

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ELIZABETHAN HIGH SCHOOL

Retford, Nottinghamshire

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122885

Headteacher: Ms. L French

Lead inspector: Mr D. Cox

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th October 2004

Inspection number: 268959

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1203

School address: Queen Street
Retford
Nottinghamshire

Postcode: DN22 7BH

Telephone number: 01777 703293

Fax number: 01777 706796

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Tasker

Date of previous inspection: 10th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Elizabethan High School is a comprehensive school that is larger than most other secondary schools and educates boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. The school is oversubscribed with 1203 students on roll of which there are 181 students in the sixth form; these numbers represent an increase on those quoted in the previous report. The sixth form is about the same size as most other sixth forms. The school is situated in the market town of Retford and takes approximately two thirds of its students from nine main feeder primary schools, mainly located in rural areas, some up to 10 miles from the school. The school operates across two sites, approximately one mile apart. In Years 10 and 11, around 70 students undertake courses at North Nottinghamshire College of Further Education and some post-16 students access courses at Retford Oaks High School and Tuxford Comprehensive School, as part of a 16-19 collaboration.

The school consists of almost entirely of white (British/European) students and English is the first language for almost all students. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is below average and the percentage of students with Statements of Special Educational Need is well below average. Most students are on the register of special educational needs for moderate learning, dyslexia, social, emotional and behavioural needs and a small number of students are autistic.

The socio-economic circumstances of the students are average. Attainment on entry to the main school is average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form varies year to year because of the open entry policy.

The previous headteacher retired on the grounds of ill health at the start of the Autumn Term 2003 and a new headteacher, was appointed and has been in post since 1st September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10297	D. Cox	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); Computing in the sixth form
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
11933	D. Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	History
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Business studies
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs
17278	B. Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry in the sixth form
32178	J. Shears	Team inspector	Geography
33158	G. Jagger	Team inspector	English in the sixth form
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship; Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** standard of education and **satisfactory** value for money. Teaching, students' achievement, leadership and management are satisfactory. The sixth form is good and its cost effectiveness is also good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Girls achieve well.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well because of good teaching.
- Students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11 in art and design, music, drama and history as a result of good teaching.
- Students achieve very well within the special educational needs department.
- Teachers do not place enough emphasis on how students learn.
- Strategies to improve students' writing skills are not applied consistently enough.
- The achievement of students in design and technology in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The achievement of students who are gifted and talented is unsatisfactory.
- Monitoring systems, whilst satisfactory, are not applied consistently enough.

Progress since the last inspection has been **satisfactory**. Standards, achievement and the quality of teaching are of a similar standard. Most, but not all, of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A- very high; 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.

Students' achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The achievement of girls is good whilst that of the boys is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, students achieve well in art and design, music, drama, history, religious education and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects.

By the end of Year 11, achievement is good in science, art and design, history, music, business studies and work-related learning. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology where it is unsatisfactory.

Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and are average by the end of Year 11. Levels of literacy and numeracy are average; information and communication technology (ICT) skills are below average. The achievement of those students who are gifted and talented is unsatisfactory because there is not enough provision in some subjects. Achievement in the sixth form is good; standards are above average.

Students' personal qualities are **satisfactory**; their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students' attitudes are good and their behaviour is satisfactory. Attendance is average and punctuality is satisfactory. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes and satisfactory attendance; their behaviour is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. Teaching is **satisfactory**. Teachers know students well and there are good relationships. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good in the specialist department. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on how students learn or how to improve students' writing skills. Teaching is good in the sixth form and students achieve well as a consequence.

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory; the sixth form curriculum is good because a wide number of courses are provided across the consortium. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a good range of support staff but accommodation is unsatisfactory. Satisfactory attention is given to the care and welfare of students. There are satisfactory links with parents and good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other senior staff is **satisfactory**, as is the school's management. Since the previous inspection, the school's leadership has been in a state of flux. The previous headteacher was unable to continue in his post because of ill health. During this period, the acting headteachers and the senior leadership team have done a sterling job in ensuring that standards have been maintained. A new headteacher took up post in September 2004 and she has a very clear vision for moving the school forward. Monitoring systems, whilst satisfactory, are not applied consistently enough. Governance is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. The school is rated highly by parents. It has a good reputation with them and is oversubscribed. Parents are very satisfied with the education that the school provides and what it does for students. However, parents are less happy with the quality of behaviour and with the school's procedures to seek out and take account of their views. In general, the inspection team supports the parents who have positive views of their partnership with the school. The opinion of the inspection team is that the behaviour of students is satisfactory although more could be done to seek out the views of parents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure there is a greater focus on how students learn.
- Implement strategies to improve students' writing skills.
- Improve students' achievement in design and technology.
- Ensure those students who are gifted and talented achieve well.
- Ensure monitoring systems are applied consistently.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a statutory collective act of worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE ELIZABETHAN HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **good** education and its cost-effectiveness is **good**. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well in chemistry as a result of very good teaching.
- Students achieve well overall because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students have very positive attitudes which contribute to their good achievement.
- Arrangements for taking account of students' views, and involving them in decisions, are inadequate.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English language is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. Standards are well above average.
Science	Provision in chemistry is very good . Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
Humanities	Provision in geography is satisfactory . Students achieve satisfactorily because of the satisfactory teaching they receive. Provision in history is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Information technology	Provision in computing is good . Students enter the course with well below average standards and achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Business	Provision in business is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.

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

There is satisfactory provision for students' welfare and health and safety. The quality of the advice and guidance that they receive is **good**. The school extends admirable support to those students from across the consortium and to those students visiting the school from other countries.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership is **good** and management is satisfactory. The sixth form has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Overall, students are very positive about the school. They enjoy coming to school and appreciate the wide variety of courses on offer to them. Students speak highly of the support that they get from staff. However, students feel that the school does not seek out their views enough. The inspectors agree with the students in that the school could do far more to seek the views of students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Main school

Students join the school with standards of attainment that are average and by the time they leave Year 11 their standards are also average. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Competence in the basic skills of language, literacy and mathematics is average but below average in ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well because they are more diligent than the boys with coursework.
- Students' writing skills are relatively weak which affects their coursework and lowers their performance in GCSE examinations.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 11 in art and design, music, drama, science and history as a result of good teaching.
- Students in the special educational needs department achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology in Years 10 and 11 because teachers do not demand enough of them.
- Gifted and talented students underachieve because teachers do not set work that stretches them.
- Not enough use is made of ICT across the curriculum to raise standards.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in art and design and average in other subjects with the exception of ICT where they are below average. Students achieve well in art and design, music, drama, history, religious education and physical education. Achievement in all other subjects is satisfactory.
2. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average in art and design, history, music, business studies, science and work-related learning. Standards are average in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology and ICT where they are below average. Achievement is good in science, art and design, history, music, business studies and work-related learning. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology where it is unsatisfactory. Students achieve well in science because teachers use a wide variety of imaginative strategies to ensure that students are actively learning. Achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology because teachers do not demand that students do enough writing or complete their coursework.
3. Girls generally achieve well during their years at school. Most girls work hard and in Years 10 and 11 complete their coursework. However, whilst the achievement of boys is satisfactory, they do not always put as much effort into the completion of coursework. In

some subjects, teachers do not encourage the boys as much as the girls, resulting in the lower achievement of boys.

4. Standards of literacy are average. Reading is a relative strength throughout Years 7 to 11. Students are encouraged to read by staff and many enjoy reading. However, writing is an area of relative weakness and as a result few students attain the very highest grades at GCSE and boys in particular struggle with the coursework elements of the examination. The proportion of students in the school speaking English as an additional language is small and none of these are at the early stages of learning the language. In general, these students make satisfactory progress.
5. Competence in ICT across the curriculum is below average. Although students make use of ICT in their coursework, they are not always provided with enough opportunities to practise these skills. Facilities for ICT have improved since the previous inspection although access is still problematic for some departments. Whilst in some subjects good use is made of ICT, it is not used well in others as a tool to aid research or to improve students' writing skills.
6. Standards in mathematics are average. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill is satisfactory.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In the special educational needs department, achievement is very good. Students make very rapid progress towards meeting the targets in their individual education plans. They quickly improve their English and mathematical skills because teachers set work which, while challenging, is within students' capabilities. In the GCSE examinations, students do well and several move on to A-level courses. However, across the school, teachers do not always set suitable work, so that, in mixed ability classes in particular, students of different abilities are given the same work. This limits their learning. However, where teachers do vary the resources, learning is at least good. Gifted and talented students make unsatisfactory progress. Teachers do not always match the work to the needs of the students and do not place enough emphasis on stretching the gifted and talented.
8. The poor accommodation for physical education restricts students' opportunities to achieve high standards in some activities.
9. The school set realistic targets for improvement and met its targets in 2004. Standards are similar to when the school was previously inspected.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.8 (34.6)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.8 (34.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.1 (32.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 200 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54 (58)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.0 (36.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 208 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. At the time of writing, national comparisons for GCSE results in 2004 were not available.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average in English and average in mathematics and science. Results overall were average and the trend in improvement was below that seen nationally. However, in 2004, results improved and students' achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 6 was satisfactory and the trend in results is closer to the national trend.
- Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were average and similar to those noted in the previous report. Students' achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 was unsatisfactory. The trend in results was in line with the national trend. However, in 2004, students' average points scores improved and students achieved the results expected of them.

Sixth form

Because of the 'open entry' policy to the sixth form, overall attainment on entry varies from year to year and from subject to subject. Students in the current Year 13 entered the sixth form with average levels of attainment and by the end of Year 13, their standards are above average. Achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in chemistry because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Students achieve well overall because of the good teaching.
- Achievement, whilst satisfactory in geography, is not as good as that seen in other subjects inspected.

Commentary

- In the subjects inspected in detail, students attain well above average standards in mathematics. They attain above average standards in English language, chemistry, design and technology, history and business studies. Standards are average in geography but below average in computing. Students achieve very well in chemistry and well in all other subjects with the exception of geography where achievement is satisfactory.
- The most important factor in bringing about students' achievement is the quality of teaching that they receive. In most subjects teaching is good, although in geography it is satisfactory. There are, however, other aspects of the school's education that promote such good achievement. For example, the students' attitudes to their work are significant contributory factors.

14. Results overall in the 2003 A-level examinations were average and grades were at a similar level in 2004. However, since the previous inspection, results have varied significantly from year to year because of the 'open entry' policy.

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	92.2 (94.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	29.9 (32.2)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per student	262 (281.2)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 74 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Main school

Students have good attitudes to learning and to school life. Their behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Students' attendance is in line with the national average and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students want to learn and show good levels of interest in the range of activities that the school provides.
- Students have good relations with one another and with adults in the school.
- The moral development of students is good.
- Poor behaviour impairs students' learning in a minority of lessons.
- There are too few opportunities for students to develop spirituality.

