

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ELLOWES HALL SCHOOL

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103871

Headteacher: Mr A. Griffiths

Lead inspector: Ross Parker

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th November 2004

Inspection number: 268960

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

© Crown copyright 2005

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11 – 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1098

School address: Stickley Lane
Lower Gornal
Dudley
West Midlands
Postcode: DY3 2JH

Telephone number: 01384 817915
Fax number: 01384 817916

Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr G. Marsh

Date of previous inspection: 10th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Ellowes Hall School is an averaged sized secondary school with a small sixth form. It serves the quite insular community of Gornal in Dudley. Employment in the local area is average, though there are few people employed in highly skilled occupations, and there is no established tradition of local people gaining further or higher education qualifications. Young people are involved in a significant amount of anti-social behaviour in the local community outside school hours, and older people suffer from significant ill health. As part of a drive to combat these two problems the school has recently sought and gained recognition as a specialist Sports College. In another bid to raise Gornal out of the lowest 10 per cent of wards in the country for education and skills, the governors have for many years maintained a fierce determination to offer access to sixth form education to as many local students as possible.

Pupils' attainment when they come to the school has been below average for four of the last five years. Students move on to sixth form courses having achieved standards well below those normally required. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school means is average, and so is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who use English as an additional language is very low. Pupil mobility is low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
30046	Ross Parker	Lead inspector	
12775	Judith Goodchild	Lay inspector	
30699	Arthur Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics
3958	Maureen Cawdron	Team inspector	English
20380	Neville Pinkey	Team inspector	Science
32774	Barry Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
15320	Arthur Penn	Team inspector	Art and design
3843	Graham Cooper	Team inspector	Design and technology
30978	Elizabeth White	Team inspector	Geography
10316	Norman Bertram	Team inspector	History
27082	Geoffrey Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; Citizenship
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Religious education; English as an additional language
3943	Don Innes	Team inspector	Special educational needs
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services

3 Harrowby Road,
West Park,
Leeds

LS16 5HN

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	23
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	25
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	52

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Ellowes Hall School provides a **satisfactory** standard of education. It has halted the decline which was seen in the last two years and there are clear signs of improvement. It supports **satisfactory** achievement and personal development, and provides **satisfactory** value for money. Pupils come to the school with knowledge and skills which are below average. The secure and supportive school environment, together with recent developments in behaviour management and teaching, is now promoting average standards in a majority of subjects. The sixth form is inadequate because it does not provide a suitable curriculum for all of the students who are recruited.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good quality of teaching and learning, since poor behaviour has been effectively tackled, is already promoting good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- The learning ethos is good, built on the good support for pupils and students, their good attitudes, the good relationships across the school, and the positive influence of Sports College status
- The good leadership of the head teacher has won the respect of pupils, students and staff.
- Unsatisfactory governance and leadership of the sixth form have not identified the unsatisfactory guidance which leads to inappropriate recruitment; nor has it devised an appropriate curriculum
- Recent rapid improvements have been effective, but reactive, and not based on a strategic plan where progress can be monitored effectively.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils and students to develop independence, and the highest attaining pupils are not given suitable challenges in every lesson.
- Standards are too low in science, modern foreign languages, geography, history and religious education.
- Spiritual development is unsatisfactory, particularly because tutor periods are not used consistently to provide the daily act of collective worship.

Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Results dipped seriously in 2003 and 2004, when behaviour also declined. Improvement in the range of teaching strategies and resources are now beginning to show results. Curriculum issues raised in the report were dealt with, but the curriculum is still unsatisfactory. Though governors' responsibilities have been more closely defined, they have not been effective in monitoring and developing sixth form provision, where improvement has been unsatisfactory.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that this school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses. These are in: the match of the curriculum to students' needs; the guidance that leads students onto unsuitable courses leading to poor completion rates for these students; and the leadership and management of the provision for students over compulsory age.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Years 9 were average, but results in GCSE examinations were well below average for the second consecutive year. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are currently **average** across all years. Achievement is now **good**

in Years 7 to 9. Standards are well above average in design and technology, but remain below average in science, history and geography.

Achievement is **satisfactory** in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are still making up ground lost as a result of staffing difficulties and a decline in behaviour in recent years. By the end of Year 11 standards are **average** overall. English and mathematics are amongst the majority of subjects where standards are average, though they are still below average in science, history and geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. In design and technology they are above average, and well above average in music. Recent under-achievement in science has been turned round though achievement remains unsatisfactory in geography and modern foreign languages. Overall there has been no consistent pattern to the difference in performance between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Standards seen in the sixth form during the inspection were below average overall, though they were average in chemistry and art among the subjects inspected in detail. Achievement is currently at least satisfactory in all the subjects seen except psychology, and is good in English, chemistry and five of the sampled subjects. Results at AS and A-level have been well below average in recent years, though achievement has been satisfactory. Students have been accepted onto A-level courses with lower grades at GCSE than is usually the case, as part of the school's commitment to inclusion. Though they are often able to appreciate ideas and concepts when they have the support of a teacher, they have not been able to translate this into examination success.

Pupils' personal development is **satisfactory**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**. There is a significant minority of pupils whose behaviour threatens to cause difficulty in some lessons, but they are well managed and the overwhelming majority show good attitudes. Behaviour is **satisfactory**. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall. Pupils develop good moral and social awareness. Cultural awareness is satisfactory, but spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching is **good**. It is predominantly energetic, well planned and built on good relationships. The good behaviour management has overcome recent disruption to support **good** learning for the majority of pupils, including those with special needs. Assessment is thorough though there is further scope to use data to raise and sustain achievement. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The school has developed a range of vocational courses to match the interests of a wider range of students. There is a good selection of extra-curricular activities, with a very good range of sporting activities. However, citizenship and careers education do not meet statutory requirements, and the time-table arrangements are restricting achievement in English, modern foreign languages and geography. Overall support and guidance for pupils are **good**, as are links with parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The headteacher provides **good** leadership. With keen support from governors and other key staff he has accurately identified the most urgent priorities for improvement. Management is **satisfactory**, with a number of recently appointed but already influential subject leaders working closely with the recently formed leadership team. However, the school does not provide religious education in the sixth form, or a daily act of collective worship for all students. The full National Curriculum is not provided in citizenship, and careers education does not meet requirements.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

There is a good partnership with parents the great majority of whom are well satisfied with the school. The great majority of pupils are loyal and very appreciative of what the school is offering them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Link future developments to a strategic development plan based on a thorough evaluation of provision.
- Raise standards in Years 10 and 11 by spreading the good teaching approaches seen particularly in mathematics, English and design and technology.
- Provide more support for pupils' spiritual awareness.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils and students to develop independence, and for higher attainers to have more consistent access to suitably challenging tasks.

