recruits students into Year 7 from a number of primary schools. Standards on entry are, overall, well below average, with many students having poorly developed skills in literacy and numeracy. Despite the schools hard work to meet the needs of students with different levels of prior attainment, standards in Year 9 remain well below average overall and the students' achievement is satisfactory. By Year 11, standards rise to below average and there has been a marked improvement in GCSE results over the last two years. In 2002, only 12 per cent of students gained five or more A* to C GCSE grades. The provisional results for 2004 indicate that this statistic has now risen to 43 per cent. This substantial increase is, in part, because of the school entering students for an ICT course where four GCSE grades can be gained. Levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are complex and difficult to unravel. Teaching in these two years is satisfactory, but the students are reaching higher standards than predicted by their prior attainment. The students add value to their work and levels of achievement are good. The disparity between teaching and achievement can be accounted for in a number of ways. Those students who attend regularly tend to do well. Though the quality of teaching shows too much variation, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, especially in English and science, teaching is better and standards are in line with national expectations and most students successfully sit their GCSE examinations in these subjects. The entry policy relating to ICT also boosts attainment and benefits achievement. It is in many of the other subjects, where GCSE entry levels are smaller, where standards are lower, teaching is less effective and achievement is less pronounced. The school also provides revision sessions, including during the Easter holidays, and this provision is also helping to boost achievement. Thus, despite variability in the quality of teaching, the students improve their standards from a well below average starting point and they achieve well.

2. A further factor affecting standards is the fact that the school has a well above average proportion of students with special educational needs. These students are well supported in their work by classroom assistants and, again, those who attend regularly achieve well. The support offered by classroom assistants often results in progress in lessons being better than might be expected because of the individual help, attention and encouragement offered. The cumulative effect of this provision is most positive. Other students, from the traveller community and those for

whom English is not a first language, are similarly well supported and they also achieve well even though some of the teaching they receive is not sufficiently challenging.

3. Overall, students with special educational needs achieve well across Years 7 to 11 in relation to the targets set in their IEPs. Students with a statement outlining their particular needs also achieve well in relation to meeting the targets set at their annual reviews. In subjects, students with special educational needs achieve well in English, science and history as well as religious education in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, along with other students, they achieve unsatisfactorily in geography, music and physical education and in ICT and French in Years 7, 8 and 9. School data shows that students with special educational needs improve their literacy skills as they progress through the school. In last year's GCSE examinations no students on the school's special educational needs list left without a qualification and 22 out of the 26 entered attained at least 5 A* to G passes. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science students on the school's special educational needs list achieved as well as other students in the school in relation to the National Curriculum levels they attained.

4. Though standards overall in Year 9 remain well below average, the students' performance in national tests in English, mathematics and science show differing levels of attainment. The Year 9 national test results in 2003 in English were above average, but in both mathematics and science they were well below average. Overall, standards were below average when compared to all schools nationally. In comparison to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards were very high in English, placing the school in the top five per cent nationally, were well above average in mathematics and above average in science. Overall, the results in these tests were well above average and indicate very good achievement. The provisional available data for 2004 indicates that standards were average in English, well below average in mathematics and below average in science. In relation to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards were well above average in both English and science, but below average in mathematics.

In the tables below, the figures quoted apply to results gained in 2003. Though candidates were entered for examinations in 2004, the school is challenging some of the outcomes and, at the time of the inspection, fully validated data for 2004 was not available.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1 (33.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.2 (31.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	30.9 (30.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 108 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Inspection evidence based on lesson observations and analysis of students' work indicates that standards in Year 9 are well below average overall. They are well below average in most subjects, but in science, religious education and physical education they are below average but rise to being average in English, German and art and design. All students, including those with special educational needs and EAL, are achieving at least satisfactorily overall. In individual subjects, achievement is well below average in ICT and below average in French, music and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, geography, history and design and technology. Students achieve well in German, science, religious education and art and design and very well in English.

6. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average when compared to all schools nationally, based on the attainment of five or more grades at A* to C, but fell to well below average when based on total GCSE points per student and average points scored on their best eight subjects. When compared to similar schools based on prior attainment, results were average based on five or more A* to C, but remained at well below average on the other two measures.

7. Provisional results for 2004, suggest that based on five A* to C grades standards were below average when compared to all schools nationally. However, when compared to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards rise to well above average. This indicates that the students achieved very well and did far better than predicted based on their performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 two years earlier. Though the 2004 results are still awaiting validation, the provisional data clearly indicates that standards in Year 11 are rising and are now significantly higher than those gained in 2002 when only 12 per cent of students gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	36 (12)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (82)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	26.7 (23.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 108 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. For current students in Years 10 and 11 standards are below average overall. In geography standards are well below average and they are below average in mathematics, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education. Standards are average in English, German, science and art and design but rise to above average in history.

9. Levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 for all students are good overall. The achievements of present students are unsatisfactory in music and physical education, are satisfactory in mathematics, geography, design and technology and ICT and are good in both English courses, German, history and art and design. Achievement is very good in science. The school is improving and there is evidence that the departmental reviews that were introduced as recently as last September and already helping to improve standards. The use of assessment data to set targets and monitor performance against such targets is unsatisfactory, but has been identified by the school as a key area for attention. The challenge is to ensure that at a departmental level assessment data is used with consistency to monitor students' progress as an aid to improve standards further.

Sixth form

10. The sixth form is very small, far smaller than the average and comparatively few students in the recent past have sat A level examinations. Students have tended to use the sixth form to improve their GCSE results and spend one year gaining some AS level qualifications. This pattern is changing and more students are now being encouraged to pursue A level and other courses of the same standard. There has also been a recent problem relating to course completion rates and attendance, both of which are unsatisfactory. However, course completion rates are now improving, but attendance, especially in Year 13, remains an issue. In 2003, the school's results for the small number of candidates who sat their A level, or equivalent examinations, were very low and were in the bottom five per cent nationally. The provisional 2004 results, which are again based on a very small sample, show a small improvement. Results were well below average but are no longer in the bottom five per cent.

11. In 2003, there were sufficient candidates entered at a level to allow national comparisons only in English literature. Standards were average, with all 12 candidates gaining at least a C grade. This represents good achievement. In 2004, subject entries were so small that no national comparisons can be made.

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	78.5 (56.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	6.2 (13.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	98.5 (n/a)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 13 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

12. Sixth form work seen during the inspection, based on the three subjects that were inspected in depth, indicated that standards are now average and that the students are achieving well in relation to their prior learning, which is below average. Students are achieving very well in science and well in English literature. In ICT achievement is only satisfactory because too much absence hinders progress. No significant differences in achievement between female and male students were discernible.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to school and their behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and behaviour although their attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students are positive about what the school has to offer them.
- The school has good expectations of students' behaviour and most respond well to this.
- Attendance rates are improving, though they are unacceptable in Year 13.
- Some students' attitudes and behaviour are less positive than the majority.

Commentary

13. Most students like the school. They particularly appreciate the good relationships they have with staff and the ease with which they can seek their help in lessons and around the school. As a result, most students are attentive in lessons. They concentrate well and are keen to learn and to improve their work. Younger students are particularly positive about practical subjects such as science, food technology and ceramics. Students like the variety of extra-curricular activities on offer including after-school clubs and visits outside school. However, they grumble about the price of school meals and the condition of some toilets.

14. Students behave satisfactorily because most know what is expected of them and feel that sanctions, such as detentions, which are used if they misbehave, are fair. Students dislike some students' anti-social behaviour but say that teachers mostly deal well with any incidents. They report that any bullying is dealt with seriously and that the availability of older 'buddies' means that there is always someone to talk to. Some parents have concerns about behaviour and bullying but the inspectors found that students' behaviour is well managed and that bullying is dealt with well. During the inspection, students behaved well around the school and were polite to visitors.

15. Some students' attitudes and behaviour are not positive however. Some have low educational aspirations which are a barrier to their achievement. This is reflected in some low level classroom disruption and frustration with their learning. While students mostly get on well with each other, there are some racist and homophobic comments towards others and incidents which have resulted in exclusion. The rate of exclusions is above average. Strategies to improve and manage behaviour, such as the use of the quiet room for internal exclusions, are beginning to have an effect on reducing the number of fixed term exclusions. There were three permanent exclusions last year but there have been none since the start of the academic year.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	540	56	3
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	4	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
Total	561	59	3

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

16. In normal lessons the attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs are generally satisfactory, as with other students, because they are well managed. When support staff are present to provide extra help this is accepted well by all; others often taking advantage of their presence and seeking extra help themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of students working in special withdrawal lessons are very good; they respond well to the intensive and focused work provided and are keen to succeed. In a Year 9 English lesson, attitudes were very positive as a result of the interest students had in the power relations between the main protagonists in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Year 11 students with Statements of Special Educational Need are particularly appreciative of the help, support and guidance they have received from the learning support department throughout their time in school.

17. Students' attendance is gradually rising as a result of improved attendance monitoring procedures and the school's focus on rewarding good attendance rates. In the academic year 2003-04, overall attendance levels rose to meet the national average. The school continues to exercise stringent checks on absence as data for the year beginning September 2004 shows a slight decline in the autumn term. During the inspection there were some students missing from all lessons observed. Most students are punctual although some are late for school every day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.7	School data	0.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

18. The school places implicit emphasis on promoting students' personal development and the impact on students' behaviour and attitudes is satisfactory. During their time in school, students' understanding of themselves and other people develops well. They are beginning to explore their own values and beliefs.

19. Many teachers actively encourage reflection, seek opinions and listen to answers. They give students a range of meaningful jobs and responsibilities. In subjects such as religious education and

English, students are reflective, can think beyond the material world and show respect for members of their community. A small group of students has, for example, built and maintained a sensory garden for an old people's home. Global issues are addressed in a range of subjects such as citizenship and geography. There are regular visits to art galleries and theatres. Although the school does not meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students, assemblies are thought provoking and address a good range of moral issues, enabling students to benefit from periods of reflection. However, the school does not specifically plan for this aspect of personal development and so students do not have a consistent experience across all subjects of the curriculum. This means that there are missed opportunities in some subjects.