Commentary

15. Students' positive attitudes enhance their academic attainment and achievement. Students like learning and are keen to achieve their best. They concentrate well in class, follow instructions carefully, and work hard. The majority of them express their views readily and confidently. They are thoughtful, self-motivated and interested in learning outside ordinary lessons. They enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities and school trips, and they are conscientious about completing homework tasks. Where teaching is satisfactory but not stimulating, students can have a relaxed approach to work and progress. Occasionally they display unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. This happened during the inspection in a few lessons, mostly in Year 10, where teachers set undemanding and uninteresting tasks. However, in general students behave, even when the teaching lacks pace and challenge.
16. The quality of relationships is good. Students get along well with one another and with adults in the school. They are polite, easy to talk to, and co-operative. They see school as a friendly place in which they feel secure and free from harassment. Students are happy with this aspect of school life. They regard their relationships with members of staff and with one another as a particular strength. They say that there is some bullying, but that the school deals with incidents promptly and effectively. In the year 2003/04 there were 162 fixed-term exclusions, which is above the national average for a secondary school of this size; there were no permanent exclusions. However, relatively few individuals account for most of the cases. These students are not typical of the majority, who are well behaved and, in the case of the upper school, show self-discipline when coping with the limitations of the site. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. The vast majority of students respect the school's rules and expect others to do so too. They strongly disapprove of any conduct that disrupts learning. Poor behaviour of this kind occurs in a minority of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Students lose interest, refuse to settle and distract the rest of the class.
17. The moral development of students is good. They have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and are prepared to work well in class. Their support for various

charities, especially their support for the education of two students in India, demonstrates concern for those less fortunate than themselves.

18. Students have satisfactory opportunities for social development. Despite the problems of the confined site in the upper school, they respond well and move in an orderly manner. The year councils provide opportunities for them to take responsibility for themselves, and social events are planned there. The range of extra-curricular activities, in particular the performances of the arts, enable students to develop confidence and to work with those from all year groups. Students studying for the Junior Sports Leader Award take on the responsibility for the organisation and running of the sports day for the federation of feeder schools.
19. Provision for their spiritual development is unsatisfactory. In some areas, notably science and religious education, students do have the opportunity to reflect on what they learn. The teacher of a Year 11 biology class encouraged students to marvel at the formation of the fish they were studying and the students responded with great sensitivity. In religious education the use of visualisation techniques encourages students to use their imagination and become part of the experience they are seeing. In many other areas, however, opportunities are missed and although moral messages are presented through assemblies, there are not enough opportunities for students to explore their spirituality.
20. Provision for the cultural development of students is satisfactory. Students have positive opportunities to explore the arts and the local sculpture park is used well for inspiration. Students are encouraged to express their emotions through their art and through drama. The jazz band demonstrated an enthusiastic appreciation of the music they perform. They explore aspects of the art of other cultures overseas through subjects such as art and music, but they have little first-hand experiences of the wide range of cultural diversity that can be found in Britain.
21. Attendance is satisfactory in all year groups. The school's overall attendance rate is broadly in line with the national average. The incidence of unauthorised absence is below average.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British Caribbean
Black or Black British African
Chinese

No of students on roll
1170
20
1
1
1
1
4
1
4

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
162	0

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

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.9	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Sixth form

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal development is good, and their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Provision for their moral and social development is good. Provision for their cultural development is satisfactory, but provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attitudes to learning enhance their academic achievement.
- Students respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility; they make a valuable contribution to the work of the school.
- Students get too few opportunities to develop their spirituality and beliefs.
- Students have little opportunity to develop their multi-cultural awareness.

Commentary

22. Students like being in the sixth form and have very good attitudes to their work. They are very well motivated and this makes a significant contribution to their good achievement. Students have high aspirations, are determined to do their best and enjoy their lessons. The majority of them are confident, articulate and willing to express their own ideas. Students are keen to take on responsibilities. They respond very positively to opportunities to learn independently and use their initiative, as the groups who are involved in young enterprise clearly demonstrated during the inspection. Students have very good relationships with adults in the school. Their relationships with their teachers are based on mutual respect and co-operation, and promote good learning. Students also get on very well with one another. They are friendly and mutually supportive, and work well together in lessons.
23. Provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. There are very good individual opportunities, for example the membership of the youth parliament, but there is no planned monitoring of the experiences that sixth formers have, to ensure all are included. Sixth form students are encouraged to become responsible and to support the work of the main school and they respond well. Through support for younger students in lessons, helping to run extra-curricular activities, as referees and as paid supervisors, they gain confidence and act as good role models. Students working for the Community Sports Leader Award develop skills that they use outside the school and this supports their confidence and self-esteem. The sixth form has

very good links with the community through the nearby senior citizens centre and they actively involve themselves in social events held for the members. Opportunities to develop the spiritual awareness of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. There is little opportunity to develop their beliefs through religious education, and the quality of assemblies and the 'thought for the day' is very variable. Despite the presence of students from overseas within the sixth form, there are not enough opportunities to celebrate other cultures.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Main school

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and satisfactory attention is given to the care and welfare of students.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory as is assessment.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 166 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1)	26 (16)	79 (48)	51 (30)	8 (5)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good in the specialist department.
- Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 in art and design, music, drama, history and science.
- Teachers know students well, which helps to improve students' self-confidence.
- There is not enough focus on how to improve learning,
- Teachers do not focus enough on improving students' writing skills, particularly those of the boys.
- Teachers do not always use assessment data to improve students' learning.
- Students are underachieving in design and technology in Years 10 and 11 because of unsatisfactory teaching.

Commentary

24. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good in science, art and design, history, music, drama, physical education and religious education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in science, art and design, history, music, drama, work-related learning and business studies. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology where it is unsatisfactory.
25. When teaching is most effective, teachers thoroughly prepare their lessons, very good resources are used, there is plenty of variety and students are required to be active in their own learning. For example, in an excellent Year 11 chemistry class, the teacher's excellent planning and delivery enabled students to improve their practical skills significantly through the use of investigation. Students were enthused and thoroughly enjoyed the lesson, displaying excellent attitudes to work.
26. Students achieve well in drama, because of the good teaching they receive. For example, students achieve well because there is a strong emphasis on improving communication skills. This includes non-verbal as well as speech.
27. Teachers have good relationships with students and know them well. This approach by staff enables students to learn within a secure and caring environment. Students know they can ask questions and staff will take time to support them; many staff give time

outside of the normal school day. Behaviour is generally managed well and teachers have high expectations of students.

28. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good in the specialist department. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of how students learn best. They explain very clearly what students should do and have high expectations of how they should behave. As a result, students learn very well. Because relationships are very good, students work hard and enjoy the lessons. Teachers plan lessons carefully, though insufficient emphasis is given to recapitulating on what students have learnt by the end of the lesson, so a little of the lesson impact is lost.
29. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, it is characterised by teachers not focusing on what and how students learn. Teaching can be quite dynamic and students appear busy but very little learning is occurring. Teaching sometimes lacks challenge and is slow to engage students' interests. Whilst the vast majority of students quietly get on with their studies, some students become bored and consequently misbehave. Teachers do not always inform students what learning is to take place. When planning their lessons, teachers do not make enough use of the wealth of assessment data that is available to them. This results in teachers not always matching work closely enough to the needs of students, for example, students who are gifted and talented.
30. There is not a consistent approach to improving students' literacy skills. Marking, for example, is inconsistent. There is good marking, as in business studies, where students are made aware of the progress they are making and understand what they need to do to improve their work. In other subjects, marking does not inform students how they might improve. There is no common approach for improving students' skills in writing, particularly those of the boys. This results in few students attaining the very highest grades at GCSE or students not attaining the highest marks in coursework.
31. Teaching is unsatisfactory in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. There are examples of good teaching in textiles and food technology. However, in other areas, the work is too easy for students, teachers do not insist on students doing written work and, as a result, students underachieve.
32. There are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons in order to share more effectively the skills and good ideas that different teachers have to offer.
33. Assessment is satisfactory. The school has a wealth of information regarding students' achievements. Procedures and systems for assessing the progress of students are improving, but are not being used consistently enough across the school. For example, use of assessment in science is very good because teachers have established efficient systems to ensure students are thoroughly assessed. At the same time, there are big variations in the quality of marking and assessment in design and technology with students getting little or nothing in the way of written feedback in some material areas. The assessment of students with identified special educational needs is good and ensures they achieve as well as their classmates.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in chemistry and this results in students achieving very well.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- Learning is not as strong when students are not made aware of what is expected of them.

Commentary

34. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching is very good in chemistry. It is good all other subjects with the exception of geography where it is satisfactory.
35. Teachers know their subjects well. Teachers have a good knowledge of the course requirements and students are aware of what they need to do to achieve a specific grade. When teaching is good, students are encouraged to participate in discussions. They respond well to questions and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways. Teachers plan well and lessons are well structured. Teachers proceed with a brisk pace and allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. Less effective teaching occurs when students are unaware of what they are expected to learn. On some occasions, students do not participate well enough in discussion and are not challenged, so achievement is slower than expected.
36. The quality of teachers' feedback on written work is satisfactory and provides sound guidance to students on how to improve. Students value the oral feedback and discussion that follow the written assessment of their work.

The curriculum

Main school

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a good match of staff to its needs, sufficient resources, but inadequate accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a broad range of subjects available in Years 10 and 11.
- There are a good number of extra activities available to students outside of lessons.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Not enough use is made of ICT within subjects.

Commentary

37. The curriculum has good breadth in Years 7 to 9; all students are taught drama as a separate subject and have the option of starting a second language in Year 9. The range of subjects available to students in Years 10 and 11 is particularly good, especially in terms of the way that students' needs are met through courses at a local college, which increases the number of vocational options available to students. Those who are on such courses, but are unsure of their final choice, follow a 'taster' course in several different subjects so that they can make a more informed choice. However, there are also weaknesses in the curriculum, the most important of which is the unsatisfactory provision for students who are particularly gifted or talented. There is no whole-school register of such students and any special arrangements are left largely to individual subjects, few of whom make any special provision so few of the most able students are really stretched.

38. Not enough use is made of ICT across the curriculum. The proportion of computers available for use by students is broadly in line with the national average. However, ICT is not used consistently enough both across and within subjects. This results in students having widely varying experiences of ICT. Students are not provided with enough opportunities to practise skills within subjects.
39. Form time each morning is used inconsistently; some teachers use the time to allow students to reflect upon, or have meaningful discussions about the 'Thought for the day', while others do little other than mark the register, leading to many students not taking part in a daily act of collective worship.
40. Overall, the provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. In the last inspection report it was noted that teachers were not taking account of the different abilities in a class when planning lessons and this is still the case. While the students' individual education plans are good, teachers do not always use these plans to help them provide appropriate work. This restricts how much students learn. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons and help students improve standards. In the special educational needs department, provision is very good. Students are taught very well and are actively involved in their work. This explains why achievement is so good within the department.
41. The school provides a good number of extra activities for students, especially in the areas of science, sport and music. The quality of activities in music is very good; bands and ensembles benefit from being led by accomplished musicians, which has a considerable impact on the quality of performance.
42. There is a good level of teaching and support staff to provide for students' learning. Overall, teachers are deployed efficiently to ensure that their expertise is used well. There are good induction procedures for newly qualified and for recently appointed teachers. Newly qualified teachers speak warmly of the effective formal and informal induction procedures and the support they receive from the school and from the local authority. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution in supporting teaching and learning.
43. Poor accommodation constrains the physical education curriculum and restricts students' opportunities to attain high standards in some activities. Across the school, the amount of taught time is below the norm and affects teaching strategies and students' achievements.