And in the sixth form:

- Provide a curriculum which is more closely matched to the needs of students
- Provide better advice to students joining the sixth form.
- Ensure a greater focus by managers on the work of the sixth form.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Provide religious education for sixth form students.
- Ensure that teachers give sufficient emphasis to citizenship in Year 9, and assess and report on citizenship at the end of Year 9 and 11.
- Provide careers education in Years 7 and 8.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE ELLOWES HALL SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Despite good teaching and learning and students' very positive attitudes, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **inadequate** and improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. It plays an important role in the community it serves and provides good opportunities for many of its students to gain maturity and to progress to higher education and employment from a secure local environment. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the needs of a minority of the students who are recruited. Because the sixth form provides for a small number of students, the school has to allocate additional funds to cover the costs, so its cost effectiveness is **unsatisfactory**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good and students learn well when they are on courses which are suited to their needs.
- Too many students are badly advised to embark on unsuitable courses. Consequently retention rates for some courses are poor, results are lower than might be expected, and the provision is not cost effective.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not provide adequately for students who have not achieved higher grade passes at GCSE.
- Students like the school and appreciate the attention and support that staff provide.
- The sixth form meets a distinct local need within a community which is insular and does not have a widely established tradition of learning.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory because the limits to the curriculum and consequent poor retention rates have not been effectively overcome.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that this school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses. These are in: the match of the curriculum to students' needs; the guidance that leads students onto unsuitable courses leading to poor completion rates for these students; and the leadership and management of the provision for students over compulsory age.

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 literature is good , as are levels of achievement. Standards are below average but students in Year 12 are coming to terms with the increasing challenge of A-level. Students in Year 13 are benefiting from the skilled questioning and variety of learning approaches which have made them confident and articulate in discussion. They know their texts well, and are beginning to develop an independent viewpoint.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . Whilst good teaching supports the more competent students to achieve well, too many students are recruited to the course without the depth of knowledge and experience necessary. They lack the independent learning skills to compensate for this themselves. Consequently teachers need to constantly check that students are coping with new concepts, and this slows the pace of learning.
Science: chemistry	Provision in chemistry is good . Although students' attainment when they start the course is below average, they are highly motivated and teachers support them well. As a result standards are average and achievement is good in Year 12. In Year 13 students find the work far more challenging and achievement is only satisfactory.

Visual and performing arts
and media: art and design

Provision is **satisfactory** in AS and A-level art and design. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Some students have well-developed independent research skills that include the use of ICT. Drawing and media exploration need greater challenge and course planning needs to ensure that skills are deepened over the two years.

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'.

Twelve additional lessons were sampled, together with students' work in different subjects across Years 12 and 13. Standards were average overall. In three-quarters of the lessons good teaching was supporting good achievement, even though some groups were very small. Unsatisfactory achievement was seen in psychology where students are taught entirely via a video link. In history and sociology significant numbers of students had gained no qualifications from the course.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The guidance to students before they embark on courses is **unsatisfactory**. Though intended to be inclusive, this leads to some students dropping out of courses, failing examinations and a loss of self-esteem. However, tutors know students very well and provide good support and encouragement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is **unsatisfactory** and improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Though relationships are very good and there is mutual respect between tutors and students, the courses are not meeting students' needs. Management is **unsatisfactory**. Routine monitoring has not identified students who have not been making sufficient progress, and the school has not done enough to improve the range of courses available.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy their life in the sixth form and find it rewarding. They show a positive and responsible attitude towards their studies and contribute effectively to the life of the school. They particularly value the very good relationships they have with staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are **average** overall. Achievement is **good** overall in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is **satisfactory** overall.

Standards are average in English and mathematics in the main school. In the sixth form they are below average in English and well below average in mathematics.

Standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are sufficient to enable students to make progress in all areas of the curriculum, and they are good in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 9 are improving steadily.
- Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were well below average, undermined by staffing issues and flaws in teaching in a small minority of subjects.
- Standards are not high enough in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.1 (31.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.3 (33.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	31.8 (31.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 196 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Over the past five years pupils have come to the school with standards below the national average. Only the current Year 8 have previously reached average standards. One fifth of pupils in Years 7 to 9 came to the school with significant reading difficulties. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average.
2. In the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 standards in all three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) were below average. Compared with schools with similar results at the end of Year 6 mathematics results were average, English results were above average and science results were below average. In 2004 mathematics and English were average, and better than the results in similar schools, though science results remained below average. Overall the trend of improvement over the last three years has been better than the national trend in both English and mathematics, and similar in science. Overall there has been no consistent pattern to the difference between boys' and girls' results.
3. Work seen during the inspection shows that pupils are achieving well from their standards when they came to the school. Standards are now above average in design and technology. They are average in all other subjects except science, geography and history. Inspection evidence shows that standards in history and geography were well below average at the start of Year 7.

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	33 (40)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	27.6 (32.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 192 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In the 2003 GCSE examinations results were well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who gained five or more passes at C grade was below the average for schools whose pupils had achieved similar results at the end of Year 9. The proportion of pupils who achieved some GCSE passes was the same as that in similar schools. Results were very similar in 2004. There were two clear reasons for this. Results in science were poor. Too many classes were taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers, and behaviour declined to an unacceptable level. Pupils who did behave well in these groups were unable to make adequate progress. In addition, in 2004 results in English literature fell well below the average standards achieved over the previous four years because of staffing instability. In 2003 flaws in dealing with new examination syllabi caused results in history to dip sharply for one year and in 2004 similar flaws in ICT teaching also contributed to the problem. The school's analysis of the examination results shows that without these factors, standards would have remained just below average as they had been for several years.
5. Work seen during the inspection shows that strategies to improve behaviour and achievement are working. Standards remain below average in science, where pupils' earlier learning has been disrupted by two years of staffing difficulties. They remain below average in history and geography, partly because the most competent pupils tend to opt for different subjects in Years 10 and 11. They are also below average in religious education. Otherwise standards are now average, and are well above average in music.
6. Achievement is at least satisfactory in every subject except modern foreign languages, and in the majority of subjects, including mathematics, achievement is currently good.
7. Pupils identified as having educational needs requiring additional support make good progress so that the level of support needed for some can be reduced or removed. In 2004, pupils still on the register gained an average of almost seven GCSE passes and all exceeded reasonable expectations based on assessment of their attainment on entry to the school. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11, alongside their peers. This is because most of them know enough English to cope with the demands of the curriculum, and experience the same aids and barriers as other pupils. Pupils who enter the school at different ages with little or no English achieve well in acquiring a basic understanding of the language and in expressing themselves with reasonable clarity in speech and writing. This is because they have positive attitudes to learning and benefit from effective help from house tutors, subject teachers and support staff, and also their fellow pupils. No specific register of gifted or talented pupils exists, so their achievement is not separately monitored.

Sixth form

Standards are below average overall, and achievement is satisfactory in the courses inspected in detail. In examinations over recent years standards have been well below average principally because students do not have the independent study skills to progress from moderate GCSE grades to success at AS or advanced level. Evidence seen during the inspection shows that the majority of students achieved satisfactorily in these examinations, though too many students left courses before taking the examination.