Sixth form

20. Students in the sixth form value the opportunities and flexible curriculum offered to them, which enable them to continue their education beyond statutory school age. They are particularly positive about the good relationships that they have with their teachers and other students which help them to feel well supported. Students' personal development is good. They behave well and are good role models for younger students. They are responsible and mature when working as 'buddies' with younger students and when discussing the organisation of activities in their sixth form committees. Students say that the sixth form is 'one big family' which helps them to mature in preparation for further education or work after they leave. In spite of these positive attitudes, attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory in Year 12 but falls below acceptable levels in Year 13 with a high rate of unauthorised absence. Personal development is satisfactory for students in the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 11 the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. The use of assessment data as a means of informing teaching, learning and curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. Its use is better in the sixth form where it is satisfactory. The curriculum overall is unsatisfactory because of a number of statutory breaches, though it is satisfactory in the sixth form. However, opportunities for enrichment are good. The quality of resources is satisfactory and the school's quality of accommodation is good. Students receive satisfactory care, guidance and support overall, but these functions are good in the sixth form. Relationships with parents are satisfactory and the school's work with other schools and its wider community is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in Years 12 and 13. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Though improved, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. It is very good in science in Years 11 and 12, good in the sixth form, but is often too dependent on the teacher in other lessons.
- The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs is good.
- Teachers' use of ICT to support lessons is unsatisfactory.
- The assessment of students' work and the use made of assessment information to plan what students should learn next is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

21. The quality of teaching and learning is now better than that reported both in the previous inspection report and by Her Majesty's inspectors when they visited the school in November 2001. However, there is still too much teaching that is unsatisfactory and too little that is very good or better. Though standards have improved, only one lesson, from a sample of 108 was deemed excellent and only 18 lessons were graded as very good. This is a disappointing outcome. The school's procedures for systematically monitoring and evaluating teaching, and sharing good practice, are in their infancy. Though very good teaching was spread across all year groups the findings of the inspection mirror the views of students and parents; teaching is inconsistent and this adversely affects achievement. In the main school teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in French, music and physical education and the students' levels of achievement are depressed as a consequence. In part this inconsistency arises because of problems with the recruitment and retention of suitable staff, but it also arises because monitoring procedures until recently lacked sharpness and effectiveness. A clear challenge for the school is to ensure that more lessons, across all subjects, are at least very good and eliminate the element of unsatisfactory teaching.

22. In the main school, there are no subjects where the overall quality of teaching and learning is graded better than good, though science teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. In those lessons where teaching is most effective and students learn at least well as a result, tasks are well prepared, the students, irrespective of their ability, are challenged, learning objectives are shared and a starter activity is used to consolidate previously learned knowledge. Where teaching is most effective, staff employ a range of strategies designed to enthuse the students and capture their imagination. This was seen in some lessons in English, science and art and design for example. Staff in other subjects occasionally showed similar skills, but too often the quality of learning was too teacher dependent. This variability in the quality of teaching and learning is a feature that the school's senior managers have identified in their newly adopted monitoring procedures, but have not yet had time to tackle in a concerted manner.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1(1%)	18 (17%)	44 (41%)	36 (33%)	8 (7%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

23. Though comparatively few questionnaires were completed by parents and students, those who did express opinions criticised the use of homework. The main criticisms centred on its regularity, quality and marking. The overall opinion being that the school's approach to homework lacks consistency and that it is too teacher dependent. The inspection team supports these observations. In some cases the quality of set homework was high and was carefully planned to enhance learning. In other cases, homework was either infrequent, or was set with little thought about how it would further extend learning. Marking was also variable in both quality and quantity. Where standards were high, marking was thorough with helpful comments added to the students' work. In the worst cases, exercise books had either not been marked, or had only been marked occasionally. In some instances the students were lavishly praised for the efforts they had made, rather than for the quality of their work. It was evident that in some cases marking was casual with errors in spelling, for example, either not being corrected, or being corrected inconsistently. Such an approach does little to aid learning or achievement and such practices were usually associated with those teachers who were less effective in the classroom.

24. Where teaching and learning are at least good, there are good working relationships in the classroom and most students have positive attitudes towards their studies and they behaviour well. In a good number of lessons the teachers' natural enthusiasm is shared with students and, as a result, all students, including those with special educational needs, work hard and well in a

purposeful atmosphere. The use of ICT is also developing and this too is enhancing learning, though the overall use of ICT as a tool to enliven teaching and learning is under-developed in comparison to most other schools. This weakness has also been identified by the new senior management team and is a priority for development.

25. Where teaching and learning are less than satisfactory, lesson planning does not meet students' needs or take sufficient account of prior learning. The lessons that were judged as being unsatisfactory typically had insufficient challenge and tended to be dull, lacking in pace and were too teacher orientated. These weaknesses in planning tended to result in the students become bored and restless, with their contribution in the lesson dwindling to a minimum. For the overall quality of teaching to improve, that good practice that does exist needs to be shared and more staff should be prepared to challenge the students to work independently.

26. Teachers are well aware of the needs of students on the school's list of special educational needs. In design and technology, in the smaller groups, teachers plan very specific resource tasks to support 'making' and this enables students to make appropriate progress. The quality of target setting on students' IEPs is generally good, most targets being sharp and appropriate for students. This helps teachers plan their work to meet the needs of these students. On the odd occasion some of the targets are vague, hence it is unclear how students are expected to make progress.

27. Support staff provided effective help in lessons for students with special educational needs. In English lessons, for example, support staff show initiative and are fully involved. In a Year 9 art and design lesson, effective help enabled students with special educational needs to progress well. In a Year 8 history lesson the lesson plan was carefully crafted to include the effective use of support staff.

28. At all ages of entry to the school, satisfactory provision is made for students who are at various stages of learning English as an additional language. Good induction procedures support small groups of newly arrived students and are effective for all students including those who are new to the English education system. However, individualised language learning plans are not used effectively in teachers' planning to inform students' precise learning needs and to ensure they receive inclusive support. Students, therefore, remain largely dependent on the teacher and TAs in mainstream lessons.

29. Students at an early stage of learning English are withdrawn from lessons in small groups. In these lessons they are well supported and are able to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills appropriately. These lessons are well planned to meet their needs. Effective support systems include the development of bilingual dictionaries, differentiated listening and reading tasks matched to individual learners' needs, writing frames and clear objective setting.

30. The assessment of the students' work and the use of this assessment are unsatisfactory. The school has had a very good policy for assessment in place for a number of years; but it has not been implemented. In part this is because the computer systems supporting the policy have not proved adequate to generate the information that teachers have required to improve the quality of their setting of targets for students or of the knowledge they need to report to parents. In addition to this, it is only recently that senior managers have pursued the need to implement the school's policy for assessment with any degree of urgency or rigour.

31. Teachers are now provided with good information about each student's levels of prior attainment, together with their performance in standardised tests. Senior managers, departmental heads and teachers are now better placed to set targets and identify underachievement. Because, however, this situation has only been effective since the start of this academic year, as yet there has very little measurable effect on standards.

32. The improvement of the quality of assessment and the procedures for its implementation and use are high on the school's agenda. Inservice training for teachers on marking the students' work to the correct national curriculum standards in all subjects and especially in geography, history, ICT and music has been instituted as a priority and continues. Success is to be seen in the

work of the religious education department and to a lesser degree in each of the core subjects of English, science (where there is still a degree of inconsistency) and mathematics. There is still much to be done before there is a consistent level of quality across all subjects.

33. Assessment and recording procedures for EAL students do not include sufficient monitoring and evaluation of progress. This is unsatisfactory and means that students' continuing learning needs are not being met.

Sixth form

34. The good quality of teaching offers those students who attend regularly an opportunity to develop intellectually and to improve their future prospects, whether this is in employment or in further or higher education. Overall, the standard of teaching and learning is good. In approximately four out of every five lessons, teaching and learning were at least good, but the incidence of very good teaching was disappointing and there were no excellent lessons. Approximately one in every five lessons was graded as very good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching enables the students to achieve well in many lessons. In the focus subjects, teaching is very good in human biology and it is good in English and ICT.

35. Teaching and learning are better in the sixth form than in the main school because staff are more confident. In lessons, staff show good subject knowledge and there are good relationships with the students and this helps learning. Staff plan well and are more prepared to encourage independent working, though this approach needs to be further developed. Those students who regularly attend and who complete their courses of study benefit from a sixth form education and achieve well. However, course retention rates are not good. In the best lessons, students are engaged in suitable activities that help them develop intellectually as well as personally. As a result, they are able to sharpen their analytical skills and heighten their interest in the subject. This was especially apparent in some A-level biology lessons. On other occasions the progress made during the lesson was inhibited by the group size and its composition. Some Year 12 English classes are very large with a considerable range in levels of prior attainment. This poses problems for the teachers deciding at what level to set the lesson. As a consequence the progress made by better qualified students is not always as rapid as it should be.

36. Based on the student questionnaire and inspectors' discussions with students, it is clear that students greatly value the opportunity to study at sixth form level. They grade the standard of teaching as good and they particularly appreciate the fact that teachers are available to provide additional help and advice when it is required. The inspection team endorse these views.

37. Assessment is satisfactory. Marking of the students' work is satisfactory in all subjects and good in human biology and in textiles. Teachers follow the guidelines provided by the examination boards so that the students know what is expected of them. In general, as is the case in English and in the key skills course for application of number, the use could of data analysis to determine more appropriate targets, or course entry levels, needs improving.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory; it does not meet a number of statutory requirements. Opportunities for students outside lessons are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not meet statutory requirements and the requirement to provide ICT for all students is not met in all subjects, which means students are not achieving as well as they should be.
- The statutory requirements for citizenship throughout the school and for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are not met.

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum in English and science is good with students benefiting from a range of courses.
- There is no daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

38. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the statutory provision of ICT in geography and music in these years is also not met. However, the school has bought in a commercially produced ICT course for Years 10 and 11. This provides a 'ladder' for achievement and enables students to attain more GCSE success than they would normally. Statutory provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is not met, nor is provision for citizenship. This is because the strands of the citizenship National Curriculum are not taught in enough depth and assessment is not taking place. Students' personal development is, therefore, not as well rounded as it should be. In most other subjects, there is suitable breadth and balance and in English and science this is good. In French and music this is not the case because of staffing issues. In physical education there is insufficient breadth because there is no accredited course in Years 10 and 11. In geography, a lack of field trips means the curriculum is not as broad as it should be. Though provision for PSHE is satisfactory, the time allocated has to be shared with citizenship and religious education. There is no daily act of collective worship in the school.