Sixth form

The curriculum is good overall, with a very good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a good match of staff to its needs and adequate resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are a very large number of advanced level courses available.
- There is a very good enrichment programme.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

44. The school works closely with two other local schools. Their joint planning means that the number of courses available at advanced level is far higher than would usually be expected in a school of this size. One very good aspect of the curriculum is the 'complementary studies' course open to all students. Here, students can improve their key skills, gain accreditation such as the Community Sports Leader Award or study other subjects that will broaden their education, such as art for science students or a new foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

The quality of care for students is satisfactory. The school makes sound provision for their welfare and health and safety. Procedures for supporting, advising and guiding students are satisfactory. Arrangements for consulting students, acting on their views, and involving them in the work of the school are also satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value the help that they receive from their teachers regarding academic work.
- Heads of year make a valuable contribution to the school's provision for monitoring and supporting students' progress.
- The school gives very good support to students with special educational needs.
- Some tutors spend relatively little time with their forms due to the split-site timetables, and this affects the continuity of care.
- There are weaknesses in the guidance that students in Year 11 receive on future courses of study.

Commentary

45. Students appreciate the academic support they get from members of staff. They feel that they get good feedback from subject teachers on how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. They are confident that if they need further explanations and advice they will get them. The school makes comprehensive arrangements for target setting. All students have individual targets, and get one-to-one interviews with tutors at which their progress towards them is reviewed. However, many of the targets are broad and not specific to the subjects of the curriculum. As a result, they do not support students' academic progress as effectively as they might. This is also the case with information on standards of attainment. Students are accustomed to teachers using National Curriculum levels to grade pieces of work, but are often uncertain as to what they signify. In general, students have only a limited understanding of their own learning and progress.
46. The school has a satisfactory system of pastoral care and students have adequate access to personal support and guidance. The work of form tutors is hampered by the demands of the split site. For example, they cannot always be with their forms for registrations. This reduces the amount of time that they can spend with their tutor groups and impairs the quality of care. The quality of the 15-minute registration period in the morning is variable. Sometimes teachers make good use of it to deliver a meaningful 'Thought for the day', but in some cases it becomes social time in which students chat to one another about their lives outside school. Students have adequate access to sources of advice and guidance. There is no system of peer counselling, but individuals with personal problems can seek help from heads of year, form tutors and any member of staff with whom they feel at ease. Heads of year are very active in monitoring students and providing them with well-informed and appropriate support. They track attendance and quickly and effectively follow up unexplained absences. They also carry out regular

checks of students' planners. This gives them a good insight into each student's overall academic and personal progress.

47. The school's programme personal, health and social education provides students with satisfactory guidance on their personal development. The quality of careers guidance is good. Guidance on further study is satisfactory. Students who are now in Years 10 and 11 say that when they were in Year 9 they got good information and advice on their GCSE options. The school runs a good programme of work experience, which gives students in Year 10 valuable insights into the world. However, there are weaknesses in the school's arrangements to inform and advise students about courses in the sixth form and at further education colleges. Although few students drop out of the sixth form altogether, a significant number either change subjects or persist with courses that do not suit their needs. It is evident from the inspection's survey of students' views that many of them are dissatisfied with the quality of guidance in this area. The responses show that a third of the current Year 13 feel that they did not receive helpful guidance on what to study after Year 11.
48. Students with special educational needs receive very good help and guidance. Members of staff are very sympathetic and supportive. They have very good relations with students and have a real understanding of their needs. Older students with special needs value the quality of support that they received when they were in the main school. They feel that it enabled them to achieve well academically and personally. The school also provides good support for students who are disaffected and in danger of dropping out of education. Its curriculum of work-related learning matches their interests and abilities, and is usually successful in improving their motivation, attendance and attitudes.

Sixth form

There is satisfactory provision for students' welfare and health and safety. The quality of the advice and guidance that they receive is good, but the school's arrangements for seeking out and acting on students' views are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of academic support and guidance is good.
- Students receive good advice on further study and choice of careers.
- Arrangements for taking account of students' views, and involving them in decisions, are inadequate.

Commentary

49. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are good and make a positive contribution to their achievement. Teachers give students constructive feedback on their work, which helps them to improve. Members of staff are very approachable and willing to give additional support. Students are very appreciative of this. They say that their subject teachers will always 'go the extra mile' to help them. Year 13 also value the support that they receive from staff when they are completing their UCAS application forms. The quality of personal support is satisfactory. Students have very good relations with members of staff and in general feel able to turn to them for guidance on personal problems.

50. Provision for guidance on further study and on careers is good. The school supplies students with plenty of information on courses in further and higher education, and arranges visits to universities in order to help them to make the right choices. Students who need additional advice have good access to well-informed sources of advice; for example, they can have a one-to-one interview with a careers adviser from Connexions.
51. Procedures for consulting students and taking account of their views are unsatisfactory. There is a sixth form committee, but its main purpose is to organise social and fund-raising events. It does not act as an effective sounding board of opinion in the sixth form, as a significant number of students are aware. Almost one in six of respondents to the inspection's survey said that the school did not seek out and respond to their views. In Year 13 the number was almost one in three. There are some very strong feelings on this issue. Students feel that they have not been treated as adults and their views ignored on matters which are important to them, such as the refurbishment of the sixth form common room and the 'no jeans' rule in the sixth form dress code.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Its links with other schools and colleges, universities and the wider community are good. Arrangements for dealing with parents' complaints and concerns are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is oversubscribed and has the confidence of students' parents.
- The good support that parents give to their children's learning has a positive effect on attainment and progress.
- The school has good links with the parents of students with special educational needs.
- The school's good links with the community promote students' learning and personal development.
- Some parents do not feel adequately informed about their children's progress.

Commentary

52. The school is rated highly by parents. It has a good reputation with them and is oversubscribed. Parents are very satisfied with the education that the school provides and what it does for students. Of those who responded to the inspectors' questionnaire, most parents say that their children like school and achieve well. They are also very pleased with the expectations that members of staff have regarding hard work. They are less happy with the quality of behaviour and the school's procedures to seek out and take account of their views. Nearly a quarter of parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress. In general, the inspection team supports the parents who have positive views of their partnership with the school. In the opinion of the inspection team, the quality of information on progress is satisfactory. The quality of written reports is satisfactory overall, but has weaknesses in respect of targets for improvement. Most subjects give a general indication of areas for improvement, usually relating to the student's attitudes, organisation and application to task. They are too broad and are not specific to the subject, and therefore do not give parents the best guidance on how to help their children to raise attainment.
53. Parents want their children to achieve well academically and are keen to encourage their learning. Their support makes a valuable contribution to students' attainment and

progress. Parents work closely with members of staff in attempts to overcome any obstacles to learning. They want to be well informed of their children's progress. Parents wish to support children's learning at home, hence the concerns of a significant minority of respondents to the parents' questionnaire regarding students' homework. They also give their backing to extra-curricular activities. For example, they make financial contributions to trips and residential visits and pay for their children to have instrumental music tuition.

54. Although most parents are very supportive of students' learning, there is a growing trend for families to take children out of school for holidays. Currently, four out of ten students in Years 9 and 10 have missed at least one day's attendance because of holiday leave, and this is not helpful to their attainment and progress.
55. The school has an effective partnership with the families of students with special educational needs. The school encourages parents to support their children's learning and personal development, and makes good arrangements to keep them well informed about progress. The response is very positive. Parents willingly co-operate with members of staff and actively support students' learning. They are very appreciative of what the school does for their children.
56. There are good links with other providers of education in the local area. The school's partnership with North Nottinghamshire College of Further Education broadens the curriculum and increases opportunities for learning. Collaboration with primary schools has improved since the last inspection. Links are good at whole-school level, where they are strongly promoted through the 'Family' of schools. There is also very good co-operation between special needs staff over the transfer of students from primary to secondary education. Some of the school's subject departments, for example physical education, have good links with their primary colleagues, but others such as history and religious education have very few contacts.
57. The school has good links with the local community and uses them effectively to enhance students' learning and personal development. The support of local employers is essential to the success of its work-related curriculum and programme of work experience. The quality of personal and social education and careers guidance is enhanced by the input of local organisations, such as the police, health clinics and Connexions, the careers advice service.

Sixth form

The partnership with students' parents is satisfactory. The school has good links with universities and the community. Parents receive satisfactory information on their children's academic and personal progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents give good support to students' learning.
- Good links with other schools and with universities enrich the curriculum and enhance the quality of support and guidance.
- The school's good links with the community enhance students' learning and personal development.

Commentary

58. Parents' high aspirations have a positive impact on their children, who are keen to do well and have very good attitudes to their work. Parents are very supportive of students' learning, and the encouragement that they give their children helps them to achieve well in the sixth form.
59. The Elizabethan High School's good partnership with other schools in the area significantly increases students' opportunities for learning. Its membership of the local 16-19 years consortium widens the choice of courses. A number of its students attend lessons at Retford Oaks High School and Tuxford Comprehensive School as part of this collaboration. The school also has a good partnership with a local special school. This has a direct and positive impact on design and technology in the sixth form. Several joint projects with the special school act as a stimulus to students' learning in this subject. Good links with universities enrich the curriculum and enhance the quality of support and guidance.
60. The sixth form has some valuable links with the local community. A number of students are working towards the Community Sports Leaders Award and are gaining in confidence and self-esteem by developing skills that they use outside the school. The students have a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the neighbouring senior citizens centre, where they become actively involved in organising social events for the members.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

The quality of leadership and effectiveness of management are satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteachers, together with the leadership team, have steered the school admirably in the absence of the headteacher.
- The new headteacher has a very clear vision for moving the school forward.
- In science, good leadership is moving the department forward rapidly.
- The quality of leadership of the special educational needs department is good.
- Monitoring systems, whilst satisfactory, are not applied consistently enough.
- The pace of change has not been as rapid as that seen in many other schools.

Commentary

61. Since the previous inspection, the school's leadership has been in a state of flux. The previous headteacher was unable to continue in his post because of ill health. During this period, the acting headteachers and the senior leadership team have done a sterling job in ensuring that standards have been maintained. The new headteacher took up post in September 2004.