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	57.6 (82)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	10.4 (6.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	145.9 (167.1)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

8. Results in A, AS, and VCE examinations in 2003 were well below average. This is partly explained by the school's policy of allowing students to take a sixth form course with lower grades at GCSE than is the case in the great majority of schools. This reflects a determination to allow as many students as possible to continue their studies in a familiar environment, even though the most appropriate lower level courses were not available.
9. Small numbers make it impossible to compare individual subject results with national averages. There is no consistent pattern of success or failure across individual subjects. At least one student has reached the higher grades in English in each of the last three years. Half of the subjects offered have enabled some students to reach the highest grades over the last three years. Evidence from the inspection shows that students find it more difficult to maintain the progress they make at the start of Year 12 through to advanced level examinations in Year 13. A number of weaknesses were identified which contribute to this difficulty. Students find it hard to translate their ability to talk about concepts they have grasped into formal written answers. They take longer than the average sixth form student to master the more complex concepts involved in advanced level work. They have not read as widely as more competent students, so lack the breadth of knowledge to make the comparisons and predictions which are crucial higher level skills. They find recall of concepts and information from Year 12 difficult because they lack the independent learning skills to consolidate their initial understanding when they are working alone, outside lessons. Their lack of independent learning skills also restricts their ability to organise what they have been taught in class, and apply it in unpredictable examination questions. Based on this evidence the majority of students achieve as well as they are able to in examinations.
10. In the four subjects inspected in detail achievement is currently satisfactory overall. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are below average though achievement is good in English. The average standards in chemistry also represent good achievement for these students. Achievement is satisfactory in art. In mathematics standards are well below average and achievement is satisfactory. Progress is slower than usual because students require a good deal of teacher input and lack the experience to study independently.

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

The attitudes of pupils are **good**. The behaviour of pupils is **satisfactory**. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is **satisfactory**. The attendance of pupils is **satisfactory** and

punctuality is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are raised through Sports College status and leadership awards in Year 11.
- The improvements in behaviour within the school are having a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- The attitudes of pupils towards their studies and the school are good.
- Attendance levels have risen significantly over the last year.
- Pupils' independent learning skills are underdeveloped.
- The spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient attention is given to preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society.

Commentary

11. Since the appointment of the head teacher there has been a significant improvement in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils. This has begun to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem and contributes significantly to their attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are proud of belonging to a specialist Sports College. Many pupils do not always see the value of gaining educational qualifications because there are many employment opportunities and the need to gain qualifications is not always high on their agenda. Teachers have to work hard to engage some pupils' attention in lessons and enthuse in them a desire to learn. Independent learning skills have not been consistently developed in the past and many pupils are dependent on teachers in lessons rather than taking the initiative. When stimulated by lively and interesting teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes very good. They become interested in their studies and are able to sustain their concentration well. Where teaching is less effective, and pupils' interest is allowed to deteriorate, a minority demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm for their work with the consequent lack of progress in learning during the lesson.
12. The behaviour of the great majority of pupils is satisfactory. It falls short of being good because it is currently dependent on teachers controlling it. Parents expressed concern about the standard of behaviour within the school, and both pupils and teachers acknowledge that there were difficulties up until the start of the autumn term. The new behaviour regimes are effective and behaviour in lessons is generally good. Unsupervised behaviour outside of lessons was often boisterous, particularly between lessons, and pupils arrived at some lessons in a 'high state' and time was wasted from the start of the lesson settling them down. Pupils state that the standard of behaviour has improved since the head teacher came into post. They have a great respect for him because they know that unsatisfactory behaviour will be dealt with. Relationships between pupils are good and the arrangement in tutor groups, where older pupils automatically support younger ones, contributes significantly to this. Year 9 pupils mentor Year 7 to ensure they understand what the school requires of them. The house system also fosters a sense of belonging and team spirit. All pupils report that bullying is not an issue in this school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1042	133	3
White – Irish	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12		
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6		
Black or Black British – African	2		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	3		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

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

13. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is high. Three pupils have been permanently excluded this term. The high number of exclusions this term is partly due to the raising of the standard of acceptable behaviour within the school. Pupils who have been transferred into the school for a 'fresh start', considered at risk of exclusion at other schools, accounted for several of the exclusions. Currently the school has no procedures to internally exclude pupils so that their learning is not disrupted. Lack of accommodation prevents the well-qualified and experienced learning support staff undertaking early intervention work with some pupils who are experiencing difficulties in managing their behaviour.

14. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall. It is not consistently planned for in all subjects and opportunities are missed to reinforce this aspect of pupils' education. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The religious education syllabus, and teaching, provides good opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. Opportunities do exist in other subjects but they are not highlighted to raise pupils' awareness. The moral and social development of pupils is good. Pupils are well aware of right and wrong actions and most have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school community by acting as mentors and prefects. Members of staff appoint prefects. The school council is undeveloped as a forum for the expression of pupils' views and to involve them in future developments affecting the school community. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They are aware of their own cultural heritage but less so of those that differ from their own. Whilst some subjects such as religious education, English and art have a well-planned element of multicultural education in lessons, other subjects have not approached this in a systematic way. The 'Thought for the Day' in morning tutorial sessions is addressed inconsistently. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.8	School data	0.8
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.

15. The attendance of pupils is satisfactory. Attendance in the year 2002/03 was below the national average for all schools. Attendance for the last academic year was reported as above the national average for all schools. This represents a significant improvement in the standard of attendance. Good procedures to monitor and improve attendance were introduced last year by the appointment of a student support officer who worked in partnership with the education welfare service. However, there are still a significant number of pupils with attendance levels below 90 per cent and there are no pro-active early intervention strategies in place to identify and support these pupils. Punctuality to school and lessons is satisfactory.

Sixth form

16. The attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are very good. They are very happy with the way the school provides for them. In particular they comment positively on the benefits of small groups where teachers know them very well, and the high level of personal support which is available. Most show a positive and responsible attitude towards their studies. Their very good personal development is seen in their increasing self-confidence, and their involvement in the life of the school. Several students have volunteered to act as mentors to younger pupils within the school and listen to them read. Some students have trained to become Junior Sports Leaders and work with primary schools as well as junior sports teams within the school. The attendance and punctuality of sixth form students are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is thorough, but data is not yet used to full effect to raise and sustain achievement. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school provides a satisfactory level of care. Links with parents are good, and there are satisfactory links with other schools and good links with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good behaviour management allows pupils to concentrate on learning.
- Pupils have confidence in their teachers.
- In some lessons teachers keep too much control over pupils' learning.
- Teachers and support assistants work together well, but some written targets for pupils with special educational needs are not clear enough.
- Pupils' independent learning skills are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 134 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (3%)	31(23%)	60 (45%)	35 (26%)	4 (3%)	0	0