39. Alongside the traditional range of GCSE courses, the school offers some vocational courses to meet the full ability range of students in Years 10 and 11. However, insufficient emphasis has been given to developing an alternative work-based curriculum that better meets the needs of a significant number of students aged 14 to 19. There is an effective partnership with a local further education college that is of benefit to students; some older students, for example, follow National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses. The curriculum is suitably enriched with a range of trips to the theatre and art galleries as well as the use of visitors to the school to enhance the quality of students' learning. However, extra-curricular provision for the arts, particularly music, is unsatisfactory. Students are missing out on this aspect of their learning. Extra-curricular provision in physical education is good. It is not possible to comment on participation rates in extra-curricular activities because the school does not have complete records of this.

40. Overall, curricular provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs have full and equal access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. All students are entered for the full range of GCSE courses on offer and in Year 11 there are opportunities for some to take part in vocational courses, including links with a local college and work-based providers. Formal extra-curricular provision means students with special educational needs have the opportunity to ask for and receive extra subject and specific support and guidance during the week. Support staff help with home work clubs and the weekly 'green' club. Some older students also take part in weekly timetabled vocational courses, which contributes well to their personal development.

41. Staff are kept fully informed of special educational needs through a weekly briefing session. However, the quality of provision for students with special educational needs within subject departments is inconsistent. In English, science and art provision is good. It is also good in religious education in Years 7 to 9. Provision is satisfactory in most other subjects whereas in geography and music it is unsatisfactory. It is also unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in ICT and French.

42. Resources are satisfactory. The provision of one computer to every three students is very good and well above the level seen in most schools. Even so inspectors reported that some subjects such as science and music were not making enough use of ICT. In English the use of ICT helps students in Years 10 and 11 to raise their standards through good and appropriate use of redrafting. The library provision is satisfactory overall but there are shortages in texts for modern foreign languages, physical education and history. There are only two computers in the library. Although some subjects make frequent use of the library – giving notice of forthcoming topics so suitable resources can be assembled – this practice is not systematic. There are no formal lines of communication between the library and subjects. In subjects the resource level in art and design is very good and good in English, modern foreign languages and geography.

43. Accommodation to support learning is good in subjects such as English, art and design and physical education. In these examples teachers can use a number of different types of rooms and this enables them to plan a wide range of activities for their students. In other subjects teaching takes place in reasonably sized class rooms and students have easy access to all parts of the school. Accommodation is not satisfactory in science, where laboratories are old, cramped and poorly equipped.

44. Not all the learning support department accommodation is accessible by parents or students with mobility needs. Resources within the department are adequate. Leadership has identified the need for improved provision of improved reading books to meet the full range of learning needs of students.

45. The match of well qualified teachers to the taught curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in English, mathematics, German – including an Advanced Skills Teacher – and art and design. Staffing is poor in French where there are no specialist teachers. It is good in religious education during Years 7, 8 and 9 but there are not enough specialists in Years 10 and 11 so the staffing is unsatisfactory. The recruitment of well qualified staff is not easy in this location. Some subjects such as English have been innovative in their approach, recruiting teachers on the Graduate Teacher Programme and also targeting former students who have a commitment to the school. The match of support staff to the needs of the school is good, especially in special educational needs.

46. The learning support department is well staffed. As a result, students with a statement outlining their particular need as well as other students on the school's list of special educational needs receive sufficient support both in-class, in extra-curricular activities and in small group withdrawal lessons. Support staff are enthusiastic and committed to working with students with special educational needs and their effective deployment ensures the curricular needs of these students are met.

Sixth form

47. The school offers a range of AS courses but there is a limited range of A-level courses. However, there is a good range of vocational courses and students also have the opportunity to re-sit English and mathematics at GCSE, many attaining grade 'C' or above. Key skills courses are also available. In physical education, students have the opportunity to take the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) course. This enables the school to establish close links with primary schools and broadens the outlook of students who coach younger children in a range of sporting activities. With the exception of textiles, history and photography, where numbers are less than five, most courses have suitably-sized groups. Few students stay on to study A-level courses but some do stay to follow other AS courses. As a result, many courses are co-taught. Retention rates are low as a result of local socio-economic circumstances and a lack of tradition for staying on after Year 11. The school has just become part of a local consortium to offer suitable courses and widen opportunities for those who decide to opt to stay on after Year 11. Early indications are that numbers staying on are set to rise.

48. The curriculum is suitably enriched by trips to art galleries, places of worship and to the theatre. PSHE lessons enhance students' personal development and there are joint activities with a local college to broaden this even further. Careers advice, both for work and further education is part of this weekly structured programme of activities. Statutory provision for religious education is also met as a result of this.

49. In the three subjects inspected in depth staffing is very good in biology and good in English literature and mathematics. In English literature there is a good blend of experienced teachers with teachers who are relatively recent entrants. Students with special educational needs continue to receive good support.

50. There is a satisfactory range of resources within the focus subjects of biology, English literature and mathematics to support and develop learning. Students in English literature make

good use of ICT and internet sources in particular to enhance their knowledge and understanding of different genres and contemporary contexts.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is good. They are provided with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to air their views about the school. Sixth form students receive good advice and guidance and there are good opportunities for them to contribute their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff understand students' needs and backgrounds and care for them well.
- Most students feel well supported by the good relationships they have with staff.
- Students are not provided with enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- Students are mostly positive about the school council as a forum for discussion.
- Students in the sixth form receive good advice and guidance.

Commentary

51. The school cares about the welfare of all its students and is well aware of the difficulties which many of them face. The school's relationship with outside support agencies is good and is used effectively to ensure students have access to help where available. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and for monitoring the progress of students who are in public care are secure. Regular multi-agency review meetings are an effective tool for monitoring the well-being and progress of vulnerable students. The pastoral care available to students in school is led and managed well by heads of year who provide good continuity of care and support as students move through the school.

52. Many students appreciate the good relationships they have with staff and know they will be listened to seriously either by a teacher, their tutor or head of year. For example, whilst some have concerns about bullying they also speak positively about the effective way it is dealt with by staff. They also feel well supported by student 'buddies' who listen to their concerns. Students feel their independent learning is well supported through the provision of homework clubs and the ability to freely use the library at break times. Year 7 students say that their induction into school was good and that they were helped to settle quickly. Guidance for students on courses and options for further study as they move through the school is satisfactory.

53. Students have mixed views about the way in which teachers and tutors help them to understand how to improve their work. They report variation in the way in which different teachers in different subjects support and guide them so that they understand how to improve and to achieve higher levels or grades. In religious education, for example, marking of students' work is detailed and explains to students how to improve their work but in other subjects students do not know at what level they are working and what they must do to achieve improvement.

54. Students say that it is easy to air their views with most members of staff and senior managers because they are approachable and will listen. They talk positively about the school council as a forum for discussing their concerns and are pleased, for example, that they are to be consulted about improvements to the school meals. They approve of the work done through the school council to raise money for charity and to explore environmental issues. Some students feel that their views are not always fully represented at senior management level. The school keeps in close touch with the views of students through the school council and the sixth form council. For example, students are fully aware of the school's vision for technology college status and they are knowledgeable about the advantages that this will bring to the school.

55. The school has effective relationships with outside specialist agencies; this enhances further the quality of support and guidance for those students with special educational needs. Annual

reviews are effective and support students with a statement outlining their particular needs as they move through the school. Students' views are taken into account at these reviews because they are involved in the setting and review of their targets. The school meets the curricular and other support requirements for students with a statement outlining their particular needs.

56. The identification, assessment of and procedures for assessing students with special educational needs are effective. Leadership draws on a wide range of assessment data to help guide the appropriate placement of students on the school's list of students with special educational needs. Whole school data provides the potential to closely track the progress students with special educational needs make. As a result, the school is able to show students with special educational needs are making progress commensurate with their capabilities. However, the analysis and evaluation of whole school data, GCSE and national test data at the end of Year 9, is not yet well embedded.

57. The school ensures that students for whom English is an additional language have guidance in their home language and that cultural aspects of their home heritage are included into lessons.

Sixth form

58. The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to students in the sixth form is good. Students say that they feel well supported both academically and personally by their teachers and by other students. Some are critical of the target setting day as they feel that it does not give them a frequent enough overview of their progress but they acknowledge that they can go to any teacher for advice and support. They are given good guidance on higher education, career and work options. Students are very positive about the sixth form council committees of which they are all members and which are active in organising charity, sports and entertainment events and speakers from industry. They appreciate the opportunity to take responsibility in the school, for example helping with homework clubs as Millennium Volunteers and recognise the value that this has in supporting their younger peers.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The few parents who expressed a view are satisfied with the school.
- Parents do not receive good enough information about their children's progress.
- The school uses its links with the community well to enrich students' learning.
- Links with other schools and colleges are being used well to extend the curriculum available to students.

Commentary

59. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about parents' views of the school because an insufficient number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting. Those parents who expressed a view concluded that they were generally pleased with the school because it is well run and is improving. The school encourages parents to be more involved in their children's education. Some parents respond well to this by attending meetings with tutors and supporting new initiatives such as the 'Bring your parent to school day' although not all take these opportunities.

60. Parents at the meeting reported that the school responds well if they wish to discuss any concerns. However, they dislike the parents' evenings where they only meet form tutors and not subject teachers. The school has already identified this as an area of concern and has begun to implement a programme of subject teacher consultations. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory and do not meet statutory requirements. They do not provide sufficient information on students' progress

and the standards they have achieved. Targets for improvement are too vague and do not give clear enough guidance either to parents or their children on what students need to do improve.

61. There are effective links between the learning support department and the parents of students with special educational needs. Although invited, not all parents attend annual reviews of those students with a statement outlining their particular needs. However, for those who do, their views are recorded; hence they are fully involved and informed about their child's progress towards the targets set as part of the review process. Procedures for involving parents in the setting and review of targets on IEPs are developing well.

62. The school has a good and increasingly effective partnership with the community in order to enrich the curriculum for students. Good work is being done to extend links with industry and business partnerships to provide students with practical and meaningful opportunities to support their learning. There are good opportunities for students to undertake community projects such as gardening and building maintenance. The school functions well as a community facility, providing on-site facilities for a nursery, adult education classes, sports clubs and summer schools. The local community supports the school well. For example, the co-operation of local businesses and professions means that year 10 and 11 students have good access to a range of work experience placements. The school's bid for specialist status has been well supported by funding from two local companies.