62. The quality of leadership is satisfactory. The senior team has worked hard to take on board new initiatives such as the national strategies. However, because the leadership team has been under strength the pace of change has not been as rapid as that seen nationally. For example, the literacy strategy is not fully embedded and as a result, there are weaknesses in students' writing. The new headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and is working with the senior team on creating a single vision for the school. She had already identified many of the strengths and areas for development noted in this report.
63. The school monitors its performance and has tackled weaknesses. In particular, the underachievement in the national tests has been dealt with successfully and students now do at least as well as expected in these tests. The school has been successful in acquiring funding for new school buildings, which are urgently needed, particularly in areas such as sport.
64. Management of the school is satisfactory. Both sites run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There have been significant improvements in the collection of data on students although teachers are not making enough use of this data to ensure all groups of students are achieving well. School policies are not always applied consistently. For example, inconsistent use is made of the school's policy of correcting students' written work. Performance management systems are in place and meet requirements. However, outside of this system there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and the amount of monitoring of teaching varies between subjects. Whilst attention has been given to improving the quality of teaching, there has been insufficient emphasis on improving learning.
65. At middle management level, leadership and management are satisfactory although there are significant differences. For example, in science, good leadership and strong teamwork have led to improvements in test and examination results. On the other hand, in design and technology, examination results have been falling because there is a high degree of inconsistency in teaching within the department that the leadership has not dealt with.
66. The school improvement plan provides a sound basis for moving the school forward. However, departments do not always see the link between the needs of the whole school and the needs of the department. This results in teachers not always sharing the good practice that exists within the school.
67. Overall, the leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. While individual teachers plan well for students with learning difficulties, others do not and there is insufficient emphasis on checking that material in all lessons suits students' needs. In the specialist department, leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator leads by example and is well respected by his staff and students. He has forged a united team of teachers and teaching assistants who are fully committed to helping students learn. Reviews of students' achievement are very efficiently organised and conducted in a friendly atmosphere so that parents feel free to contribute.
68. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and help to formulate policies. There are good links between governors and the departments and this enables the governors to monitor the work of the school. The governing body reviews

examination performance and is aware of which subjects perform well and those that require improvement. Similarly, they are well informed about financial matters because these areas are managed well by the school. The one weakness is the governors' failure to ensure that the school is providing a daily act of collective worship because of problems with accommodation.

Sixth form

The quality of leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sixth form is well led.
- A good range of courses is provided for students across the consortium.

Commentary

69. Since the previous inspection the sixth form has become more open and has attracted students from a wide range of abilities. Examination results have varied from well above average to average since the previous inspection as a result of the more open policy. However, students do achieve well. The consortium arrangements provide students with a good range of courses. The sixth form leadership team provides good support for students and leads a good team of tutors. Many extra-curricular activities are arranged and students benefit greatly from these. The monitoring of students' performance is satisfactory; each student has a number of interviews with the head of sixth form throughout the year; remedial action is taken if thought necessary. Governors fulfil their statutory duties.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3829498	Balance from previous year	80000
Total expenditure	3800727	Balance carried forward to the next	108771
Expenditure per student	3169		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

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

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

Leadership	Good
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Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not Applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A co-ordinator has recently been appointed to take charge of WRL, giving good leadership and direction to the subject.
- Work experience and school-based work successfully support and complement one another.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the WRL programme.

Commentary

70. During the inspection four lessons directly related to WRL were seen.

Standards and achievement

71. Courses in WRL are successfully building upon work experience placements for the Year 10 students, links with employers and subjects such as business education, careers and French for business. These courses have been established over the last three years. Students value their work experience placements understanding that they both support and complement the work they do in school, as seen in a Year 10 class on health and safety issues. Preparation and debriefing for work experience are good. Visits to the school by employers take place, which develop the link between the world of work and the school, for example a recent visit by the owner of a franchise. Students are given the opportunity to make presentations to their peers about what they learned about the placement. Staff with experience of the world of work teach vocational subjects such as business, which enhances achievement. Good use is made of the partnership with the Nottingham Educational Business Alliance (NEBA), Skills Force programme and the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) youth award, which accredit students with a range of key skills demonstrating they are gaining standards better than could be expected.

Teaching and learning

72. Work-related learning is developing successfully from the courses previously run in school. Consequently the impact that WRL is having on learning and achievement is already good. In most subjects, students are involved in problem solving and working both independently and collaboratively. For example, Year 11 students evaluate the marketing of a T-shirt, which consolidates students' experiences from the workplace. Students are involved in problem solving through activities like enterprise initiatives and active survival courses. In lessons, students are frequently engaged working in groups, delivering presentations to other students, producing reports and analysing data. WRL is seen as a tool to enliven teaching and improve students' learning and achievement. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 class based upon an employee's pay slip. The school has developed business, commercial and industrial partnerships in order to enliven and enrich students' learning, especially those who prefer to learn in a practical way. The local supermarket and Rotary Club are both involved in preparing students for interviews.

Leadership and management

73. Leadership and management are good. The links developed with business and partnerships are successfully creating first-hand experiences for students. This is

impacting well on standards. The development plan is good. However, provision for WRL is not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough. Work-related learning was not a subject at the previous inspection.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is satisfactory.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading is a relative strength because teachers provide opportunities for students to practise.
- Students are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- The monitoring of teaching has not yet resulted in the sharing of best practice and the elimination of unsatisfactory or less effective practice.

Commentary

Examination results

74. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average. This represented a dip from the 2002 level. However, results in 2004 rose again to being in line with results in 2002 and just before then. In 2003, GCSE results in English and English literature were average with results in 2004 being similar.

Standards and achievement

75. Whilst higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9 have good speaking and listening skills, lower attaining students express themselves briefly, possess a limited vocabulary and have difficulty in explaining themselves more fully when asked to do so. Writing is an area of relative weakness. Higher attainers write for a good range of audiences but middle and lower attainers do not possess this flexibility and their work contain many basic errors. Reading is a relative strength throughout Years 7 to 11. Higher attainers have a good grasp of the effect of particular words in a given context and most students have a sound understanding of what they read.

76. In Years 10 and 11 students improve their skills at a rate that means they remain in line with the national average. Students extend their skills in speaking and listening and are able to present a point of view confidently and convincingly. Higher attaining students produce lengthy, well-structured essays on a variety of topics. However, the work of many

middle and lower attaining students is marred by errors of spelling punctuation and grammar. Lower attaining students write in a simplistic manner and often find difficulty in writing effectively about literary topics. Students continue to understand the content of what they read and higher attainers show a good insight into some demanding literature.

Teaching and learning

77. When teaching is most effective the teacher has very good knowledge of the subject and so sets tasks that arouse the interest of students and provide them with an appropriate level of challenge. The lessons include variety and the pace is such that students can assimilate the ideas that are being presented to them. When the teacher allows students the 'space' to take part in a well-structured discussion together, they are able to be active and so learn more quickly. The most effective teachers pay close attention to making sure that students are actually learning and improving. Thus they create many opportunities for assessing students' understanding and using this to inform what they will teach next. Whereas less effective teachers tend to tell students what they should write, effective ones provide full explanations and demonstrate to students how they should perform their tasks. A number of teachers use the 'three-part lesson' to advantage and this creates variety within the lesson and so helps students to concentrate. Marking is variable. At best, it is thorough, with attention being paid to accuracy at the word and sentence level and helpful general pointers being given to students about what they need to do if they are to improve. Such guidance is especially helpful when it is provided as students are redrafting their work. When marking is superficial, errors are overlooked, low standards are accepted and students are not helped to improve.
78. When teaching is less effective, the teacher does not make efficient use of the time allocated for the lesson and learning opportunities are lost. When the pace of lessons is too slow, students become restless and learn little. In Years 7 to 9, the opportunities for students to produce lengthy pieces of writing, then to have the benefit of having them carefully marked, are limited and this restricts students' development as writers. There is less use made of ICT than might be expected.

Leadership and management

79. The head of department provides a good role model as a teacher and the day-to-day management of the department is efficient. However, the monitoring of teaching has not yet been effective in sharing best practice or eliminating less effective practice.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

80. Standards of literacy are average. Following the previous inspection, action has been taken to raise the general standard of literacy and the progress made has been satisfactory. Departments have, for example, put strategies in place that ensure that students learn and use subject-specific vocabularies. Some departments focus well upon developing particular features of the work, such as improving accuracy in writing or setting work that requires students to read in order to obtain information. However, the pattern is inconsistent. The curriculum is not systematically used to ensure that all students fully use and develop their reading and writing skills. Most notably, there are too few opportunities for students to produce extended writing. Marking across the school is inconsistent. Some of it is thorough and helpful, but in a number of cases it is superficial and overlooks many basic errors. In a number of cases seen, lower attaining students, especially in mixed ability classes, lacked the literacy skills necessary to keep up with the

work, yet they did not receive the support they needed to improve their skills. Though heads of department do monitor the teaching of literacy in their subjects, there is still no effective whole-school monitoring in place.

English as an additional language

81. The proportion of students in the school speaking English as a second language is small and none of these is at the early stages of learning the language. The special needs co-ordinator organises support for students and there is a service agreement with the local authority to provide support for students and advice for teachers. In general, the system operates effectively, and students make satisfactory progress. However, the process of identifying the needs of new students is relatively slow and students would benefit from receiving prompt attention.

Modern foreign languages

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good curriculum on offer which enables many students to study two of the three languages the school offers.
- Boys achieve considerably less well than girls.
- Time is constantly lost as teachers move between the two sites, and around the large number of rooms they teach in on the upper-school site.
- Monitoring of teaching does not focus well enough on learning to raise standards.

Commentary

Examination results

82. GCSE results in 2003 were average. Provisional results for 2004 are at the same level. Results for boys are lower than those for girls. At the time of the previous inspection results were below average and they have shown a steady improvement since then.

Standards and achievement

83. Students' listening and speaking skills develop well but students get too few opportunities to develop their writing skills especially in Years 7 to 9. This does not provide a strong base for learning in Years 10 and 11 and high attaining students do not achieve as well as they might. This is reflected in the lower than usual results in GCSE at A* and A grades. Boys achieve considerably less well than girls. This was an issue raised in the previous inspection that has not been successfully addressed. Students with special

educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students. Students achieve well in Russian because of the good teaching they receive.

Teaching and learning

84. When teaching is most effective, the use of the language being taught is good. Teachers control their classes well and no time is lost because of poor behaviour. Students behave well and show good attitudes to work. Working relationships are good and there is a relaxed but businesslike atmosphere in lessons. There are good procedures for assessment, but the use of the data provided for setting targets and for showing students what they need to do to improve is limited. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to learning with computers. In the minority of cases, when teaching is less effective, work is not sufficiently challenging to improve students' learning and to raise standards. The school's deployment of teachers and the rooms they work in is a contributory factor in students' achievement being satisfactory rather than better than this. Because teachers work on both school sites and teach in a large number of rooms in the upper school, time is constantly lost as they frequently change rooms. In addition, it is not possible for teachers to move the range of equipment they would normally use in languages lessons. Teachers do not always take account of the range of ability found in most classes and this is a second reason for achievement being satisfactory rather than good.

Leadership and management

85. The curriculum is good. The vast majority of students study at least one language in Years 10 and 11 and an encouraging number study two. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has clear priorities for development. Monitoring of teaching does not focus rigorously enough on learning and raising standards. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection; the good leadership is providing a clear vision for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Good	
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers aid students' achievement by planning lessons clearly and having a good understanding of mathematics.
- ICT is not used sufficiently as a resource to consolidate or extend students' learning.
- Higher attaining students in some lessons are insufficiently challenged.
- Students benefit from good regular assessment and the resulting performance data is used well to monitor students' progress.