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

17. Teaching is good overall. It is strongest in subjects like English and mathematics where teachers exploit good practice identified in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy¹.
18. Recent action by the new head teacher and leadership team has been effective in curbing some unruly behaviour. In addition there are more specialist teachers, especially in science. As a result teachers have been freed to teach, with minimal time being spent managing difficult behaviour. Pupils have been freed to learn, without disruption from their peers.
19. Teachers' good subject knowledge and very careful planning build pupils' confidence. In the best lessons a wide range of activities ensures that different learning styles are catered for, maintains motivation, and keeps pupils active. One of the features of weaker lessons is that teachers talk for too long, unaware of pupils' drifting attention.
20. With the freedom from active disruption, teachers are able to pass their enthusiasm on to pupils. Good relationships and humour are also infectious in the best lessons. High expectations are a feature in most subjects, though in science the most competent pupils are more seriously challenged in Years 10 and 11 than they are lower down the school. Often the challenge is created through high quality questioning. Here again in the weaker lessons teachers keep too much control. They either provide too many answers themselves, or allow too little time for discussion. Consequently pupils do not have enough opportunity to explore ideas or to develop their understanding of concepts. In most lessons, teachers ensure that different levels of ability within their classes including both the highest and the lowest attainers are appropriately challenged and supported. However, there are inconsistencies between departments and between teachers within the same department.
21. Teachers use resources well, many of them very carefully prepared. Computer presentations frequently capture pupils' attention, or regain it when momentum has slowed.
22. In some lessons a small number of pupils show their inclination to disrupt as they have done in the past. Experienced teachers manage this well, and maintain the pace of learning for other pupils. Even the least experienced are clearly developing more effective ways of managing this obstacle.
23. Teachers have good information about pupils' difficulties and needs, and advice on possible ways of helping them to achieve targets set in their individual education plans. Some targets are too vaguely expressed to be helpful to teachers or pupils because progress towards them cannot be measured. Even so, teachers make good use of the information they have and generally set appropriate tasks and provide effective help. In this, they are ably helped by a very good team of learning support assistants. Support assistants are also successful when

¹ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects (all subjects apart from the core subjects and RE) as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

teaching small groups needing extra help with reading and writing and recording progress made when pupils use the integrated learning system to improve skills of language and mathematics. Volunteers from the community and students in the sixth form help pupils to improve by listening to their reading.

24. Learning is also good. In almost every lesson pupils learn what is expected, and in most lessons they learn well, held back only by their reliance on teachers. Their attitudes are good and most pupils work hard through most of every lesson. There are many examples of pupils working together effectively: the more competent pupils help others with their work; pupils use discussion to develop better understanding; or they move around the room to sample other people's ideas.

Assessment

25. Marking and assessment are good in the majority of subjects. Most teachers mark written work regularly and give pupils clear guidance about how they can improve. In English they use a good range of techniques. In mathematics and science, teachers check continuously to ensure that pupils understand the new ideas that they are discussing. In art, pupils can use work that has already been marked to evaluate their own efforts and set themselves targets.
26. Across the school assessment data is collected regularly and fed to form tutors so that they can check how well their pupils are doing across all of their subjects. This system is relatively new, and some recently appointed tutors have yet to be trained to make the best use of the data. However, heads of house are now providing effective management so that feedback to pupils and parents will be increasingly useful.
27. Less well developed is the assessment of each individual pupil's progress from lesson to lesson. Too few teachers are asking themselves whether every pupil achieved as well as he or she could in the lesson, and whether they could change the next lesson to make it more challenging or more accessible. The school recognises this and has organised training in the new year to build on the good practice that already exists in English, mathematics and science.

Sixth form

28. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and supports good learning. Teachers show a good range of skills to meet the diverse needs of students who are recruited. They support students to develop their understanding of important concepts, and to apply these in different situations when they are supported either by the teacher or by their peers. The fact that many students are recruited with lower GCSE grades than is normally the case means that their often good achievement in lessons is frequently not translated into examination success because they lack the independent learning skills to do it by themselves. There is a good range of strategies which promotes a highly enthusiastic response in English. In mathematics the limited experience of many students who are recruited to the course means that teachers need to take too much responsibility, and students do not have the skills to explore the wider application of the concepts they have learned. In science the informal teaching style demands a high level of student participation. In art, teaching is satisfactory though there is a need to provide students with greater challenge with more exciting stimuli in order to give students access to the higher grades.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The school provides a good range of vocational courses as well as traditional subjects at GCSE. However, provision for citizenship and careers education does not meet statutory requirements. There are significant weaknesses in the sixth form curriculum, with too

few appropriate courses for the lower attaining students who are recruited. Enrichment opportunities are good. The school's resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some statutory requirements are not yet in place.
- The sixth form curriculum does not meet students' needs.
- There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to study and participate in activities outside the school day.
- The good match of specialist teachers and support staff to the curriculum provides good learning opportunities for all pupils.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation in the main school is unsatisfactory for a Sports College.
- Sports College status is having a significant positive impact on the curriculum.
- Time-table arrangements have exacerbated underachievement in modern foreign languages.
- Learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are good because of the assistance provided by the support staff.

Commentary

29. In the main school the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. In Years 10 and 11 pupils can choose from a good range of GCSE and GCSE vocational subjects. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 now study at least one work related GCSE subject. In Year 10 all pupils have the opportunity to take part in work experience. Arrangements have been made to accommodate some pupils in flexible learning opportunities through extended work experience and attendance at local colleges. Work-related learning is well managed and providing additional learning opportunities for pupils. Careers education and guidance are good for Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form with good support from the Connexions partnership. However, careers education is not taught in Years 7 and 8. Personal, social and health education, incorporating citizenship, is taught in Years 7 and 8, and in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9 responsibility for teaching different topics is delegated to different subjects, and this arrangement is currently unsatisfactory. Issues are not always explicitly identified when they arise, even though a whole-school plan expects that they will be. Here, and in failing to assess and report on citizenship at the end of Years 9 and 11, the school fails to meet statutory requirements.
30. In an effort to satisfy the option choices of all pupils when they start Year 10 the school operates a policy of designing a fresh timetable each year. This and the drive to introduce more work-related options have caused problems in modern foreign languages which were not anticipated, or effectively managed. This in part has exacerbated unsatisfactory achievement. On the other hand very good additional opportunities for pupils to study extra courses such as applied ICT and critical thinking are provided in twilight sessions after school and on Friday afternoons. From Christmas each year these sessions provide two hours of additional revision classes for pupils in Year 11.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum because teachers know their difficulties and support their progress. Pupils benefit from being taught in smaller groups than usual which helps both their learning and the growth of confidence. The provision of learning support assistants is good, and they are well deployed and used effectively in class. Withdrawal for specialist help with basic skills in Years 7 to 9 quickens progress. In Years 10 and 11, pupils for whom a full range of GCSE courses would be inappropriate can choose to do work-related courses at a local college or to reduce the number of courses so time is available for extra help in organising coursework.
32. Provision for talented and gifted pupils is at a very early stage of development. It falls short of that made in many other schools and is unsatisfactory. Criteria to be met for inclusion on a special register have not yet been fully agreed. No agreement has been reached on ways of

enriching the experience of such pupils or monitoring their development. Those with special talents in sport and performing arts are well provided for within the school and by links with local clubs and organisations. Higher attainers in mathematics take GCSE in Year 10 and then begin the advanced subsidiary course. In each of the last two years, pupils have made visits to universities to encourage them to think about higher education. There are opportunities to take part in performances of music and drama, working in the community or with helping younger pupils to develop their reading, which enrich experience and develop skills and confidence. Although valuable in themselves, the range of these experiences is too narrow to achieve the school's aim to increase knowledge, raise awareness of opportunities and encourage aspiration