63. Links with local primary schools are good. Transition arrangements are well established and the way in which students from Year 6 settle easily into the school as a result is appreciated by parents. The learning support department has close links with its main primary feeder schools and, as a result, provision for incoming students is planned in advance. Links with colleges where students move on to are less well developed. The school is making good progress in increasing opportunities for students' learning through its links with other schools through the local cluster. The Valued Youth Scheme, for example, enables students to gain experience of working with primary age pupils.

Sixth Form

64. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are good and contribute well to the developing curriculum on offer to sixth form students. The school's participation in the Darenth Valley Post 16 Consortium will provide students with a wider choice of subjects and courses. Students' personal development is promoted well through opportunities to participate in community projects such as working with disabled people as Millennium Volunteers and with primary pupils while gaining accreditation for the Community Sports Leaders Award.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and management. She is new to the post and there has not been sufficient time for all the improvement strategies that she has put in place, to have their full effect. The governing body has many strengths. However, governance is unsatisfactory, because some statutory requirements are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is providing strong leadership and a clear vision for the school and she is well supported by senior colleagues.
- Governors support the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, they need to ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled.
- A rigorous programme of self-review and evaluation is having a positive effect on teaching and learning
- The leadership and the management of some departments are unsatisfactory.

- Very good relationships exist throughout the school, which is an orderly, harmonious learning community.
- Difficulties in recruiting key staff hinder improvement.

Commentary

65. The headteacher provides good leadership with a very clear direction and ethos for the school. There are good relationships throughout the school. The students feel that they are well cared for and supported and that the school is improving in this respect. The vision for the future is focused on becoming a technologically rich community school, in the context of gaining specialist technology status. The headteacher has high aspirations and is committed to raising standards. She approaches this task with energy and enthusiasm. She is well supported by her senior staff, all of whom have well-defined roles within the school. Through a process of consultation with staff and governors, she accurately identified key areas for improvement. These priorities include the development of assessment for learning and ensuring the school becomes a self-evaluating school. The priorities in the school improvement plan are well understood and supported throughout the school community. However, progress with improvement has been much hindered by difficulties in recruiting staff for key posts in the school.

66. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They recognise the important role they play in both supporting and challenging the school and in monitoring progress with the planned developments. They carry out their responsibilities well through two committees that have clearly defined terms of reference. However, there are a number of statutory requirements that the school does not meet. These include ensuring the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets all statutory requirements, providing a daily act of collective worship and ensuring that reports to parents meet requirements. As a result, governance of the school is unsatisfactory.

67. The school is managed satisfactorily by the headteacher and senior staff. A programme of subject evaluations has recently been introduced. These are carried out by members of the leadership team, together with interested volunteers from the staff. They are in-depth and rigorous and include the analysis of test and examination results, the observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students' work. To date, three subjects have been evaluated. As a result, clear action plans for improvement have been produced. Governors are very supportive of these evaluations and they appreciate the detailed information that they now receive in order to carry out their monitoring role. Governors will play a direct role in future evaluations, by observing lessons with senior staff and by being present when feedback is given. This will complement the active role that they already play in many aspects of school life, such as providing support for ICT developments, organising community placements and attending a wide range of school events.

68. An appropriate range of policies, underpins the work of the school. These include a clear and detailed policy on managing the performance of staff. All teachers have performance reviews and individual targets are set. These targets have a focus on improving teaching and learning and raising standards. An audit of professional development needs has been carried out, so that staff will have the necessary skills and knowledge to address the school's priorities for improvement. Staff who are new to the school take part in a well-structured induction programme. There is a race equality policy, which forms part of the school's equal opportunities policy. The effect of this policy is not yet formally monitored and reported to governors, though this policy will be reviewed during the current academic year.

69. The school budgets systematically, allocating resources to meet the school's priorities and the educational needs of its students. The expenditure per student is above average, although this is comparable to schools with a similar proportion of students with special educational needs. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	2,405,966
Total expenditure	2,407,801
Expenditure per student	4,074

Balance from previous year	69,854
Balance carried forward to the next	68,019

70. The heads of year and many heads of department lead and manage their teams well. They demonstrate a clear vision and a strong commitment to improvement. Leadership and management of the core subjects of English and science are good and they are satisfactory in mathematics. However, some heads of department provide unsatisfactory leadership and management. In these cases, there is a lack of clear direction and insufficient focus on continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The school is addressing this issue by providing support and rigorous monitoring of identified teachers.

71. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs and statutory requirements are met. Effective leadership has resulted in a good whole school ethos for the inclusion of and support of students with special educational needs. Leadership has ensured the ethos of provision and support for students with special educational needs has a good profile and that staff are fully involved in the overall provision for them. There is a clear vision for future provision and development planning is well linked to whole school areas for improvement.

72. The quality of management is satisfactory. It has been impaired by the recent decrease in the time available to organise provision for students with special educational needs. There is, though, some administrative support available on a weekly basis to help ease the load. The use of ICT to help administration and evaluation and analysis of data is not well developed. LSAs are deployed effectively to provide the required support for students with Statements of Special Educational Need and those at the school action stage of the Code of Practice for special needs. This provides the breadth and level of support required for these students. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the support staff is not yet well embedded, nor is the monitoring and evaluation of subject departments with respect to their provision for students with special educational needs.

Sixth form

73. A new head of sixth form had been in post for a matter of days at the time of the inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to make judgements about the quality of leadership and management. Despite its small size, the financing of the sixth form does not present a drain on the resources of the rest of the school and it provides satisfactory value for money. The senior management team have a clear vision of how the sixth form should develop. This involves developing vocational work and Swanley School is now playing a more prominent role than hitherto in the local schools' consortium, which is partly designed to foster educational opportunities for students aged 16 and over.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning does not enable all students in Years 10 and 11 to have the opportunity to develop enterprise and employability skills.
- Work experience is well organised enabling all students to have experiences of different types of employment.
- Not all teachers have a clear understanding of the potential contribution of work-related learning; work-based learning in subjects is not embedded.
- The school is making good progress in developing a more vocational curriculum but only for lower attaining students.

Commentary

74. Work experience is a well established and expanding programme which allows all students in Year 10 to undertake placements with local businesses. This provision is being expanded and last year 60 percent of students in Year 11 undertook a further week of work experience after the completion of their GCSEs. Students are expected to take responsibility in selecting an appropriate placement and their response to the whole programme is very positive. Careers education is also well established and forms part of the school's PSHE programme.

75. In spite of these successes the provision for work-related learning for all students in Years 10 and 11 is still not satisfactory as it is still in the developmental stage. Policies have yet to be fully formulated and there are no mechanisms to ensure that the entitlement of all students is monitored. Few inspectors reported on effective provision within individual subjects for work based learning and, in some cases, opportunities were missed to use the experiences of work to make lessons more interesting. However, good progress has been made in developing work based learning for a small group of low attaining students and some vocational GCSEs have also been introduced, but on most other courses the development of enterprise and employability skills is not well developed. Where such skills as teamwork, risk taking and greater personal responsibility for learning occur, their contribution to work-related learning is not made explicit.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well; in Years 10 and 11 students achieve well
- Teaching focuses sharply and effectively on the skills the students need to improve.
- Students work hard and have good attitudes.
- The department is very well led and well managed.
- Marking is very good but the application of other assessment procedures to raise standards is not rigorous enough.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to learn independently or collaboratively during lessons.

Commentary

76. Students arrive at the school with standards in English which are well below average. By the time they take the national tests at the end of Year 9 they have achieved very well and their test scores are at the national average. They are well above the average of schools with a similar intake. This is part of a rising trend in results: from well below average in 2001 to above average in 2003 and (provisionally) average in 2004. In terms of GCSE grades A* - C the examination performance of pupils in Year 11 in 2003 and (provisionally) in 2004 was below average. Given their starting points two years previously, these students also achieved well

77. Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 and Year 11 are average. Achievement is very good in Year 9. The proportions working at the expected levels for their age - and also at above expected levels - are far higher than when these students joined the school in Year 7. The best progress is made in writing. Most students have gained the confidence to produce extended pieces. They also change the tone of their work effectively, depending on the purpose of the piece. There are good gains in the control of paragraphing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Higher attainers use a more varied range of vocabulary. Achievement is good in Year 11. The students' course work suggests that more than half are working in the A*-C grade range. In both Years 9 and 11 some students are not reaching the expected levels, primarily because of weakness in accuracy and a lack of an analytical response to reading. Some have standards that are very low; but all are on course for entry in examinations, including those with significant learning difficulties. Teachers and support staff work well together to assess these students' special educational needs and to plan lessons that support their progress well.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some features are very good. The teachers' very good subject expertise ensures the students develop the skills that result in positive progress. Consequently schemes of work and lesson planning ensure that activities in lessons match the planned learning outcomes. Planning also makes sure students are kept busy, reflecting the teachers' very good expectations and aspirations for the students. However, teachers do not always display learning outcomes or give students enough opportunities to reflect on what the activities are helping them to learn. Teachers set substantial homework that enables students to apply and consolidate their skills. Relationships are very good and students value and respond well to their teachers' strong encouragement. In a few very good lessons students had frequent opportunities to

learn independently or in groups and pairs. Overall, they do not have enough opportunities of this kind. Marking is very good and teachers use assessment information well to place students in suitable learning groups. There have been some effective recent developments in the use of assessment to set targets for students, including those with special educational needs, in the setting of formal assessment tasks and in the tracking of students' progress. However, overall assessment procedures are not as rigorous, consistent in their application or effective as the best practice observed in departments in other schools.

79. The head of department sets a very good example as a teacher. His high aspirations for the students and, therefore, for his colleagues have a positive impact on the work of his team and so influence the standards achieved by students. He takes an inclusive approach to management by devolving areas of responsibility to his colleagues, including recent entrants to the profession, which motivates teachers and gives them confidence. The department evaluates its examination results against national data and other measures and analyses examination performance to inform its planning. Good use has been made of external reviews to enhance provision. The consistent application of procedures, regarding assessment for example, requires closer monitoring. The focus on effective communication skills helps to prepare students for important elements in the world of work, though little other work based learning is covered. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection and improvement has been good overall. It has been very good in Years 7, 8 and 9 as evidenced by considerably improved test results.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

80. Provision is satisfactory. Effective work in the English department enables students to make good progress and reach average standards. However, across other subjects the overall standards of literacy are below average. In subjects such as science or design and technology – where the standards were average – the teaching reflected the realisation that many students do not transfer the skills that they acquire in their English lessons unless specifically required to. This level of expectation is not sufficiently recognised by some other departments so students can apply in all subjects skills such as sustained and effective explanatory writing that they display in their English course work.