Commentary

Examination results

86. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average. In 2004, they increased, continuing the upward trend in these results, broadly following the national trend. The GCSE results in 2003 were average. In 2004, the results were slightly lower than those in 2003.

Standards and achievement

87. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining students find the n^{th} term of a quadratic sequence and solve it well using trial and improvement methods. The lower attaining students calculate, using the correct units, the areas and perimeters of rectangles and triangles. By the end of Year 11, the higher attaining students use Pythagoras Theorem and trigonometry to calculate lengths in three-dimensional problems. The middle attainers evaluate complex sequences of numbers using algebraic equations to find the sequence rule. The lower attaining students construct and interpret travel graphs to find both the time taken and distance travelled.

Teaching and learning

88. Teachers aid students' achievement by planning lessons clearly and having a good understanding of mathematics. However, apart from the aim or objective of the lesson, this planning is rarely relayed to the students in terms of content and expectations of the progress to be made. The use of the 'three-part lesson' structure gives students a variety of activities that assist their learning. Teachers use good starter activities but the endings do not recapitulate what has been learnt sufficiently. In the top sets, the most able are well challenged; however, the higher attaining students in other classes do not benefit from such a level of challenge. Students working collaboratively together is not a feature of most lessons; however, in one Year 8 lesson on constructing pie charts, this was effectively used. Helpful, constructive marking does take place, although there are inconsistencies across classes. Students are provided with information on how well they are doing but are unclear on how specifically to achieve their target. Homework is provided regularly and assists in the raising of achievement, though the presentation of work by students is not always clear enough to assist with their later revision.

Leadership and management

89. The head of department has a sound vision for improvement and provides good management of a team which works hard to raise standards. Monitoring of both teaching and of students' work takes place and this helps teachers to raise standards. In lessons, ICT is not used sufficiently by students to consolidate and develop their understanding of mathematics. The students benefit from regular assessment of their learning, and evaluation of examination performance is carried out to inform both planning and target setting.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. Standards of mathematics are average. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill within the mathematics department is satisfactory. The department has delivered a training session and offered support to other subjects on the teaching and learning of mathematics. However, numeracy is not a strong feature of other subjects' lessons. Little

has been done since the initial training several years ago to embed numeracy sufficiently across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do better in GCSE examinations than might be expected, given their test results when they enter the school.
- Teachers use a wide variety of imaginative strategies to ensure that students are actively learning.
- Higher attainers in Years 10 and 11 enjoy the opportunity to study three separate science subjects and achieve very high standards.
- Good leadership, and strong teamwork within the department, have led to improvements in test and examination results.
- Learning, although satisfactory overall, is not as successful in some mixed ability Year 7 lessons as it is for other year groups in the school.

Commentary

Examination results

91. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were average. Results were higher in 2004, particularly at the higher level 6 and above. GCSE results for double award science were in line with the national average in 2003. Students did better in science than they did on average in their other subjects. In 2004, GCSE results were also higher. For the first time in 2004, one group in Year 11 took three separate GCSE science subjects; results in all three subjects were well above the 2003 national averages.

Standards and achievement

92. Students generally have at least a satisfactory knowledge of the topics they have studied recently and higher attainers often have much better understanding than expected for their age. For example, in Year 9, some students were successful in producing both word and symbol equations to describe the oxidation of metals. Standards are now very high in the separate science courses in Years 10 and 11. Lower attainers usually know the basic facts but find it difficult to recall the detail of earlier topics, so that their written answers lack precision. Students of all abilities have good practical and investigative skills, often better than their standards in other aspects of science. This is reflected in particularly good marks for GCSE investigative coursework.

93. At the end of Year 9, students in 2004 did as well in tests and examinations as might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school. Hence their achievement was satisfactory. There have been many recent improvements in teaching and learning, particularly the enthusiastic implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the continuing improvement in the planning for lessons. The good teaching and learning now being seen have yet to have a full impact on students' achievement, but results, and the achievement they represent, are improving.
94. Students are well taught and achieve well through Years 10 and 11 so that, by the end of Year 11, their GCSE results are better than expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Hence their achievement by the age of 16 is good.

Teaching and learning

95. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully. They are particularly skilled in questioning students: they ensure that everyone is listening, target their questions well, give students time to think and consider, and are constantly probing to discover and develop the depth of students' understanding.
96. The department places particular emphasis on students' learning, planning a good variety of interesting and imaginative activities to hold students' concentration and ensure that they learn efficiently throughout the lesson. For example, in a very good lesson for lower attainers in Year 9, students moved swiftly between four 'hands-on' models of parts of the digestive system and had their understanding reinforced by writing about what happens to a piece of cake when it is eaten.
97. In some lessons for mixed ability groups in Year 7, the learning is satisfactory, rather than good or very good. Higher attainers could learn faster in these lessons and the very lowest attainers sometimes fall behind and do not succeed in keeping up with all the ideas being presented. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, some students in Year 10 were disinclined to settle to their work. The time and effort taken by the teacher to maintain acceptable behaviour led to slow learning for the whole class.

Leadership and management

98. The head of department leads by example in terms of his enthusiasm for the subject, the quality of his teaching and his attention to detail in monitoring the work of the department. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and share a commitment to raising standards. Despite the comprehensive monitoring systems, there is still considerable variation in the quality of teaching in different lessons. There are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons in order to share more effectively the skills and good ideas that different teachers have to offer.
99. The department provides a very good science curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the separate science courses are much appreciated and enjoyed by higher attainers. All other students follow a double award science course which is very well planned so that even the lowest attainers are generally successful in gaining a grade.
100. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved significantly, students' investigation skills are now a strength rather than a weakness and teaching is now good. Hence, the department has made good progress since it was previously inspected.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by secure specialist knowledge, very effective planning and really good relationships, so that students learn and achieve satisfactorily.
- Teachers do not always modify work to meet the needs of all students so that some lower attainers do not achieve as well as they should.
- The key skills ICT course is a valuable resource and helps students to gain additional skills in using computers.

Commentary

Examination results

101. GCSE results were below average in 2003 with no significant difference between the results for boys and girls. Overall, students did not perform as well as expected. Results were similar in 2004 but girls' results improved considerably.

Standards and achievement

102. Students enter the school with below average ICT skills. By Year 9 many students are able to use computers confidently because they are provided with a well-structured course that enables them to achieve satisfactorily from their wide range of experience upon entering the school. They use the Internet well for research and show a sound understanding of word processing and databases. They are particularly adept at using presentation software, frequently incorporating image and text manipulation and use of *ClipArt* and *WordArt* to enhance their work. Higher attainers have a good understanding of matching work for particular audiences and incorporate and manipulate sophisticated and imaginative materials into their presentations. Lower attainers have poor writing skills that result in them frequently making errors when entering data.

103. By the end of Year 11, students' ability to use the Internet and word processing is in line with that normally found. Their understanding of spreadsheets and databases and the general quality of their coursework are below average. Higher attainers understand the role of ICT in society and are able to give a sound evaluation in the use of ICT for social, academic and personal use. Many students have well-honed skills in producing presentations incorporating digitised images, tabulated results and screen dumps. However, some students lack the skills in the use of some basic software tools. Lower attainers are restricted by their low level literacy skills, particularly when inputting data. They are more dependent on teachers for guidance and struggle to cope with formulae and using databases. Students following the key skills course achievement satisfactorily because the course is well matched to their needs. However, their understanding of control systems and sequencing is generally underdeveloped.

Teaching and learning

104. Teachers demonstrate very good knowledge of the subject; which is used well to ask searching questions and stretch the students within lessons. Teachers plan their lessons really well. In the best lessons, they have high expectations of what students can achieve and how students should behave. Students are well supported because teachers share the lesson

objectives well so that students understand what they are going to achieve and how they will do it. Subject content is accurate and teachers explain principles well. Effective use is made of digital projectors to demonstrate each stage of the lesson clearly, but not all the features of the interactive whiteboards are used enough. Relationships are particularly strong and result in a good balance between enjoyment and hard work. Not all teachers modify work so that all students can achieve as well as possible. This results in some low attainers not making enough progress in lessons.

Leadership and management

105. Leadership has a clear vision for the future. The very good key skills Intranet resource is a significant strength. The staff team work well together and are supported effectively by the network manager and technician.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

106. The use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The proportion of computers available for use by students is broadly in line with the national average. However, ICT is not used consistently enough both across and within subjects. This results in students having widely varying experiences of ICT. Students are not provided with enough opportunities to practise skills within subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Question and answer are well used to develop the students' vocabulary of geography.
- Writing tasks do not extend higher and middle attainers.
- Students behave well as a result of good relationships with the teachers.
- There is insufficient use of ICT, which hinders research.

Commentary

Examination results

107. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were broadly average and results were at a similar level in 2004. Results have been broadly average in recent years. Girls performed better than boys.

Standards and achievement

108. By the end of Year 9, students are able to accurately use maps, describe and explain geographical features, understand the impact of hazards on man and use a wide range of geographical terms. This represents satisfactory achievement, as in work seen, middle and higher attainers do not have enough opportunities for extended writing. By the end of Year 11 students have a secure factual base, use fieldwork for research and are confident in their oral responses in lessons. They do not, however, write at length or fluently.

Teaching and learning

109. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from enthusiastic teachers who structure lessons well. They ensure that the students are aware of what they are learning. Students are motivated by the range of activities and so behaviour is always good. Students answer questions with enthusiasm but are unable to develop their ideas fully as the written tasks are too brief. Homework is used to reinforce learning.

110. In Years 10 and 11, students display a satisfactory level of subject knowledge because teachers regularly reinforce learning with clear definitions of words and relevant examples. Students are not provided with enough opportunities to use ICT to help with research. Marking and assessment are linked to GCSE criteria with praise comments being effective in motivating lower attainers.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory and there is an understanding of the direction that the subject needs to take with some progress already underway. Policies and procedures are well organised while the team works well together. Monitoring and target setting are in their early stages and, as yet, are not ensuring standards are rising. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection with standards and the quality of teaching maintained.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above average because students are well prepared for the examination.
- Students achieve well because of consistently good teaching.
- Arrangements to assess and monitor students' progress are not as good as other aspects of the subject provision.

Commentary

Examination results

112. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were average and grades were higher overall in 2004.

Standards and achievement

113. By the end of Year 9 students are able to use sources of evidence to describe and interpret the past. They place events sequentially in timelines. Students broaden their knowledge of topics, such as the social conditions during the Industrial Revolution, and understand the immorality of child labour. Higher attaining students write well-structured accounts, but the quality of work of others is reduced because there is insufficient explanation and weakness in expression. By the end of Year 11, students have made good progress in developing research and organisational skills; this is particularly evident in high quality coursework. They are knowledgeable about topics, such as the social reforms of the Liberals under Lloyd George and achieve well in projects on World War One and the suffragette movement.