33. The school has been awarded Sports College status and this is making a significant contribution to the curriculum and enrichment opportunities for all pupils. All year groups are provided with a wide range of choice in physical education, and extra-curricular opportunities are very good. The large number of accredited options in Years 10 and 11 allow every pupil to choose a course leading to a qualification. Senior pupils can then coach younger pupils. Staff also make additional time available so that talented dancers can take a GCSE examination in Year 9.
34. The match of staffing to the curriculum is good. The school now has an almost full complement of suitably qualified teachers, and has overcome the severe difficulties of the previous two years over recruitment and the constant changing of supply teachers. In science, which was particularly affected, there is now a good balance of specialism. However, in religious education, the use of non-specialists in crucial courses is adversely affecting achievement. The programme for induction of newly qualified teachers and those new to the school is good, being particularly strong on behaviour management.
35. In view of the school's status as a Sports College, the sports accommodation is cramped, and prevents the playing of a full, recognisable version of games such as badminton and volleyball. This undermines the mission to build pupils' self-esteem. In design and technology, the inadequate accommodation for food is restricting the delivery of the curriculum. In response to the key issue in the previous report, the standard of cleanliness of the gymnasium, changing rooms and swimming pool has been improved and maintained. The accommodation for learning support is inadequate and has to be used for too many purposes: as a work room and office for staff, for teaching or as a haven for pupils experiencing personal problems which they cannot cope with in lessons. Despite much good will, there are too many disruptions.
36. The school's resources overall are satisfactory. The key issue over the library and insufficient computers raised in the previous report has been successfully addressed, and facilities are now very good.
37. A very good selection of extra-curricular activities is available to enrich all pupils' learning experiences. There are a significant number of after-school and lunchtime activities. Good examples are found in music, art, and in particular, physical education where participation is high.
38. The curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory in the previous report. Efforts to rectify this have brought different problems, and improvement in this area has been unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

39. The sixth form curriculum is unsatisfactory. Post-16 students are offered a wide range of subjects leading to accreditation at AVCE, and GCE AS and A levels, including all three sciences. However, there are too few courses in the sixth form which match the interests and

abilities of students for who have found GCSE courses difficult, and too many students are recruited onto inappropriate courses.

40. Statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not being met although plans are now being drawn up to ensure adequate provision. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs in the main school is not continued into the sixth form. Students with special needs who are recruited onto sixth form courses are not formally monitored and the support is unsatisfactory. There is a good range of enrichment activities, predominantly sporting, available for sixth form students.
41. Accommodation for the sixth form is self-contained, and offers good opportunities for working, using ICT and socialising. Despite having no toilet facilities it is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is **satisfactory**. The support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, pupils receive are **good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements for pupils coming into the school are very good.
- The mixed-age tutor groups provide good support for pupils.
- The learning support unit gives very good support to pupils.
- Systems to identify pupils whose attendance is declining are not rigorous enough.
- The guidance given to pupils about subject choice when entering the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

42. Tutors are the learning managers for pupils. They have the responsibility for overseeing the attendance and personal and academic progress of their tutor group. There is still a significant number of pupils whose attendance is below 90 per cent and the systems for identifying these and putting in place early intervention strategies are not rigorous enough. The vertical grouping system ensures there is a continuity of care for pupils from Years 7 to 11. These 'family units' have many benefits for pupils and give them a sense of security, particularly when they first join the school. Pupils are confident they can approach staff for help with either personal or academic problems. The very good week's induction programme that the school has invested in ensures that pupils are settled and ready to start academic work in September. It also allows the school to identify any potential problems and put in place support strategies. Very good support is given to pupils by the learning support unit. Lack of suitable accommodation restricts the range of options the unit is able to offer. Academic progress checks each term helps tutors identify pupils who are underachieving. Tutors meet with parents and pupils to discuss progress and set targets to raise the level pupils are currently working at. Revision classes prepare pupils well for external examinations.
43. Although careers education is not provided as it should be in Years 7 and 8, careers guidance is satisfactory. There are good links with Connexions personal advisors who work with the school. Pupils interviewed in Year 10 felt that they had enough information about GCSE courses before they selected them. A small number of pupils in Year 9 are accurately identified as needing alternative curriculum arrangements in Years 10 and 11. These pupils are currently benefiting from attending colleges of further education to study a range of vocational courses, some linked with extended work placements. Students appreciate the personal support and guidance which is available in such a small sixth form. However, subject guidance for post-16 choices in the sixth form is unsatisfactory for significant number of students who are following inappropriate courses.

44. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. The school has successfully addressed concerns raised at the previous inspection. Child protection procedures are fully in place.
45. The school is trying to involve pupils more in its daily life and to provide a more effective forum for their views to be expressed. This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. An increasing role is being developed for the school council but it is still early days. Their peers elect representatives. Prefects are appointed by staff and support them in the daily running of the school.
46. The school meets the expectations of the special educational needs Code of Practice better than at the time of the previous report. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified through information provided by primary schools and the results of national and other tests, together with concerns of teachers and parents. Progress is reviewed at appropriate intervals with the participation of parents and pupils. Transition plans are established to help pupils into the next stage of their education, training or employment. Individual education plans are in place which are well designed to inform teachers of needs and suggested means of help without making excessive demands upon them. However, some written targets are not clear enough for progress to be effectively measured.

Sixth form

47. Students in the sixth form felt that their induction into the sixth form had been good. They were very happy with the high level of support they receive from staff for their studies and with their application to university. Assessment profiles are produced each term by subject staff and used in tutorials with students to track progress and to identify any potential problems. The advice and guidance lower attaining students receive when selecting subjects to study at A-level are unsatisfactory. Students are studying subjects at A-level that are inappropriate for their prior attainment. This leads to a number of students dropping out of courses, to failing to attain a grade in external examinations and, perhaps most importantly, to a loss of confidence and self-esteem. The sixth form council organises social events and is a route for students to express any concerns they may have.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is **good**. The quality of the school's links with the community is **good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links through the Sports College programme are helping to raise standards in other schools.
- There are good links with primary feeder schools.
- The good partnership with parents supports pupils' learning.
- Curriculum bridging links are not fully in place to ease the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school.
- Links with other sixth forms are underdeveloped.