81. There have been training events that focus on the development of literacy in recent years and there is a whole school policy, although it is rather general and limited in guidance. The new headteacher has correctly introduced a draft policy that is wider in scope and provides a fuller range of guidance for teachers to support their work. It is too soon for this document to have had an effect but it clearly promotes the importance of literacy.

French

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff recruitment and retention has been very difficult and there is no current provision for French in Year 9, 10 and 11.
- In the better lessons students are challenged and the use of French is effective but standards generally are below average.
- Assessment procedures do not provide students with clear targets for learning.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

82. The school has faced significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff for the department and this situation remains unresolved. There is currently only limited time available to study French in Years 7 and 8 and none available in Years 9, 10 and 11.

83. Students studying French enter the school with standards which are well below average; many will not have studied French before. Standards of work seen were well below average in Years 7 and 8 in all aspects of learning. Achievement is unsatisfactory and is linked to poor attendance as well as the lack of suitably qualified staff to deliver the subject.

84. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall. However some good teaching was seen. In those classes where it is satisfactory or better, teachers set a good level of challenge and use the target language effectively, with the result that students are developing good listening skills. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs where teachers, not yet sufficiently trained to teach French, concentrate too much on the development of reading and writing and not enough on speaking and listening. In these classes teacher expectations are too low and lessons are dull with little opportunity for students to use the language themselves. Teacher led activities are lengthy and often concentrate unduly on the theory rather than the practice of language skills. This inhibits rather than encourages students in their attempts to communicate in French. In these classes there are too few opportunities for students to work independently.

85. Leadership and Management are unsatisfactory. Good practice within the department is not being shared. Assessment procedures currently in place do not adequately provide students, including those with special educational needs, with clear targets for improvement. No provision is being made for work based learning.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are close to the national average.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment procedures do not provide students with clear targets for learning.
- ICT is not used constructively enough to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

86. Results in the 2003 examinations for students in Year 11 show that standards in German were close to the national average. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. The picture was very similar in 2004. These outcomes represent good achievement.

87. It is rare for students entering the school to have any prior knowledge of German. Standards seen were broadly average for both boys and girls at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 in all aspects of learning; this represents good achievement. There is a wide variation between students and between year groups often as a result of poor levels of attendance where students missing from lessons fail to access key information. Overall achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is good as a result of good teaching. Students are well trained from Year 7 in the recording and memorizing of vocabulary. They are constantly exposed to the challenging use of target language by teachers and lessons are planned well. By the time students reach Year 11 they have well developed listening skills, they are able to give extended answers to oral questions and are beginning to use language descriptively to go beyond personal responses to what is seen and heard. Lower attaining students can use three main tenses with reasonable accuracy. On the GCSE course, the students succeed in developing their use and understanding of the German language.

88. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall because teachers have very good subject knowledge, use the target language well and use questioning effectively to set good pace and challenge. This helps students to learn well and make good progress. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of tasks to suit different learning styles. Though there is restricted access to ICT to enliven learning, lessons are conducted at a lively pace catering well for the varying needs all

students. Useful homework is set and marking is generally helpful. However, assessment for learning, including for students with special educational needs, is under developed and does not fully inform targets for student improvement. Teachers provide very good opportunities for students to explore aspects of work-related learning including the Year 10 GCSE coursework topic on working abroad. The Year 9 summer term project to teach German in Primary schools is both innovative and creative.

89. The department is well led and managed. The head of department provides vision and clear direction, leading by good example. Students are well supported, revision classes for Year 11 GCSE students are successful and there is good provision and take up for educational visits abroad.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Satisfactory teaching is leading to satisfactory learning and achievement.
- Standards are well below national standards but in line with those for similar schools.
- Lessons are orderly and sometimes enjoyable but make insufficient use of modern technology.
- Lack of subject knowledge on the part of some of the teaching and support staff is impacting adversely on lesson quality.
- The understanding and use of assessment as a tool for raising standards is improving.

Commentary

90. Students' attainment on entry to the school is well below national levels. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average but showed better than average improvement for the students comparing their results with those they gained in end of Year 6 examinations three years earlier. Provisional results for 2004 appear broadly similar. Overall these results indicate at least satisfactory achievement for the students in both years.

91. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average compared with those in all schools. Compared with similar schools, however, results were well above average. Provisional results for 2004 are much the same though the improvement rate is likely to be closer to the average for similar schools. Success at grades A* to C has improved substantially over time with twice as many students gaining higher grades now than five years ago.

92. Current standards judged from the work in students' books and observed during lessons, are similar to those reflected in these examination results. Across the school achievement is satisfactory. The students' work improves from well below average on entry in Year 7 to below average by the time they are sixteen. For most the various aspects of algebra prove more difficult than other elements of mathematics. The bottom third of the ability range show weak arithmetical skills in all years. Year 9 students in lower ability sets fail to remember multiplication tables or to recognise the relationship between similar fractions. Year 11 lower set students show that they can do good work with box plots and other data handling when supported in class but make basic numerical mistakes when working unsupported in test or examination conditions. A small but significant number in all years make very little improvement because their attendance is poor.

93. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Teachers are aware of their needs, know what is contained in their individual education plans and help them towards their targets. In doing so they are supported by teaching assistants who also know the students well and take a genuine interest in their progress and welfare. Some, however, are not as knowledgeable about the mathematical topics that are to be studied as is necessary to ensure that the students progress as effectively as would otherwise be possible.

94. The quality of the students' learning is satisfactory overall because the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared and usually delivered at good pace. Lessons are orderly with teachers maintaining a good level of control over the class whilst also encouraging the children to do their best. To an extent, however, the emphasis on control is at the expense of longer discussion and encouraging the students to explain their thinking and consider their answers more fully. Hence the students are fully engaged and produce a good volume of work of sound quality but could be further extended. In some lessons teachers talk too much and do the work themselves rather than increase the level of challenge for the students; nor do they introduce enough variety into the work. Opportunities to relate mathematics to the world of work are acted upon although they are allowed to present themselves rather than being planned for. Most teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable but lack of specialist knowledge was the main factor contributing to poor teaching and learning in the one lessons observed during the inspection in which the students' learning was less than satisfactory. In all other lessons observed teaching and learning were satisfactory or better. In one third the quality was good.

95. Weak literacy skills make it difficult for some lower attainers to understand questions and explanations. The department has a literacy policy and teachers identify technical vocabulary and definitions in the planning of every lesson. Less attention, however, is paid to teaching the various elements of literacy that is frequently the case. In class the importance of vocabulary receives too little emphasis. In books there is little correction of spelling or grammar mistakes.

96. The students have sufficient access to computers to improve skills using spreadsheets and databases; teachers however do not use ICT sufficiently in their teaching. Even in good and enjoyable lessons such as a Year 11 lesson on transformations neither overhead projector nor laptop computer was used to show how shapes rotate.

97. Assessment of the students' work, including the work of those with special educational needs, is satisfactory and improving. The department is developing a database for monitoring and analysing students' results and there is a clearer awareness of the value of comparing school results with national data. Teachers' marking is regular but would benefit from being fuller with more student involvement to help them identify for themselves how to improve.

98. Leadership and management of the mathematics department are satisfactory. The head of department is a good teacher who sets a good example and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the department. Teachers new to the department are receiving sound support and an agenda for raising standards is now established.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. In subjects across the curriculum students demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are below those seen nationally. In general, however, they are sufficient for them to be able to access what they are studying. There is a school policy for numeracy, which outlines when, and how, various aspects of mathematics are taught in the mathematics department but this is not generally used. The contribution to developing students' numeracy in other subjects is limited despite the report of Her Majesty's Inspectors in December 2001 identifying that strengthening the teachers' awareness of how to support numeracy skills across the curriculum was an issue and in this respect improvement since then is unsatisfactory

SCIENCE

All students take double science and there is an additional environmental science option. One lesson of this subject was sampled and teaching and learning were good. A number of students in Years 10 and 11 take double applied science and this provides effective opportunities for work-based learning.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting head of science provides good leadership and management.
- Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11, and in all year groups they are motivated by the very good relationships that exist between staff and students.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to improve learning and raise standards.
- The many examples of very good teaching need to be shared among colleagues, to ensure greater consistency.
- The use of data to track students' progress and set targets for improvement is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

100. Year 9 test results in 2003 were well below the national average. The provisional results in 2004 were below the national average. In both year groups, students started the school with standards that were well below average. Therefore, achievement was satisfactory for the 2003 students and good for the 2004 students. This is part of a continuing upward trend. The 2003 results for Year 9 were in line with those of similar schools. The provisional 2004 results were well above those of similar schools. Year 11 examination results in 2003 and the provisional results for 2004 were both in line with national averages and this represents very good achievement. In both years, results were well above those of similar schools.

101. From the work seen during the inspection, standards of both girls and boys in Year 9 are below the national average. This represents good achievement across Years 7, 8 and 9. In Year 11, standards are in line with national averages, indicating that achievement is very good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs also achieve very well, as teachers have realistically high expectations and plan lessons to meet their needs.

102. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There are many examples of very effective practice. These include the use of interesting starter activities, which quickly engage the interest of students to ensure the lesson progresses at a lively pace. There are also examples of the good use of learning objectives throughout the lesson, so that students are aware of the progress they are making. There are examples of very effective whole-class questioning, the good use of a variety of learning styles, well-planned experimental work, and productive ends to lessons. Less effective lessons are characterised by weaker classroom management and less active student participation. It is important to ensure that the examples of very good practice are shared throughout the department, so that teaching and learning are consistently effective. Relationships among staff and students are very good and this motivates students to achieve well. In all year groups, there needs to be an increase in the use of ICT to enhance learning in science, as well as to enable students to develop their ICT skills.

103. Much progress has been made in involving students in assessing their own work and monitoring their own performance. Greater use needs to be made of National Curriculum level descriptors and GCSE grade descriptors, to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve. Work needs to continue on using the data on students' attainment, in order to monitor their progress and to set individual targets. This also applies to the use of the individual education plans for students with special educational needs.