Teaching and learning

114. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from teaching by experienced teachers. The aims of lessons are clear, students are well managed and learning is continuous. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students so that learning is enjoyable and leads to their achieving well. Students are informed about their National Curriculum levels, but the quality of ongoing marking is variable across the subject and not enough attention is given to assessment of content and to how work can be improved. Training students in self-assessment is at an early stage. In Years 10 and 11, students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities because teachers plan their lessons very well. Students' attitudes are very good. Teachers are specialist historians and know the GCSE requirements well, so that students are given close guidance on what is expected. This leads to their reaching above average standards. Occasionally, students are too reliant on teachers to support learning, and insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons.

Leadership and management

115. The department is well led and managed. There is regular review of performance and this has led to improvement in teaching and lesson styles. The development plan identifies current needs but the evaluation criteria lack precision. The schemes of work are under review but do not identify the subject's contribution to promoting citizenship, ICT, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. The curriculum is good, except for limited opportunities in Years 7 to 9 for fieldwork. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. GCSE results have improved and standards in Years 10 and 11 are now higher.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with community workers enable students to develop their understanding of contemporary issues.
- Lessons are well planned to use a range of different techniques that will involve students.
- Good revision is enabling students to achieve well at GCSE.
- There is too little opportunity to investigate other cultures and beliefs through first-hand experience.
- Written work does not achieve the standard of students' oral work.

Commentary

Examination results

116. GCSE results for the full course and short course in 2003 were broadly average when compared with national results. Results in 2004 are slightly lower in the short course. Results in the full course are also lower; however, all students entered achieved a pass grade. Girls are attaining higher grades than the boys in both examinations.

Standards and achievement

117. By the end of Year 9, students have a general overview of the major religious faiths and have considered the problem of reconciling the existence of God with the suffering in the world. They are beginning to identify the Buddhist search for enlightenment and rules that support this search for peace. Higher attaining students understand the need for free will and are beginning to recognise the effect of belief on the individual.

118. Students following the short GCSE course consider contemporary moral issues in the light of secular and religious beliefs and have the opportunity to reflect on the dilemmas faced. They can consider different viewpoints, for example those in favour of and against euthanasia, and can identify appropriate teachings. When required, they evaluate these views; however, their

explanations do not indicate considered thought and they do not justify judgements that they make. With the support of their teacher, they make simple reasoned judgements, but their written work does not demonstrate the same standard of thought as their oral contributions.

119. Students following the full GCSE course study the philosophy and ethics of major faiths and compare and contrast key concepts of the religions they study. They achieve a sound understanding of the key features of the religions they study. They make clear notes to demonstrate their knowledge, for example, of the organisation of the Christian churches. When they are required to use this knowledge to present an opinion, however, their independent written arguments, such as the need for belief in God, do not reflect reasoned judgements or confidence in their argument.

Teaching and learning

120. Lessons are well planned to use a range of different techniques that involve students, although there are few opportunities for students to investigate other cultures and beliefs through first-hand experience. Links with community workers enable students to develop their understanding of contemporary issues. Students are most responsive where they are expected to reflect on the work they study, and teachers ensure that they support their statements with reasoning, developing their understanding. Where tasks are less demanding and can be completed with little effort and thought, students are prepared to become passive and switch off. Marking is often minimal and does not provide good opportunities to monitor students' progress in the attainment targets of the agreed syllabus. Teachers give good support for examination revision and project work. This enables students to attain higher standards than they display in their class work.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear vision and a commitment to raising standards and achievement. The department has correctly identified areas for development and plans have been made to enable students to recognise and self-assess their progress. Innovations have been introduced in the department, although there is inconsistent application by some staff. Good support is given to non-specialist teachers; however, the split-site reduces opportunities for exchange of ideas and observation of lessons. There is a clear system of monitoring the work of the department; however, action taken in response to this monitoring is not always effective enough. The head of department is managing the problems of the site and non-specialist teachers well. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and fewer non-specialist teachers enable more effective support to be given.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well in textiles because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Teachers in Years 10 and 11 do not demand that students do enough writing or complete their coursework.
- The team of teachers is not learning from one another's strengths, especially the strengths in textiles.
- Far too many students fail to gain a grade at GCSE.

Commentary

Examination results

122. Results in GCSE examinations were average in 2003 but fell slightly in 2004. However, this apparently satisfactory picture does not tell the full story as many students are not entered for the GCSE examination. In 2004, for example, 26 per cent of students who studied design and technology failed to gain a grade. There are considerable differences between the different material areas, with students doing well in textiles, for example, but very badly in electronics. Boys' results are considerably worse than girls' results.

Standards and achievement

123. Students arrive at the school with average standards in the subject. By Year 9, standards are average in terms of both designing and making, and students' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average. Work in textiles is above average and students' graphical skills are good. However, standards of written work are well below average; students rarely write at length or in any depth. Some students, especially boys, have written hardly anything at all in Year 10. This lack of writing is leading to a large proportion of students failing to complete coursework and higher attainers do not get the grades of which they are capable.

Teaching and learning

124. Throughout the department, teachers insist on good behaviour and students respond by concentrating on their work, without fear of being distracted by others. In Years 7 to 9, there is some very good teaching in textiles, where expectations are high, lessons are rapid and students learn very quickly. However, this is in stark contrast to lessons in Years 10 and 11 in areas such as resistant materials and graphics, where the work is too easy and many teachers do not insist on students doing written work because it is felt that the students do not like writing. The students studying textiles, who produce all the written work necessary for the examination, disprove this theory. The low expectations also become apparent in the lack of homework that is set and the way teachers set exactly the same work for whole classes in Year 10, irrespective of the individual's ability. There are also big variations in the quality of marking and assessment. In textiles, for example, records are detailed and the comments on students' work let them know exactly what they need to do to get more marks. In other areas, however, students get little or nothing in the way of written feedback, so do not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

Leadership and management

125. Examination results have been falling, slowly but surely, for the past three years. The quality of teaching and the resulting level of achievement are now worse than at the time of the previous inspection. This is because nobody is ensuring that individual teachers can learn from the very real strengths that exist in the department, which in turn leads to a

high degree of inconsistency in teaching and standards. The head of department is aware of the problems and has been trying to solve them for some years, but the approaches used have failed because they do not address the fundamental weaknesses in the teaching, focusing instead on students' attitudes to work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and ensures that students learn the classic skills and techniques used in art and design.
- Students acquire a wide range of experiences in two and three-dimensional art.
- There is good order and discipline in lessons that contribute to good achievement.
- There are not enough strategies to extend students' independent learning.
- There is not enough structure in students' written work.

Commentary

Examination results

126. In 2003, results in GCSE were average. However, the proportion gaining A* grades was below average. Results improved significantly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

127. Students have broadly average skills on entry to the school. By Year 9, they have good skills in drawing and painting, especially in using a wide range of mark-making techniques. Work is done carefully with subtle depth and detail in shading to achieve tone and texture. They gain useful experience in a wide range of media including printing, ceramics and light sculpture. These skills contribute to the good achievement in all years.

128. In Years 10 and 11, students gain inspiration and confidence in sculpture and clay modelling from their visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Individual work on themes such as character, pattern in nature and cultures are well researched and done with a fine finish. Printing is particularly good in achieving impact in line. However, students are not bold enough in experimenting with ideas, especially in their sketchbooks. Written work does not adequately describe their ideas or the research and development of their work.

Teaching and learning

129. All students benefit from the good specialist expertise of their teachers. The key skills are taught formally and to a high level. The teachers give good demonstrations and illustrations that inform and inspire students and add to their understanding and confidence. Assessment, including self-assessment, is ongoing in all lessons and students know what they have to do to improve. However, gifted and talented students are not provided with enough opportunities for experimenting with different ideas and materials. There is not enough guidance on how to structure written notes. Students with special educational needs get good one-to-one attention in lessons; this ensures they make good progress. Students work seriously and effectively in lessons. However, in general, they do not spend enough time or effort on homework to do full justice to their talents.

Leadership and management

130. There is good vision for the subject. There is good planning and close records are kept of students' standards and progress. There is good support for the newly qualified teacher. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, social and cultural development by examining these aspects in their own work and that of other artists.

131. There is good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards and achievement, teaching and learning and assessment have all improved.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although students' achievement overall is good, most boys do not progress as quickly as girls.
- Students are well motivated to learn, due to good teaching.
- A rich and well-led programme of extra-curricular activities provides very good opportunities for students to extend their music making.
- Good departmental leadership has put in place an infrastructure for improving provision.

Commentary

Examination results

132. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average and were at a similar level in 2004.

Standards and achievement

133. By the end of Year 9, students' musical skills are average; they improvise melodies within musical structures, notating work by hand or using ICT. They engage well in discussion, analysing and comparing musical features, but their use and control of technical vocabulary are inconsistent. Girls are more accomplished at playing instruments than boys. The attainment level of pupils opting for the GCSE course is higher in Years 10 and 11 than in previous years. By the end of Year 11, students' practical and compositional skills are well developed. All students learn instruments or singing individually. Students show good awareness of instrumental textures, but their grasp of harmony is occasionally erratic. Most students read music well and apply this and their knowledge and understanding of styles and trends well in listening tests.

Teaching and learning

134. Teaching is well planned and delivered, encouraging good behaviour and attitudes. Students work responsibly in practical work, whether in groups or individually. Carefully prepared worksheets keep students focused on tasks, well tailored to meet the varying attainment of students in the class. Good support and assessment during lessons help students reflect on how they can improve. Self-evaluation exercises and carefully corrected written work consolidate this. Activities at the beginning and end of lessons are sometimes not well linked to the main part of the lesson and, because some practical work is not broken down into easily grasped tasks, those students with limited experience, often boys, do not consistently progress as well as they are able. In Years 10 and 11, students are very well motivated, with very good attitudes to learning as a class and independently. Some lessons do not rigorously link the aspects of the course, such as performing and listening, limiting the students' intellectual development. An above average proportion of students benefit from instrumental tuition and many participate in the wide range of well-directed extra-curricular activities. The predominance of girls participating in these activities serves to heighten the difference in achievement with boys and results in more girls than boys on GCSE courses.

Leadership and management

135. The department is managed well. Through very good teamwork, there have been marked improvements to GCSE provision and the appearance of the classrooms. Music contributes greatly to the ethos of the school. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching and students' achievement overall have improved, but strategies to improve the standards achieved by boys have yet to be developed. Library resources, too, are insufficient to promote research skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in the GCSE course as a result of good teaching.
- Poor accommodation constrains the curriculum and restricts students' opportunities to achieve high standards in some activities.
- A good extra-curricular programme gives all students the opportunity to excel in school and beyond.
- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure that best practice is identified and shared.

Commentary

Examination results

136. The 2003 GCSE examination results were average and results were higher in 2004. GCSE results have been improving, consistently, for the last six years.

Standards and achievement

137. Standards in Year 9 are already close to average at this early stage in the year. This represents good achievement in relation to students' starting point on entry to the school. Boys and girls of all levels of attainment achieve well in team games, well illustrated in basketball. Students with special educational needs are very well integrated and supported, achieving as well as other students, particularly in football.