Commentary

48. The school's partnership with its parents is good. There is a commitment by the school to continue to improve its links with parents. Annual consultation meetings are held for all parents to discuss the progress of their child with tutors. Some parents felt that not all tutors knew their child. Staff turnover over the last two years has been quite high and this could be a contributory factor to their concerns. Tutors are the learning managers for their group and the first point of contact for parents. A few parents felt that it was not easy to communicate with the school. The school has effective systems in place to deal with telephone calls and pass messages on to tutors. Annual reports to parents are clear and give a clear understanding of

what their child has studied and how they are achieving. Targets are identified to help pupils improve their work. The school is committed to establishing partnerships with parents if problems occur and parents are asked to arrange interviews with staff to devise a support plan. A behaviour panel involves governors and parents in looking at ways to improve the behaviour and attitudes of some pupils who are at risk of exclusion.

49. The quality of the school's links with the community is good. The school benefits from effective links with local business and industry. These provide a source of sponsorship and for placements that give pupils experience of the world of work. Community police officers are based in the school one day a week and help to make links between the school and its community. There is good use of the swimming pool and, under its Sports College status, links with the community are being further extended. However, the lack of up-to-date sports facilities impedes this aspect of the school's work. The cross-country track is being modified so that the community can use it for walking and cycling as well as running. The school has run an Information Technology Course successfully for several years for the community. Students in the sixth form taking part in the Step in Sport initiative undertake to do 50 hours a year voluntary work each year in external sports clubs.
50. The partnership with other schools and colleges is satisfactory. There are close, consultative, working relationships with primary schools. The mechanisms for the transfer of pupils into school are very good and pupils and parents value the week-long induction course. The English department use curriculum bridging units to support the continuity and progression in pupils' learning, though teachers from some departments visit primary schools. However, this practice is not sufficiently developed. Links with other post-16 providers are underdeveloped and restrict the range of courses that can be offered to students. The school has a good working partnership with Wolverhampton University.
51. Under its Sports College brief physical education staff are working with teachers in other schools to develop their skills and schemes of work through the sports co-ordinator scheme. The first phase, which has just come on line this September, is working well with 18 primary schools, four secondary schools, and three special schools. The school has not succeeded in developing links with local schools or colleges which would broaden the range of sixth form courses to meet the needs of all students who are currently recruited.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the head teacher is good. Leadership of other key staff and management are satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed head teacher is making good use of his well-established understanding of the school to improve the climate for learning.
- The new leadership group work well as a team, are well motivated and are starting to be effective.
- The governors have good understanding of the school and its role within the community but have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met.
- Staff development and good use of internal and outside expertise show commitment to improving provision and raising standards.
- The school development plan does not identify success criteria which can be measured.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to develop consistency of approach are not yet securely established.

Commentary

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,546,484	Balance from previous year	321,599
Total expenditure	3,609,298	Balance carried forward to the next	258,785
Expenditure per pupil	3299		

52. The leadership of the newly appointed head teacher is good. He has clear vision which informs judgements about immediate and future needs. Improved behaviour of pupils is already contributing to better learning. Responsibilities for meeting whole-school needs are now delegated more widely to help the school progress on a broad front. The head teacher receives good support from a largely newly appointed leadership team. This team contributed significantly, for example, to the achievement of Sports College status. The school has a positive ethos and a strong sense of shared purpose. Some developments are progressing less well than others. Planning and extension of provision to extend the learning of the most able are behind that seen in most schools.
53. Management is satisfactory. The engagement of widely experienced consultants, including some with expertise in public examinations, has enabled the school to identify quickly what it needs to do to develop strengths and improve weaknesses. This is a sensible strategy for developing a broad perspective given that the management team has comparatively little recent experience in other schools. Most roles have been allocated too recently for precise measurement of their impact on progress.
54. Monitoring of lesson planning and scrutiny of pupils' written work have been established to monitor aspects of learning. These good procedures are not yet consistently used at departmental level. However, there are some departments, for example design and technology, music and physical education, where pupils' progress is monitored with rigour.
55. The development plan is a useful guide to needs in a range of areas. Though adequate as an instant analysis of priorities it is unsatisfactory and requires a sharpening of focus. Currently it only identifies issues to be addressed and does not include clear and measurable success criteria. As a result it is not possible for the school to monitor its progress and improvement effectively.
56. Leadership and management in subject areas are variable but overall are good and in some subjects are very good. In design and technology leadership is excellent.
57. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. A very good team of well-trained learning support assistants is used effectively and contributes well to pupils' learning.
58. Performance management is on target, records are thorough, and systems for managing and supporting weak teaching are clear. There have been successful systems for bringing about improvements in subjects, for example in science, where performance had fallen short of best practice. This helps the school's aims for improved standards to be translated into practice.
59. Financial planning is now satisfactory. This is an improvement on the situation reported at the previous inspection. There are effective systems for financial control. The school receives broadly average funding which it uses prudently, placing specific focus on the spending allocated to learning support assistants. This has resulted in high quality support given to pupils with special educational needs. Reserves held back in the last financial year were

higher than normal. This was to match external funding to build improved accommodation to meet the needs of disengaged pupils, but the project has not yet materialised. Despite subsidising the sixth form by approximately 6 per cent, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

60. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The committee structure enables clear focus on aspects of the school to inform discussion at full meetings. Governors have good general understanding of the school and its strengths and weaknesses. Links with curriculum areas are being strengthened. Strong and energetic leadership by the chairman of governors has produced a clearer sense of purpose and fuller participation in school management than were evident at the time of the previous report. However, statutory requirements for the provision of citizenship or careers education for pupils aged 11 to 16 are not yet in place. The school does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship or religious education for sixth form students, and the range of courses provided in the sixth form is inappropriate to the needs of some students.

Sixth form

Leadership, management and governance of the sixth form are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attempts to provide an inclusive facility for the local community have resulted in students being recruited to inappropriate courses.
- Monitoring has not been rigorous enough to identify students' underachievement.
- Action to improve the provision has been ineffective.

Commentary

61. Until recently, the sixth form had not had focused attention from the leadership and governors, and improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Governors have been fiercely determined to maintain a sixth form because they rightly judge that many moderately competent students will not continue learning if they have to travel across the town to another school or college. Consequently they have accepted students onto level 3 (advanced level) courses for which they were not suitably qualified. The guidance offered to some of these students has been misleading, and has led to significant drop-out rates and underachievement. This situation has persisted now for several years. Monitoring of students' progress has not routinely alerted managers to these problems. Nor has the curriculum been developed to provide suitable level 1 (basic skills) or 2 (GCSE equivalent) courses to meet some students' needs. Governors and senior managers now recognise that the sixth form is not currently educationally or financially viable and has significant weaknesses. The necessary action is now being taken to deal with this. Currently approaches are being made to other schools in order to evaluate possible consortium arrangements. The sixth form is subsidised by approximately 6 per cent of funding from the main school. This is because there are very small numbers, often only one or two, studying some subjects and this means that the sixth form's cost effectiveness is unsatisfactory.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision for work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation and management of WRL are good.