104. Leadership and management of the acting head of department are good. There have been a number of staff changes recently. These changes have been well managed and the temporary arrangements are effective. The acting head of department has a very clear vision for the future development of science, together with a determination that students should enjoy science and achieve their very best. He has involved colleagues in identifying areas for development and planning for the future. His collaborative team approach is having a very positive effect on the professional development of colleagues, who demonstrate enthusiasm for trying out new approaches and developing the curriculum. Accommodation in science is poor and outdated, but

staff employ their skills well to use this accommodation to best effect, so that it does not have a negative effect on students' learning. Consideration needs to be given to the time allocation for science in Years 10 and 11, as this is below the national average.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ICT course offered in Years 10 and 11 provides students with good opportunities to gain examination success.
- The teaching programme in Years 7, 8 and 9 is narrow, undemanding and does not meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Assessment of students' work and progress is not used sufficiently to inform teaching and learning and to report progress to parents.
- Homework is not used adequately to further students' learning of ICT.

Commentary

105. On entry to the school students standards are below average. In 2003, following teacher assessment in Year 9, the school reported that 70 per cent of students had reached Level 5 or better. This figure is unrealistically high. The figure reported for 2004 was 21 per cent and is more plausible in the light of standards seen. However, the school does not currently have a programme in Years 7, 8 and 9 that is designed for students to attain National Curriculum levels and does not have a method of assessment that measures whether or not students have reached expected outcomes. There is, therefore, currently no reliable measure of standards in ICT that students reach at the end of Year 9.

106. This is not the case in Year 11. In 2003, 41 Year 11 students passed the GNVQ qualification in ICT gaining the equivalent of four GCSEs at grade C or above. In 2004, 45 students from a smaller entry cohort passed this examination. This represents an improved performance, however, there is no national comparative data for this qualification, but those students who successfully completed the course benefit from the boost provided to their GCSE results.

107. The standards of work seen in Year 9 were very low. This represents poor achievement. The teaching they experience does not develop skills sufficiently quickly and important aspects of National Curriculum requirements are omitted. Year 7 students reported that they had not learned any new knowledge or skills in the period leading up to the inspection. Year 9 students have not developed the standards and knowledge that could reasonably have been expected of them. Too much time has been spent covering simple aspects of the programming language 'LOGO' but without fully exploiting its creative or problem solving potential. Students' sophistication in using ICT for communication and data handling does not match the level now expected in primary schools.

108. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course offers students a route to certified achievement in ICT. Students work showed standards that were average. Their achievement is satisfactory. Students not attempting the GCSE course, follow a lower level programme which is helping them to develop a range of basic ICT skills.

109. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but in Years 7, 8 and 9 are unsatisfactory, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students are offered an inadequate teaching programme that does not make sufficient intellectual and practical demands, fails to meet National Curriculum requirements in a number of aspects and presents a restricted view for what ICT can offer to students as part of their education. Skills are taught to the exclusion of problem solving and much creativity: the breadth of study is too narrow. While lessons are delivered competently their overall purpose does not give the rich, demanding and interesting experience inherent in the

National Curriculum programme of study and which can make learning really enjoyable. In these early years assessment is also unsatisfactory. Students' development is not measured against National Curriculum levels. Students are not given targets based on levels based on their previous performance and capability. Students' self assessment of their own work is not developed as a tool for learning and information on their actual progress is not reported to parents. In Years 10 and 11 lessons follow closely the GCE programme pioneered by Thomas Telford College. Network and CD ROM resources supplement the input from teachers and provide a suitable programme for learning. Teachers supervise progress, provide instruction and create a learning environment that leads students to success.

110. In all years no ICT homework is set and students are not required to continue their learning beyond the class room. The ICT curriculum also lacks the dimensions that should support students' development of literacy, numeracy, personal and social education and citizenship.

111. The leadership for ICT is poor and management is unsatisfactory. There are too many key issues and initiatives that have not been developed. In Years 7, 8 and 9 there is a very low level of expectation and very narrow focus for students' learning. Assessment procedures, including those for students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory and do not inform teaching and learning. There is nothing additional planned to meet the diverse learning needs of either students with special needs or those that are gifted and talented. The work related aspects of ICT are satisfactory. The GCSE course offers students activities that are closely related to the world of work.

112. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The teaching of lessons has improved, as has the provision of ICT provided for students in Years 10 and 11. However curriculum provision in Years 7, 8 and 9 remains unsatisfactory; assessment has not been changed to report National Curriculum levels and parents are still not well informed about their children's progress.

Information Technology across the curriculum

113. The use of ICT across the curriculum as an aid to teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The school has a very good ratio of computers to students exceeding the Government's target level. There has been extensive investment in laptop computers for teachers, data projectors and network infrastructure although the number of interactive white boards is low. One networked ICT suite is entirely free for booking by subject departments. There are, therefore, no serious obstacles to greater use of ICT throughout the school.

114. Nevertheless, only about half of the subject departments make some satisfactory use of ICT for their work. In art and design ICT is used as a creative medium and English makes good use of a departmental suite of machines for students' course work development. However, in other subjects where ICT could offer much to enrich students' experience opportunities are missed; for example to develop data handling and geometry in mathematics and for accessing authentic materials in modern languages. Teachers are beginning to use presentation software more frequently in their teaching but ICT has yet to be used to bring about the transformation in teaching and learning that is envisaged by government and for which purpose much funding has been provided.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are well below average.
- Inconsistent marking and undeveloped assessment procedures mean that students do not know how to improve their work.
- There is no fieldwork programme in Years 7, 8 or 9 so students do not develop skills of data collection and analysis.
- Good teaching in Years 7 and 8 is leading to more positive student attitudes and an improvement in achievement.
- ICT is not used as a tool for teaching and learning.

Commentary

115. In 2003 standards at GCSE were well below the average for all schools and the average for similar schools. Results fell sharply in 2004 which was against the overall trend in the school.

116. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average. The majority of students do not understand what is required to achieve good examination results. Because there is no structured fieldwork programme in Years 7, 8 and 9, they have not had sufficient experience of collecting and organising data and, therefore, do not hypothesise clearly or arrive at concise conclusions supported by sound evidence. The few higher-attaining students can write organised explanations of, for example, river processes, but the work of most students shows a lack of motivation and incomplete understanding of the processes at work. These standards represent satisfactory achievement for these students, who will have started at the school with very little in the way of geographical knowledge or skills.

117. Standards at the end of Year 9 are also well below average, with girls doing much better than boys in teacher assessments. The few higher attaining students can organise short pieces of explanatory written work, supported by diagrams, but many of the lower attainers seem to be defeated by the work they are required to do and achievement is no more than satisfactory overall. Students with special educational needs are clearly identified by teachers and a stress on literacy practice in lessons helps many of them to achieve as well as their peers. However, many specific strategies that would raise their achievement still further, such as guided writing frames, are not used.

118. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 and 8, where students are set tasks that allow them to learn in practical ways; for example a Year 7 group was learning about the scale on a thermometer by deciding what clothing would be appropriate at certain Celsius temperatures. In lessons like this they achieve well. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, but does not engage the interest of the students, who show little ability to retain knowledge or, in Year 11 work, to apply it to examination questions in a structured way. There are no contacts with local businesses and work places which could serve as a basis for some of the students' coursework and encourage a more work-based approach to learning. Teachers manage their classes well and relationships with students are good, but low rates of attendance indicate unsatisfactory attitudes from some students and make it very difficult for teachers to provide continuity of learning. ICT is not used as a tool for teaching because of a lack of confidence and, until recently, lack of access to equipment.

119. Marking is irregular with little guidance as to how well students are doing or how they can improve their work. Regular assessments, including those for students with special educational needs, are not structured to reflect the National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9, and assessment data is not collated or used to identify weaknesses in learning. Work has begun to change the assessment system but the necessary portfolios of levelled work are not in place yet.

120. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has identified the weaknesses in the department and prepared an action plan to rectify them. As a result,

improvement has begun in Years 7 and 8, where some good teaching is leading to more positive student attitudes.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are well below average at GCSE; however standards in class work are above average in Year 11.
- Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good overall in Years 10 and 11. It is often good in lessons, but there is an inconsistency in some elements of teaching, such as marking to National Curriculum levels.
- From a very low level of attainment at entry, students' achievement is satisfactory between Years 7, 8 and 9. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership of the subject is satisfactory; management is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

121. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were far below average. Initial results for 2004 show a marked improvement but figures are still well below average. Girls performed much the same as boys. Standards in classes seen, and in students' work in Year 10 are still well below average, but in Year 11 are above average. Here, students successfully analyse historical links and select, organise and use information effectively to produce well-structured work. This represents good achievement in class work. However, in the recent past, poor examination techniques have meant that attainment in class has not been reflected in examination results. There were no attainment results in history for Year 9. In classes seen, students attain levels that are well below average. This represents satisfactory achievement as they enter the school with skills and knowledge in history that are well below average. Lower attaining students use the correct terminology and make an effort to learn facts. Higher attaining students identify links and similarities between events. However, they cannot evaluate or analyse information.

122. In all years, students' progress is hindered by low levels of literacy. Students with special educational needs, who make up nearly half of all classes seen, progress in line with their colleagues because their teachers use in class support effectively, know the students well and use in-class assessment of their needs well.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. However, teaching and learning is good overall in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and teach with a level of enthusiasm which is transmitted to students. Learning reflects teaching. Thus, in the best lessons, the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm are augmented by good planning which encourages students to be active participants in their own learning. Weaker teaching is characterised by an inclination to didactic rather than participative teaching. Apart from in Year 11, students' work is not marked sufficiently to national curriculum levels or GCSE grades. In Years 10 and 11, students improve skills such as decision making and problem solving which prepare students for the world of work, and in some classes, such as those concerning the Civil Rights Movement in the U. S. A. reference is made to discrimination in the work place. However, such references are often serendipitous rather than strategic.

124. Leadership is satisfactory but management is currently unsatisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has clarity of vision about the future of the department and is committed to the raising of standards. However, the underpinning structures for marking and assessment of students' work are not yet in place. Both the head of department and the school are aware of the need for a more rigorous approach to these areas in order to raise students' attainment.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and enables students to achieve well in their lessons.
- Assessment of students' work is a strength of the department.
- The course in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements because insufficient time is allocated to it.

Commentary

125. Standards in Year 9 are below average. This represents good achievement for all groups of students who arrive at the school with well below average knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. By Year 9 students have developed their knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and of some of the other faiths represented in Britain today. They are beginning to use specialist vocabulary, such as baptism and can understand, for example, why Christians should look after the environment. Many students, however, find it difficult to compare religious beliefs and practices across the different faiths they are studying. They also find it difficult to recall detailed previous learning, although teachers work very hard to improve their skills in this area.