138. In the core curriculum for Years 10 and 11, standards are average. At the beginning of their courses in badminton and gymnastics, Year 10 students achieve only satisfactorily. This is because they have to travel to and from facilities on other sites, during their lesson time. Travelling takes up almost half of the hour allocated, and this loss of performance time restricts students' attainment and achievement. Students following the GCSE course have average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects, and they are achieving well in their coursework. Performance in extra-curricular sport is often above average, reflected in the achievements of many boys and girls in team games, athletics and cross-country running.

Teaching and learning

139. Good teaching, particularly on the GCSE course, combines pace and challenge to ensure students are actively involved in well-planned activities that enable them to learn well. Students are motivated by enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers, and they have generally good attitudes towards the subject. This is evident in the high levels of participation, standards of dress and good behaviour in lessons. The best teaching and learning occur when students are challenged intellectually and physically with high expectations for them to improve performance, as seen in girls' and boys' basketball. Although good overall, some teaching is satisfactory and lacks a strong focus on quality and improvement. This leads to underachievement, especially when tasks are not matched to students' abilities. Good use of individual education plans ensures that students with special educational needs achieve well. Planning for students to develop their literacy skills is a strong feature of all lessons.

Leadership and management

140. A strong team supports effective joint leadership and management. A commitment to improving standards of attainment is reflected in the notable improvement in GCSE results. The department is moving forward, but there is still a great deal to be done in updating documentation, and formulating policies and guidance for the implementation of new and whole-school initiatives. Monitoring is in place but there is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure that best practice is identified and shared. A good extra-curricular programme provides all students with the opportunity to achieve success in their chosen sport. The curriculum is currently delivered on five different sites; teaching and learning time is significantly reduced through the necessity of travelling to and from the sites in lesson time. Staff work hard to minimise these difficulties, but poor accommodation for the subject has an adverse effect on students' attainment and achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school has some way to go towards the aim of the national strategy for 75 per cent of students to have two hours a week of quality physical education.

141. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Results at GCSE have improved consistently every year since then.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching brings about effective learning for students of all levels of attainment.
- Business studies offers both traditional and vocational GCSE.

Commentary

Examination results

142. Results in 2003 were above average. There was some decline in the 2004 results.

Standards and achievement

143. Students' knowledge and skills are better than what might typically be expected. At this early stage of the course, students in Year 10 already show a clear understanding of key business ideas and processes. Students work diligently and respond well to the variety of challenges offered to them. They have the capacity to work independently and collaboratively. The first group of students taking the applied vocational business studies examination this summer are currently producing work of an above average standard; this represents very good achievement for these students.

Teaching and learning

144. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Teachers thoroughly prepare their work; they have good subject knowledge. Teachers with personal experience in commerce use their expertise to enlighten and inspire students. They address effectively the vocational relevance of the subject and thereby extend students' learning. Over a period of time, students' work demonstrates that the range of teaching methods used is varied and students are therefore able to develop different ways of working. Teachers quickly establish a purposeful atmosphere for learning. In a very good Year 11 applied business studies lesson on flexible workforces, students demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the changes that have taken place with the full-time, part-time, temporary and self-employed workforce over recent years. Assessment is well organised and students are aware of the progress that they are making and they understand what they need to do to improve their work. Students in Year 11 are offered extra support after school if they feel that this would be beneficial to them.

Leadership and management

145. The head of department leads in a conscientious manner and manages the department well. She is committed to enabling the department to fulfil its vision and strategic objectives. She is well informed and perceptive. There has been satisfactory progress since the time of the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The personal, social and health education, careers and citizenship programme are integrated into one tutorial lesson each week in Years 7, 8 and 9, with two tutorial lessons in Years 10 and 11.

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good scheme of work successfully supports the personal, social and health education and citizenship programme.
- The time allocated for personal, social and health education and citizenship constrains the depth of the programme.
- There is insufficient monitoring or assessment of the personal, social and health education and citizenship programme.
- There is little contribution to the citizenship programme by subjects.

Commentary

146. Students do not follow an examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

147. Students join school with a wide range of experiences in personal, social and health education and citizenship. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, work seen shows that standards are average in enquiry skills and knowledge about becoming informed citizens. Students achieve satisfactorily but the allocation of time for the integrated course constrains achievement in citizenship. As yet, there are few contributions from other subjects. However, students benefit from activities outside normal lessons like team building for Year 7 and in charity work across the whole school, which supports two students in India. In addition, occasional timetable suspension allows time for special activities. For example, during Year 9 activities week students study financial awareness and budgeting. This helps to add to students' entitlement, giving breadth to the subject. Elections for year and school councils are starting to provide a forum for active citizenship. There is a range of activities, which encourages real participation in the community.

Teaching and learning

148. Students in Years 7 to have one weekly tutorial lesson of personal, social and health education/citizenship. Students in Years 10 and 11 have two tutorials per week taught by tutors and specialist teachers. The personal, social and health education/citizenship

programme has been carefully put together enabling students to see the different aspects and their contribution to the whole. There is a comprehensive scheme of work with lesson plans and materials to support a large team of teachers teaching personal, social and health education/citizenship. However, having such a large team results in inconsistencies in teaching and learning. Procedures and inconsistent marking mean that students are not always aware of the progress they make in the three different strands of citizenship.

Leadership and management

149. Progress has been made with the introduction of citizenship. The programme is well documented to support the teachers who teach the programme. However, the limited time allocation constrains development. There is no effective monitoring or evaluation of the citizenship programme. Assessment procedures do not sufficiently inform the progress that students are making in developing citizenship skills. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100	98.6	57.1	50.2	94.3	87.5
Biology	2	100	96.4	0	39.2	80.0	78.6
Business studies	7	100	98.7	71.4	36.8	100	80.1
Chemistry	3	100	97.6	66.7	49.0	106.7	84.9
Communication studies	1	100	99.4	100	37.8	100	82.1
Drama	6	100	99.5	50.0	40.1	93.3	83.6
English	9	100	99.4	44.4	36.3	82.2	80.9
English literature	13	100	99.5	30.8	46.5	78.5	86.5
French	3	100	98.8	100	51.5	113.3	87.6
Design and technology	14	100	97.8	35.7	35.0	87.1	77.9
General studies	24	80.8	73.1	37.5	31.0	80.8	73.1
Geography	18	100	98.7	16.7	44.5	67.8	84.0
History	5	100	99.0	40.0	44.6	84.0	84.6
Information technology	6	83.3	95.6	16.7	24.6	60.0	69.5
Mathematics	12	100	96.7	83.3	55.6	105.0	88.8
Music	3	100	98.8	0	38.9	53.3	81.1
Other languages	1	100	96.9	100	64.5	120	93.8
Other social studies	7	100	97.4	88.6	81.8	57.1	42.7
Physics	7	100	96.7	28.6	44.6	71.4	81.7
Religious studies	2	100	98.8	0	46.7	50.0	85.6
Sociology	12	100	98.2	50.0	44.3	85.0	83.6
Sports studies	7	100	98.0	0	30.9	62.9	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language

Provision in English language is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the examination syllabus and use this well to help the students to achieve.
- Written comments on students' work do not always tell them how to improve.
- Some teachers are not setting enough written work.

Commentary

Examination results

150. Results at A-level were above average in 2003 and similar in 2004. Student retention is good.

Standards and achievement

151. Students in Years 12 and 13 are articulate at expressing their own independent views. They are confident at using technical terminology when they speak and write, and are well aware of the most recent theories in language study. Many students do their own independent research around the subject, and make accurate comments on challenging research materials. One weakness in the standards is the below average use of ICT in their work.

Teaching and learning

152. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. Their enthusiasm for the subject is very obvious, and motivates the students to learn. Teachers provide a variety of activities that enable the students to learn independently. They provide relevant research materials for the students, which students are expected to add to. However, there is limited use of ICT as a research tool to support learning. Students are given the opportunity to work collaboratively through paired work and group work. This allows them to share their ideas, and develop their own views. Past papers are used in both Year 12 and Year 13 to prepare students for the examinations. This provides clear guidance about what is expected of them in the course, and the final examination. Teachers make it very clear to students what is expected of them. As a result, most students achieve well, and there is a high level of interest from them. Work is marked regularly but comments do not always indicate how students can improve. Some Year 12 students have not completed a written

assignment so far this year, so neither the teacher nor the students have any clear idea about how well they are doing.

Leadership and management

153. Good leadership has ensured that standards are above average and students are achieving well. The enthusiasm and passion of the head of department motivate the staff, and lead to a collaborative approach to the sharing of resources. The day-to-day management of the department is good which has enabled good progress to be made since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. Standards of literacy and language skills are above average. Most students are articulate and contribute well to classroom discussion when they are required to do so. Students have good reading skills and sound writing skills, which enable them to produce full, well-reasoned work based upon their own research.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of the core mathematics, pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics. It also offers further mathematics where students are introduced to decision mathematics as well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and consequently students work hard. They achieve well as a result.
- The very good knowledge of teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Teachers have few opportunities to see each other teach so that their skills can be enhanced further.

Commentary

Examination results

155. In 2003, results at A-level were well above average.

Standards and achievement

156. Overall achievement is good, given the students' attainment on entry to the course. Although there was a drop in results in 2004, the standard of work seen is well above

average now. As numbers are small, results are highly dependent on the attainment of students when they start the course. In both A-level and AS, the quality of students' written and oral work is generally better than that seen at this stage in the course, and the quality of the mechanics coursework is well above that usually seen. Students make good use of past work when introduced to new topics. For example, in statistics, they extend their understanding of probability by demonstrating they have a good understanding of the probability laws and applying them to conditional probability. Students have a very good understanding of what is needed to solve the problems. They use their mathematical understanding of vectors and trigonometry very well.

Teaching and learning

157. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They give students very good support with clear explanations when they ask for clarification. One of the strengths of the better teaching is the quality of challenging questions and the planning of lessons. Teachers match both questions and examples very well to the ability of students. For example, when students were answering questions about scalar products, the higher attaining students were given problems in three dimensions. Teaching generally proceeds at stimulating pace, challenging students to stay alert and think quickly and deeply. Consequently, students are engaged throughout the lesson and a very good level of concentration is maintained. Students are highly motivated and put in a very good level of intellectual effort. They acquire new knowledge expeditiously. They participate fully in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering questions and answers. They work well co-operatively in pairs and small groups. However, in a minority of lessons there are often too few opportunities for them to take a more active role in demonstrations that would improve their understanding further. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend new learning that takes place in the lessons. Although there are opportunities for students to undertake their own study when preparing for their coursework tasks, there are few opportunities to develop study skills further in general.

Leadership and management

158. The good leadership and management are the result of teachers in the subject having a clear understanding of what is needed for students to succeed in mathematics at this level. However, although the monitoring of coursework takes place, there is little monitoring of teaching. Teachers have few opportunities to see each other teach so that their skills can be enhanced further. The wide range of subjects within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject, ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained. There has been good progress since the last inspection; teaching and standards have improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

159. Competence in mathematics is above average. There is extensive use of graphs in science and geography. Students use calculators competently and can transpose formulae with ease.