- Work experience is well organised and provides beneficial links between school, commerce and industry.
- WRL is well integrated into Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Careers advice and guidance are good and make a valuable contribution to WRL in Years 10 and 11.
- A greater emphasis on developing skills through enterprise activities to promote problem solving and simulations is needed.
- Careers education does not meet requirements in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

62. WRL provision is well managed and has been carefully planned in accordance with national guidance. The provision is under regular review. WRL draws together aspects of business enterprise, work experience and curricular provision, particularly the range of vocational education subjects offered in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Enterprise activities are not yet sufficiently developed in all years so that pupils do not yet have enough experience of this area of work. Development is based on supporting the needs of all pupils.
63. A good range of vocational courses is offered in Years 10 and 11, and all pupils are required to study at least one of them. There is also a good range of vocational options in the sixth form. These subjects are amongst the most successful provided in the sixth form.
64. All subjects have identified curriculum strands, which support WRL. In applied science elements of the course are organised as a business and pupils can become 'employee of the month'. In history pupils are made aware of modern history and the changes in agriculture. They also study changes in social conditions and in medical provision. In geography the pupils study demographic trends and the impact on employment. In physical education pupils have the opportunity to become life saving coaches and to gain first aid certificates. In ICT planning is taking place to develop links with Cadbury World. Work experience for Year 10 pupils is very well organised. Pupils on work experience are given training on a range of skills relating to the compilation of CVs and mock interview techniques. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form receive good careers guidance from personal assistants linked to the Connexions support service. However, the statutory requirement to introduce careers into Years 7 to 9 has not yet been met.
65. The quality of teaching and learning on work-related courses is good, supported by pupils' and students' good attitudes. Teachers prepare lessons very thoroughly, and make good use of resources so that pupils are fully absorbed. Time is well used because teachers make good use of questioning and discussion to enable them to assess pupils' understanding, and to maintain a brisk pace.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching has helped to bring about improved standards and good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Good leadership has created an effective team of teachers.
- Results in the GCSE examinations are lower than they should be.
- There is some lack of rigour in monitoring the work of the department.

Commentary

66. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for pupils, who enter the school with standards in English that are below average. Results in the Year 9 tests have been rising steadily since 2001, when they were well below average. In 2003 the results were below average, although average compared with similar schools. Pupils performed better than they did in science, but not as well as in mathematics. The 2004 results show a considerably improved score: pupils exceeded the department's targets for level 5 and above. Pupils are articulate, contributing freely in lessons. Most have sound reading comprehension, while high attaining pupils show sensitive insights into literature. Their writing shows increasing fluency and developing analytical skills. Pupils generally reach higher standards in speaking, listening and reading than in writing. Many weaker pupils have poor presentation and make too many errors in basic spelling and punctuation. There is overall a lack of extended writing.
67. Current standards by the end of Year 11 are average. This is in contrast to the GCSE results in English and English literature in 2003, which were below average. The 2004 results in English were very close to those in 2003, but the GCSE English literature results showed a sharp drop. This is partly because a lack of effective monitoring meant that underachievement in a new syllabus was not properly identified as the department struggled with staffing difficulties. Many pupils produce lively original writing. They are beginning to develop their ideas in detail, showing an admirable persistence in redrafting to improve their standards. High attaining pupils provide a good level of critical response to set texts. Many improve in the fluency of their writing and in their ability to support comment with evidence. A significant proportion of pupils still make basic errors, however, and have difficulty in expressing their ideas coherently in writing.
68. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good by the end of Year 9. Many pupils are working at a level beyond that expected of them. This is mainly because measures put in place to implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy have improved the quality of learning. Teachers focus on planning, on sharing learning aims with pupils, and on devising a variety of activities to ensure progress in a lesson, including effective summaries which help to consolidate what has been learned. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. These pupils have not benefited from all of the significant improvements in teaching strategies which were introduced lower down the school when they were in Year 9. Additionally they have less time than is usual to study for two GCSE subjects. Though boys do not do as well as girls at GCSE, in line with the national trend, developments in teaching have helped them to achieve relatively better than girls in Years 7 to 9. Gifted and talented pupils achieve in line with their peers. Pupils with

special educational needs achieve well, mainly because of the effective specialist support they receive.

69. The quality of teaching is good overall, with many very good features that enable pupils to learn well. In the best lessons, teachers' very skilled questioning techniques enhance understanding and ensure that pupils think about the texts they are studying in greater depth. Most teachers' high expectations mean that the work is constantly challenging. Teachers manage their classes well, so that pupils' behaviour is good, while teachers' enthusiasm generates good relations and very positive attitudes from most pupils. The brisk pace of many lessons helps to create a productive working atmosphere. Marking is generally good, more so in Years 10 and 11, when it is more detailed. Pupils feel they know how they are doing and what to do to improve. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking, however, particularly in Years 7 to 9, when not all teachers follow the department's agreed procedures. Some marking is enthusiastic rather than analytical. When teaching is less effective, it is often because of weaknesses in planning and lesson focus. Not all teachers succeed in enabling pupils to reflect on what they have learned at the end of lessons. In some lessons, pupils' learning is restricted by a lack of variety in the activities suggested. There are limited opportunities for participation, particularly when the teacher talks in front of the class for most of the time.
70. Leadership is good. The head of department has a clear idea of the way the department should move forward, and is a very good role model, leading by example and enthusiasm. After a history of staffing problems, there is now a committed team of teachers. Management is satisfactory, with a capacity for honest self-review and good procedures in place for tracking achievement. Monitoring policies are sound, but there are some weaknesses in taking effective action to reduce inconsistencies when they are found, and in evaluating the impact of curriculum innovations in Years 10 and 11.
71. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, particularly in standards at the end of Year 9. The use of assessment information and the match of tasks to pupils' abilities have improved. The impact of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has significantly improved the range of teaching and learning strategies, and the pace of learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

72. Standards of literacy are average, sufficient to underpin learning in most subjects and an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils' oral skills are a strength. Reading skills are sound, with information retrieval strong in science, for example. The skill of reading aloud is undeveloped. Writing standards are in line with expectations, but there are insufficient opportunities to develop extended writing.
73. There is good provision and planning in most subjects to support the development of literacy across the curriculum. Measures to encourage a whole-school approach have been successful. English makes an effective contribution and achievement in religious education is particularly good because all aspects of literacy are well developed.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement at GCSE is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils in Year 11 have not developed independent learning skills and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good.

- The use of ICT is well organised to enhance pupils' learning.