126. It is not possible to judge standards by the end of Year 11. There is, as yet, no GCSE examination course in religious education and the course that students follow does not meet statutory requirements because insufficient time is allocated to it. Owing to the complexities of the school's two-week timetable, it was not possible to see any lessons during the week of the inspection.

127. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and lively with a wide range of activities and tasks to motivate students. Students behave well, co-operate with teachers and with each other and take pride in their work. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. Occasionally, teachers answer too many of their own questions, or tell students what they need to know rather than allowing them to work things out for themselves. The assessment of students' work, including those with special educational needs, is a strength of the department and of the school, enabling students to know where they have succeeded and why, and what they need to do in order to improve.

128. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision of how to improve standards in the department. Teachers work very well together as a team and are committed to their work.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE results are improving.
- Students achieve very well in the GCSE textiles course.
- Students do not experience sufficient work in electronics and graphics products.
- There is insufficient experience for students to develop skills in computer aided manufacturing.
- Teachers use only a limited range of strategies to support lower attaining students with their design skills.

Commentary

129. The 2003 GCSE results are well below average but have improved in 2004. Students achieve above average results in textiles. Standards in Year 9 are well below average, which is reflected in teachers' own assessments of students' work. Achievement of students in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.

130. Students in Year 7, enter the school with well below average standards in design and technology and their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. They work in a range of materials, although there are insufficient opportunities for them to design and make products in electronics and in graphics. Drawing and freehand sketching skills are improving though standards are weaker in designing than in making because there are fewer opportunities for students to develop their own design ideas. Students of lower attainment levels find this aspect of the work particularly difficult. Year 11 students develop a good range of manufacturing processes and standards are steadily improving in all material areas. They too are achieving satisfactorily. Good examples of using the design process can be seen in textiles, which is reflected in better GCSE results. This process is not used well enough in all the material areas. For example, students do not show how their research has influenced their own designing. ICT is used to present portfolio work and to process the data they collect from potential product users. Students work enthusiastically.

131. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and some very good lessons were seen during the inspection. Teachers enhance learning by preparing a good range of activities, and resources, which enable students to use both hand and machine tools to make a variety of products. However, there is less opportunity to develop students design skills and learning in this aspect is barely satisfactory resulting in lower standards. Computers are underused in resistant materials to upgrade the quality of design work because resources are not available in the specialist rooms. Electronics and computer aided manufacture is underdeveloped. Consequently, students are disadvantaged in their GCSE coursework, particularly in resistant materials. Teachers provide good individual support for students and foster good relationships in lessons and this creates a good climate for learning. In Years 10 and 11 teachers use the examination mark scheme well though there is still insufficient rigor to guide students through the process. For example, very few students analyse what they have learned from their research before writing a specification. In the work seen, there are good examples of marking which is helpful to students but monitoring of students' progress is not rigorous enough and, therefore, some fall behind at an early stage. Assessment overall, including the work of students with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Students are prepared satisfactorily for the world of work and there are opportunities for them to develop work-related skills and confidence by being made aware of industrial practices and processes as well as visits and listening to visiting speakers particularly in health and social care.

132. Leadership is satisfactory and management of the subject on a daily basis is good. The head of department has established good working relationships amongst staff particularly through a period of staffing difficulties. The department is now focused on raising standards, which are improving. Further improvements in results are needed in resistant materials, food, health and social care. More use could be made of data analysis to target work more precisely to students' individual learning needs, and to evaluate the impact of what is provided on the learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

133. The focus was on art and design, music and physical education, though drama was sampled. One Year 7 lesson was observed during which the students made very good progress because of very good teaching. During a Year 11 lesson students achieved well. Teaching and learning were good. GCSE results in 2004 were very low but standards are below average in Year 11. Drama has tended to recruit lower attaining students but the higher proportion of higher attainers in the Year 10 group suggests that situation is changing. This results from a focused attempt to attract a wider range of students by the enthusiastic and aspirational teacher in charge. The use of assessment data and criteria to set targets and to support learning, including the students' understanding of how to do better, is underdeveloped.

Art and design

The provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject expertise is very good and this helps students achieve well.
- Curriculum planning and assessment procedures are too informal.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The use of ICT to promote learning needs further development.

Commentary

134. The low GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 reflect students' absenteeism and previous staffing difficulties. However, provisional GCSE results for 2004 indicate that though A* - C grades are below average, all students gained at least a pass grade and this is a significant improvement on previous years. Teacher assessment and an analysis of students' work indicate that the standard of work achieved by the end of Year 9 is broadly average, which is a reflection of the good quality of teaching.

135. Students enter the school with a basic knowledge of art and design. They make good gains in understanding colour, light, tone and shade. By Year 9, students use their knowledge of observation, symmetry and perspective to create three-dimensional ceramic work. They extend their learning by researching pop-art styles in both 2D and 3D designs. In Years 10 and 11 students increase their knowledge of composition and proportion through portrait and landscape photography. Their sketchbooks and projects are well annotated with examples of different exposures and effects. They create clay self images, making moulds for concrete models of their heads. They develop individual styles in their painting and sculpture which reflects their increasing maturity and confidence. Standards of work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11 suggest that standards are average. The progress students make as they move through the school indicates that achievement is good.

136. The quality of teaching and learning is good because specialist teachers provide well balanced and challenging tasks for all ability levels. When present, teaching assistants provide effective individual support. Consequently all students make good gains during lessons and over time. Relationships are good and in all years students respond well to high expectations of good behaviour. Teachers' good support during lessons encourages the least artistic to complete tasks and display their achievements with pride at the end of the lesson. Occasional off-site visits to art galleries and the local environment inspire students towards originality. Literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted through subject vocabulary, measurements, symmetry and proportion. However, though students occasionally use word processors, digital cameras and scanners, teachers miss opportunities to use ICT to enhance art. Homework is used effectively and class groups evaluate their own and others' efforts and identify areas for development.

137. Departmental documentation is too casual. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there is no firm framework linked to the National Curriculum. There are some good links to citizenship and the world of work, particularly through ceramics and photography, with some students gaining work experience placements with local photographers. Although the needs of less able students are met, there are insufficient opportunities for gifted students to extend their talents. Although students' work is marked with positive and encouraging comments, assessment procedures, including those for students with special educational needs, are inconsistent and do not inform either curriculum development or adequately record students' progress. This is an area for the department to address. Accommodation and resources are very good. Students' work is displayed extensively throughout the whole school, which significantly promotes students' self esteem.

Music

The overall quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards overall are below the levels expected.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory because of inconsistent coverage of the programmes of study.
- Teaching overall is unsatisfactory, planning lacks progression and fails to capture students' interest.
- Teachers have good discipline allowing lessons to proceed with the minimum of interruption.

Commentary

138. There were no 2004 teacher assessments available for scrutiny during the inspection. The provisional results of the 2004 GCSE music examination show that results were significantly below the national average. No students were entered for the GCSE examination in 2003

139. Students join the school in Year 7 below the level expected. However, because of inconsistent coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study and unsatisfactory teaching students do not reach the expected standard by Year 9, as a consequence achievement is unsatisfactory. Students have had limited opportunities to listen to a range of music and experience difficulty recalling the types of music listened to. They are unfamiliar with the appropriate musical vocabulary when describing the music. Students are able to play simple melodies on the keyboard reading from formal notation. This knowledge, however, is not sufficiently developed to give students the confidence to use their keyboard skills to support their compositions that are at a very simple level. Students are not familiar with the use of graphic scores. Students in Year 7 however, benefiting from a more consistent approach to composition, are beginning to develop an understanding of the structure of a composition.

140. Standards of the students studying the GCSE are below average at this point in the academic year. So far students have produced only one composition and these are generally underdeveloped lacking in style and structure. Students' performing skills are better and are rhythmically sound but the quality of these performances is at a basic level. Their achievement is unsatisfactory.

141. Teaching and learning overall are unsatisfactory. Teachers have good specialist expertise and use these skills effectively to demonstrate to students contributing to their learning. Although teachers have good student management strategies, allowing lessons to proceed with a minimum of interruption, much of the teaching is dull failing to capture students' interest; as a consequence learning is slow. Although learning objectives are identified in the planning the tasks often lack challenge and expectations are too low. The delivery of lessons is muddled, lacking focused questioning to ascertain students' understanding and to reinforce their knowledge. The outcome of this is that students are often left confused, the tasks being unclear and an uncertainty how to continue overall slowing their learning. Although lessons conclude with recaps, the main focus of the lesson, the practical aspect, is often not assessed.

142. The leadership and the management of the subject are unsatisfactory. This is the first occasion that the subject leader has led a department and is unaware of how to develop the subject for the future. The subject improvement plan is weak and does not include strategies on how to raise standards.

143. Assessment procedures, including those for students with special educational needs, are in their infancy and have yet to have an impact on standards. Students do not know the levels they are working at or how to improve. The lack of audio recordings of students' performance and creative work has led to inaccurate assessments of students' ability. ICT programs are used by students in Years 10 and 11 to support their composing skills; however, the quality of the hardware is insufficient to support more sophisticated programs. The use of ICT is under developed in Years 7,

8 and 9. Music students are not offered any opportunities to improve their work through work based learning.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory because of too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- There is no clear departmental strategy for raising standards.
- Assessment systems and procedures and their use as part of learning are unsatisfactory.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is good.

Commentary

144. There are currently no examination classes in physical education. When they enter the school, students' attainment is below that expected for their age. By the end of Year 9 standards are still below average. By the end of Year 11 standards continue to be below average. Achievement through Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory. In all years the attainment of girls is better than that of boys. Students with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as other groups of students.

145. There is a marked difference in the teaching of boys and girls, with the latter being considerably stronger. Overall, however, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory when the teachers do not plan lessons based on what students should learn. Students are not aware of what they are endeavouring to achieve and, therefore, do not set targets for improvement. In some lessons teachers do not always help individual students so that they know how to improve and often move them on to new tasks before they are ready to do so. Teaching is good in lessons where knowledgeable teachers plan lessons taking account of students' level of ability and use varied teaching and learning styles to support learning. This is especially true of the teaching of girls. Systems and procedures for the assessment of students' work are unsatisfactory. Students do not know which level they are working at during lessons and the department does not analyse data in order to assess the achievement being made by different groups of students.

146. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Students participate in clubs and competitive teams in many sports including soccer, netball, basketball and gymnastics. Some students have an opportunity of working with coaches from local clubs. The department has good links with its feeder schools through the Community Sports Leadership Award.

147. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is no clear vision about how to raise standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not ensuring consistency in all lessons and the use of assessment, including its use for students with special educational needs, is unsatisfactory. Areas for improvement in teaching and learning are not identified and examples of good practice are not shared across the department. Students are not yet developing their citizenship or work related learning. Systems have been introduced to encourage participation in lessons and to ensure higher levels of activity. The accommodation for physical education is good. Student's time allocation for physical education during Years 10 and 11 is not in line with recommendations. This has a negative impact on their learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

148. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

149. It is not possible to make overall judgements about standards or achievement in citizenship as it is not taught as a subject. Aspects of citizenship are delivered as part of the PSHE programme. Though elements of citizenship were identified in subject areas these were not consistently identified by the teachers. However, students' participation in active citizenship, seen during the inspection, was satisfactory. In the one Year 7 lesson observed students attainment was in line with that expected for their age. Students achieved very well from very good teaching and learning. However, schemes of work showed that the required strands for citizenship are not covered in sufficient depth. Assessment and reporting to parents is not in place. The present provision does not meet statutory requirements.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 [latest year for which national comparisons are available].

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
English Literature	12	100	99.5	16.7	46.5	83.3	86.5
Geography	1	100	98.7	0	44.5	80.0	84.0
Information and Communication Technology	2	50	95.6	0	24.6	20.0	69.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The provision for English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good with some very good features.
- Marking is mainly very good outlining strengths and weaknesses very specifically.
- The course is popular and the completion rates high. Students enjoy it.
- The provision is well led and managed, but admission procedures need to ensure the suitability of each student for the study of English at this level.
- The use of assessment data to set targets and monitor progress is underdeveloped.
- A sustained focus on the conventions of A level assignment writing, particularly in examination contexts, is required to support achievement further.

Commentary

151. The course is popular and the completion rate is good at both AS and A2 levels. Generally, the students' standards when they start the course are well below average for the beginning of an advance level English course. Initial standards of students in the current Year 12 were very low overall. A level results in recent years have been higher than would be expected from those relatively low starting points. They were above average in 2002 and average in 2003. Provisional results in 2004 are average. The recent results at AS level are better than might be expected given the students' starting points.

152. Standards in the current Year 13 are average representing good achievement. However, standards vary according to the task. Course work completed during the autumn term, 2004, is of an above average standard. When given sustained guidance, combined with the chance to redraft, students do justice to the above average standards that they show in lessons when discussing texts. The course work observed was technically secure; highly analytical and evaluative; rigorous in the use of text to sustain arguments; coherent; expressed with maturity; and very secure when

comparing the themes, forms and structures of C19 and C20 prose. The quality of these assignments was significantly better than the results the same students attained in their Year 12 AS examination and better than assignments completed during term time. The course work showed a very secure grasp of the conventions of A level writing in the course work context. To do justice to their potential the students require a similarly secure and effective grasp of the conventions of essay writing in the timed examination context.

153. There is a unique situation in the current Year 12. Standards are well below average. A significant proportion of the cohort, albeit a minority, has embarked on the course without possessing the basic accomplishments required in reading and writing for successful study at this level. The very large group of 24, combined with the relatively large proportion not suited to English study at this level, impacts negatively on progress.

154. Teaching and learning are good and some very good features were observed. The best lessons encouraged the students because they displayed explicitly the teachers' enthusiasm and passion for literature. Teachers also know the subject well and the assessment requirements so the students are provided with a good grounding in what they need to cover. Innovative use of resources, including ICT, enlivens the learning. The best marking explicitly tells the student what has been done well and what was required to improve. Some comments are not always as specific or fulsome. During a significant proportion of the observed lessons the teacher was at the hub of much of the question and answer sessions. There were not enough examples of students responding directly to each other when discussing texts and themes. Teachers did not structure this sort of activity frequently enough or adapt a suitable 'chairing' role to enable it to happen effectively. Occasionally lessons included too much: much was covered but not necessarily to the required depth.

155. The provision is well led and managed. Recent entrants to the profession teach the subject which affords them opportunities for good professional development. They observe more experienced colleagues. There is good collaboration between teachers in terms of planning and assessment and one-to-one guidance to students. The popularity of the course reflects well on the nature of the experiences the students had in English during Years 7 to 11 and on its reputation among previous cohorts of sixth form students. The department is strongly committed to broadening opportunity but the diversity of attainment in Year 12 suggests this requires some tempering to guarantee better quality assurance on entry. The assessment data used to set targets are limited in scope. A more systematic and comprehensive approach is required as a basis for target setting and for the support of the tracking of progress towards targets.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

156. In order to improve the students' language and literacy skills, key skills classes in communications are taught. Two Year 12 lessons were observed. Standards were below average but the students achieved well because of good teaching and learning. Relationships between the teacher and the students were very good. The focus of the lessons was making applications. Good use of ICT enabled the students to implement the good guidance provided in the construction of their curriculum vitae. Expectations were high and there was a good focus on essential literacy skills such as accurate spelling of key words connected with the world of work. The students are working for a level 2 qualification in communication.

MATHEMATICS

157. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area.

Mathematics across the curriculum

158. All students study mathematics either on a well taught course leading to repeating GCSE or following a Level Two key skills course in application of number. On the former they are progressing well. All are on course to gain a grade or more above their results in Year 11. Half or more of the dozen students are on course for a grade C or better. Of those involved in the key skills application

of number those who have not achieved a grade C at GCSE are well employed and making good progress. Level Two work is not, however, sufficiently challenging for the more able students who perceive and describe it as something of a “timetable filler.”

SCIENCE

Human Biology

Provision in human biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students are highly motivated by their very good relationships with the teacher and other students.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

159. This is a new subject for the school and, therefore, there are no previous results to compare with national averages.

160. During the inspection, the standard of work seen was broadly in line with national averages. This is the case for both male and female students. Since the attainment of these students at the end of Year 11 was well below average for students embarking on an advanced level course, this represents very good achievement. Students are very enthusiastic about this subject. They participate actively in all aspects of their lessons and they are adept at using scientific terminology to explain their work. They record and analyse data competently, developing their skills in the application of number.

161. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are characterised by good planning, together with very effective use of humour, which motivates and enthuses students. Relationships are very good and students appreciate the individual attention that they receive. They are challenged, as well as supported in their learning and they achieve very well. A wide variety of teaching and learning activities is used. One very good lesson was characterised by a starter activity using clay and marbles to demonstrate the action of enzymes as catalysts. This immediately stimulated students' interest and they then responded enthusiastically to a quick fire question and answer session to recap work on enzymes from the previous lesson. Students were then given a strict time limit to work in small groups and research the impact of various factors on enzyme activity. They then presented their findings to the other students, who listened attentively and asked questions of clarification. The lesson continued at a pace, as they moved into a practical session to investigate the effect of heat on protein structure.

162. Through making presentations to the class, students have the opportunity to develop their communication skills, as well as to become increasingly confident scientists. A number of students use ICT to carry out research into the subject, but the use of ICT as an integral part of their learning is very limited.

163. Leadership and management are good. The course was introduced, in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the students, and they appreciate the collaborative approach, which is a feature of their lessons. Students' progress is carefully monitored and they are given individual feedback. They are made aware of the criteria that are used for marking their assignments and therefore they are aware of what they need to do to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A vocational A level course and a key skills course meet the needs of students choosing to study ICT.
- The proportion of students who succeed in A level examinations is too low.

Commentary

164. The number of students studying ICT in the sixth form is small. In 2003 two students entered the A Level examination in computing; one achieved a pass grade. Two students also entered for the AS examination; again with one passing. In 2004 one student sat the A2 examination in computing and passed with grade D. Too few students are involved to allow national comparisons. However, of the seven students who sat for an AVCE examination in ICT only two passed. These standards are well below average.

165. Currently the school is preparing students for the AVCE examination in ICT and for a key skills ICT assessment. The standards of work seen for AVCE students were not consistent some had good grades and some did not meet the standards required for a pass. Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory given the below average level of prior attainment. Key skills students are producing work appropriate to the qualification they were attempting.

166. Owing to the operation of the timetable only two lessons could be inspected. In both teaching was good. Clear instruction and guidance was provided to students that developed their understanding. In consequence their learning was also good. The difference in progress seen in lessons and overall achievement is largely explained by absence and disappointing course completion rates. The departmental leadership and management for sixth form courses are satisfactory. Courses are appropriate and well organised. Since the previous inspection standards have not changed but students work is now clearly focussed. Improvement is satisfactory.

Information Technology across the curriculum (post 16)

167. The position in the sixth form mirrors that of the main school. Whilst work in art and design and English shows the potential that ICT can offer for enriching students' experience at sixth form level, other subjects have yet to exploit ICT fully. The use of the Internet for research is limited and the school currently is not exploring means to use ICT support 'anytime anywhere' learning.

HUMANITIES

168. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area, but one philosophy lesson on the nature of good and evil was sampled. In this lesson students worked at a satisfactory level. Teaching was satisfactory and the students made satisfactory progress.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

169. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area, but one design and technology textiles class was observed. The small group of students achieved well because of the quality of teaching offered. Standards of work seen were average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

170. One lesson of photography and one lesson of film studies were observed. In the photography lesson, five students were individually occupied in preparing for art and photography

examinations. Two students are also taking GCSE examinations in photography. The standard of work seen was good, which is a reflection on the high quality and expertise in teaching. Students show a good awareness of safety in the well equipped darkroom. They examine the work of photographers such as David Hockney, commenting on how this influences their own style. Their sketchbooks provide a well kept record of their work. Digital cameras, scanners and computers are used well to extend and develop themes and ideas. Their sketching and paintings are good, with some very fine brush and pencil work.

171. In the film studies lesson, the students had to analyse the techniques used by a film producer. All students made good progress, improving their skills of observation and analysis, as a result of the good teaching offered.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

172. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area.

BUSINESS

173. Owing to the long term illness of the head of business studies, business education was sampled rather than the focus of a full inspection. Business courses have been well established in the sixth form but results in 2004 were below average and the school has found it difficult to cope with the long term illness of a highly experienced member of staff.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

174. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area, though one health and social care lesson involving six students was sampled. In this lesson the students achieved very well because of the very good teaching offered. The students were involved in developing their observational skills as a means of recording evidence. The lesson was challenging and the students responded positively.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

175. No subjects or courses were inspected in this curriculum area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		5
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	5	4
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well students learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	5
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	0	4
The effectiveness of management	0	4

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