SCIENCE

The focus for the inspection was chemistry.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

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

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good, which contributes to students' very good achievement.
- Lessons are well planned and involve all students through skilful questioning.
- Lesson contexts make use of relevant applications of chemistry to motivate students.

Commentary

Examination results

160. Three students took A-level chemistry in 2003, and students achieved well given their prior attainment. Results obtained in 2004 showed a slight decline, reflecting the prior attainment of the students on entry to the course. Student retention is good.

Standards and achievement

161. Standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are above average. Students in both years have better knowledge and understanding of current topics than expected. In Year 13, for example, most students understand steric influences on molecular configuration. In both year groups, students have well-ordered files containing detailed notes of high quality. Material is cross-referenced between topics so that existing knowledge and understanding can be used quickly and successfully in new contexts. Students have good practical and investigative skills.

Teaching and learning

162. Teachers plan lessons well with clear lesson objectives that are explained to the class. They use question and answer sessions to involve all students, who are made to think deeply about the topic under study. Students enjoy lessons and appreciate having practical applications of chemistry incorporated into lessons, benefiting from their teachers' very good subject knowledge and the learning atmosphere that derives from positive teacher-student relationships.

163. Students have to think hard from the very beginning of a lesson and teachers make sure that students are active learners by maintaining appropriate pace and challenge. Teachers set a variety of homework exercises to reinforce and extend students' learning. They mark tests and scrutinise homework regularly.

Leadership and management

164. The recently appointed head of chemistry provides very good leadership, encouraging high expectations and providing clear guidance on raising standards. There are three teachers in the chemistry team who work well together and share a commitment to improving achievement. The department is able to identify weaknesses and take action to overcome them.

165. The previous inspection report referred to A-level science only in general terms, with progress described as satisfactory. Since then significant improvements are evident with the quality of teaching and achievement both very good. As a result, progress since the last inspection is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was on computing.

Provision in computing is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very secure knowledge of the examination courses and pass this on well to the students.
- The subject is growing in popularity but very few girls wish to follow the course despite doing better than boys at GCSE.

Commentary

Examination results

166. In 2003, results at A-level were below average; only boys took the examination. Results in 2004 were at similar levels. Most of those who begin the AS-level course complete the year, take the examination and choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.

Standards and achievement

167. Students enter the course with a wide range of computer skills. Several have not even studied ICT at GCSE level. This is unusual for such a theory-based course. By the end of Year 12, students have a good grasp of how generic software can be used to support their studies. They know and understand the difference between different types of media storage and are competent at using a range of applications. They build upon existing spreadsheet skills, by beginning to use more advanced ones, in work that is preparing them to meet specific examination requirements. Lower attainers can copy-type the program code into their programs with reasonable accuracy but struggle with producing an accurate specification for the required system. By the end of Year 13, higher attaining students can confidently validate their method of data entry and show good understanding of file organisation and processing. They can identify the possible sources of error in their programming and can test their work effectively.

Teaching and learning

168. The best feature of the teaching is the very good knowledge and understanding of teachers. They know the requirements of the examination and teach lessons that quickly enable students to make rapid progress. Very good relationships lead to a relaxed, yet focused atmosphere for learning and allow students to achieve better than expected. Good use of digital projectors, for teaching, aids learning because of more efficient and effective ways of presenting information. Teachers give very good on-the-spot feedback to individuals during lessons. Students respond well to opportunities to discuss, or

answer questions. They are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in using computers. They have a real interest in the subject and spend much of their spare time writing their own computer programs.

Leadership and management

169. Leadership has clarity of vision and has succeeded in attracting an increasing number of students to the course. However, there are hardly any girls studying the subject even though they gained the highest grades at GCSE. A course in A-level ICT is offered at another school within the consortium but there are no vocational ICT courses available. The staff team work well together and receive good support from the technicians.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

170. Competency in ICT is average and satisfactory use is made of ICT; ICT is not fully embedded in the schemes of work of all subjects but most students deploy a range of ICT skills through their A and AS-level subjects. When given the opportunity, students apply and use computers confidently to support their learning. Students have good access to computers at home and this really helps with the presentation of their coursework and research.

HUMANITIES

The focus subjects for the inspection were geography and history.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide good support for the A-level investigative study.
- The course is too difficult for some lower attaining students who end up failing the course.
- The teachers' enthusiasm encourages students to learn.
- Writing tasks are not challenging enough for higher attainers.

Commentary

Examination results

171. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were well below average and this is the same for 2004. Results over time do vary with the ability of the cohort. Male and female students perform equally well.

Standards and achievement

172. While results of students in 2003 were well below average as these students entered the sixth form with GCSE results well below average, there is satisfactory achievement and all students achieved grades in line with expectation. Results in 2004 were at similar levels. In work seen, the current Year 13 is attaining average standards, in line with their earlier average GCSE standards. They have a secure geographical factual base and a sound technical vocabulary and can discuss confidently the impact of man on the landscape. Higher attaining students are not given enough scope to extend their evaluative writing. Students in the current Year 12 are below average which is in line with their below average GCSE position so achievement is satisfactory, but they have difficulties in writing, analysis and in factual recall. For the lower attainers the course is too difficult.

Teaching and learning

173. Teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge encourage students to learn. Lessons are well planned and students are engaged by regular question and answer work. While note taking is effective, there is not enough extended writing to record detailed ideas and interpretation. Students are attentive and industrious and remain on task while teachers move about to support individual learning needs. Teachers provide valuable advice and feedback which is particularly effective in preparing students for the investigative study. Students display satisfactory presentation skills in ICT and are diligent in their response to homework. Assessment is thorough and mainly based on past examination papers.

Leadership and management

174. Leadership is satisfactory and the head of department is aware of the development needs of the subject. Plans and policies are in place, while more data is being used in reviewing departmental success, setting targets and analysing progress, but further work is needed on this. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection and the subject continues to be popular with the students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average as a result of good teaching.
- Students' very good attitudes to learning lead to them achieving well at A-level.
- Discussion aspects of learning are not developed enough.

Commentary

Examination results

175. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were average and have been maintained at this level in recent years. Student retention is good.

Standards and achievement

176. By the end of Year 13, students have acquired depth in knowledge and understanding of topics and they are skilled in using a range of evidence to analyse and evaluate past events. High attaining students are able to critically assess the writing of contemporary and modern historians about issues surrounding Cromwell's assumption of power circa 1650, whilst others improve their understanding through guidance and group work. Many

students achieve very well in their personal studies, showing conceptual understanding of topics and using evidence critically to support conclusions. In discussions however, some students lack self-confidence and do not develop answers in enough detail. This leads to over-reliance on teachers for support and guidance.

Teaching and learning

177. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communication skills and it leads to students achieving well. Lessons are well prepared and structured to ensure that students are challenged to be critically aware of issues and to share ideas. There are occasions when learning is very teacher-centred and students do not show enough initiative. The guidance they receive is very good and it helps them focus on key aspects in topics. On some occasions, the minority of students do not participate well in discussion and are not challenged so achievement is slower than expected. Teachers make good use of reprographic resources and homework is well used to extend class-based learning.

Leadership and management

178. The subject analyses examination results critically and uses the outcome to identify training needs, particularly at AS-level. Student performance is well monitored, with very good evaluation of extended writing; this leads to improved performance. The scheme of work is under revision to reflect planned improvement in teaching and learning, but development planning does not give enough focus to sixth form development. Since the previous inspection standards continue to be above average and teaching remains good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus for the inspection was on design and technology.

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that students of all levels of attainment are achieving well.
- Students do not have enough written feedback on their work.
- Good leadership has led to improvements in teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

179. Examination results were well above average in 2003; there were too few candidates taking the examination in 2004 to compare with the national average.

Standards and achievement

180. Students who have just started the course in Year 12, joined with below average GCSE results. However, they now have a solid understanding of the properties of the materials they have studied and recall what they have learnt well. They are, however, still coming to terms with working as effective members of a team. Overall, this suggests a good level of achievement. The same good achievement is clear in Year 13. These students' standards were average on starting the course, but their knowledge of the subject and, in particular, their understanding of the principles of design, are above average. In particular, they analyse situations very well before coming up with design proposals.

Teaching and learning

181. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject so are able to correct students' misunderstandings immediately, without having to refer to notes or textbooks. The good variety of activities used ensures that students stay focused throughout the lesson, and enjoy their work. This enjoyment is enhanced by the relationships that have been developed with the teachers, so a humorous and happy atmosphere prevails. One area of the teaching that is not as strong as the others is the individual feedback that students receive on the work they have done. Whilst this is good in lessons, when the teacher can talk to students individually, it is uncommon in terms of written guidance which the students can refer to later.

Leadership and management

182. The course is taught by three teachers who work as a close-knit team. The head of department has deployed the staff very effectively to make use of their individual skills. The benefits of the approach are seen in the good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the improved teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music

The numbers of students taking the subject in 2003 and 2004 is too small to make reliable comment on the music results. In work submitted by students, which had a strong bias to composition, evidence from the current Year 13 group suggests standards are average. No lessons were observed.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Progress since previous inspection	Good
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Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are continually improving because of good teaching.
- Teachers use their commercial experience well to skilfully extend students' learning.
- Links with local businesses lead to curriculum enrichment.

Commentary

Examination results

183. In 2003, results at A-level were very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results in 2004 were not as good.

Standards and achievement

184. Students in both Years 12 and 13 are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of key business concepts. They can confidently and accurately use a wide range of business terminology. Four weeks into a new vocational course, Year 12 students are already confident in the use of such terms as invoice, receipt, credit and delivery notes and are well aware of the consequences if invoices are completed incorrectly. In a good Year 13 lesson on direct and indirect costs, students displayed high level speaking and listening skills. They played a game of 'dominoes' matching costs such as rent, promotions and advertising and then decided whether each is a fixed, variable, direct, indirect, start-up or average cost. Students make effective use of real vocational contexts in their assignment work. They demonstrate that they can apply what they have learned to case studies, local organisations and the real economy. Students are able to analyse the information that they collect, draw conclusions and make predictions. Current students are highly motivated to succeed. They are on target to achieve at the very highest levels.

Teaching and learning

185. Students are always made aware of lesson objectives. Teachers know their students well and generally cater well for their differing individual needs. They encourage and engage students skilfully and challenge them appropriately. Relationships between teachers and students are good and students gain in confidence. All lessons are tightly planned and highly organised. Assessment is good and students are encouraged to assess both their own and their colleagues' work. As a result, all students know how well they are doing. Long-established commercial and community links also enhance students' learning experiences for students in both Years 12 and 13.

Leadership and management

186. The head of department skilfully leads her staff. Her management systems are confident and well informed. She constantly drives for improvement and has a strong sense of direction for the subject. There has been good progress since the time of the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Students' achievement	3	4
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		4
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	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	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5	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	4
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	3	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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