Commentary

74. In 2003 and 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with national expectations. Standards in both GCSE French and German have declined over the last four years and are currently well below average. German results in 2004 were an improvement over 2003, but still well below average. Given the below average attainment on entry, achievement at the end of Year 9 is good, but is unsatisfactory at GCSE.
75. In the current Year 9 standards are average. Achievement is good, considering the attainment of pupils on entry. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and show a good standard of accuracy in spelling and basic grammar because teaching methods are well matched to their needs. Pupils in Year 8 are beginning to use the past tense with confidence and accuracy. However, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are not sufficiently challenged with more extended writing.
76. Standards in Year 11 remain well below average, and achievement is unsatisfactory. Most pupils have insufficient personal organisation and study skills, owing to a lack of training in the discipline of working independently. They do not listen to each other and learn from mistakes, or repeat items in tasks until they are correct. Inaccurate pronunciation is often a barrier to effective communication. Additionally some pupils in Year 11 have double periods and time is not used as productively as it would be in two single lessons. As many able linguists tend to opt out of studying a language in Years 10 and 11 there are few positive role models and this too makes it harder to raise standards.
77. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The planning, challenge and variety encourage good learning, by enhancing motivation and enthusiasm. The materials used are well suited to individual pupils' needs, and support in class and use of the foreign language assistant are good. ICT is well integrated into lessons. It is particularly effective as part of a 'carousel' of activities where it motivates pupils, as well as developing their independence and their command of vocabulary. However, progress is slowed in Years 10 and 11 because earlier teaching has not supported pupils to commit new knowledge and concepts to memory.
78. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The teaching team has been strengthened and now works well together. They have adapted the way they teach in Years 7 to 9 to improve pupils' motivation and learning. This is still not having as much effect in Years 10 and 11 because of pupils' earlier experience.
79. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Though standards in Years 10 and 11 have declined, the reasons for this have been clearly identified and effectively dealt with in Years 7 to 9. Pupils now study only one language, expectations are higher, and pupils have more opportunity for independent learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Under very good leadership teaching and support staff work very well to raise standards.
- The teaching is good so that pupils are challenged well and they respond positively to their work.
- The department's performance is constantly analysed to assess its effectiveness.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

80. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average although there is clear evidence that most recently it has been closer to the average. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average but above average when compared with similar schools. In 2004 they improved further, maintaining the recent upward movement, which is more pronounced than the national trend. The results in the 2003 GCSE were below national averages at A*-C, but improved to be average in 2004. These results are well above average when compared with similar schools; pupils achieve better in mathematics than they do in many of their other subjects.
81. Current standards of work seen in lessons are average in all years. Pupils of a wide range of ability are challenged to achieve well and teachers are rightly challenging pupils with modest ability to attain grade C/D grades at GCSE. For example middle set Year 10 pupils can use the rules of indices competently, which is a sound indication of good examination preparation. The quantity and quality of work in Year 9 by pupils entering the school with below average grades are good. Pupils have a firm grasp of basic mathematics such as dividing fractions and using percentages accurately.
82. Achievement is good across all years; this confirms the recent outcomes in national tests. Pupils in middle ability sets in Years 10 and 11 benefit from high expectations and respond well with competent work. Many are able to understand linear graphs and recognise the reasoning of both negative and positive gradients. Presentation of work reflects positive attitudes and supports the overall quality of improvement in their work. High ability pupils are confident with work corresponding to the higher grades of GCSE. In a higher attaining Year 10 group, pupils were preparing for GCSE coursework and have mastered the process of identifying patterns in numbers and are able to generate formulae and explain their work. This group sits the GCSE early which is designed both to support their needs and to offer an opportunity for pupils to study an AS module during Year 11. The corresponding group in Year 11 has yet to receive their grades; however, pupils speak highly of this provision that enables the most competent pupils to an exposure to a higher level of mathematics appropriate for future post-16 study within the school.
83. Teaching and learning are good. All teachers possess good subject expertise and are enthusiastic. Most lessons begin with starters, which are used effectively to sharpen pupils' recall of previous work or to concentrate their minds. An example of this was in a higher attaining Year 8 group where pupils were successful in placing in order of size values initially expressed as fractions, decimals, percentages, roots and powers. All teachers have high expectations and a sharp knowledge of individual needs. Sometimes they do not allow wider group debate which would give pupils better opportunities to consolidate their previous learning. The very best teaching includes questioning designed to encourage pupils to think for themselves. For instance, a Year 7 mixed ability class become engrossed with their investigative work and were able to explain, present, refine and justify their thinking. As such the mathematics moves beyond applying routines and establishing accurate outcomes but begins to attempt to grasp underlying concepts. The work of the support staff is good with well-established work routines. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Their needs are very clearly recognised and this reflects the good level of training support staff receive from the school. Work seen during the inspection showed insufficient use of ICT so that pupils are not able to develop their awareness of the most effective tools for solving problems and presenting or analysing data.
84. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a very good role model of open mindedness and focuses upon sharing and reviewing good practice. Teachers observe each other teaching and give written feedback to suggest improvements. The teaching team analyse the wealth of available data carefully and use their findings to

adapt their plans to raise standards further. All department documentation stresses the correct balance between how pupils best learn and appropriate subject content. There is very good support for staff development and the expectation is that sharing any fresh information and ideas with the department team follows course attendance. As a result the department is justifiably recognised by the senior management team as a strength in the school.

85. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The wide-ranging improvements to teaching and learning styles have supported sustained improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9. The department has moved these teaching approaches into Years 10 and 11 more rapidly than is seen nationally, and teaching is now good. Attainment when compared to similar schools is now consistently above average. The use of assessment to diagnose performance is very thorough. Most pupils are aware of their current and predicted levels of attainment but they need more help understanding how they can get better.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. The school has a well-focused policy, which is regularly reviewed during monthly scheduled meetings. As a result pupils' numeracy skills are used in most subjects and mathematical competence throughout the school is average. Satisfactory use is found in geography and history where the use and the interpretation of graphs and tables of figures are commonplace. Pupils' routine number skills are also accurate in modern foreign languages; for example, pupils use units of weight and measure and in science power calculations and rating of appliances are competently calculated. The use of data is used well in physical education linked to data-related fitness; the results are then appropriately represented in graphical form.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are below average.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are good but guidance on how to improve is inconsistent in marking pupils' work.

Commentary

87. Results in the national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were below the national average and below average in comparison with similar schools. The results were similar in 2004 and have shown no significant improvement over recent years. Standards of work seen in Year 9 broadly reflect the test results but there are encouraging signs of improvement. In particular, higher attaining pupils are responding positively to improved challenge in lessons and are reaching standards above the expected level. Investigative work develops satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 but skills in presenting results in graphical forms remain limited.
88. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below the national average and below average in comparison with similar schools. The results were very similar in 2004, and had been declining steadily for the previous four years. Standards of work seen are overall below average, but pupils are responding positively to their work and standards are rising. Higher attaining pupils in both Years 10 and 11 are confidently tackling demanding work, such as the role of hormones, the rock cycle and the movement of tectonic plates. They are producing work of a good standard, have an appetite for their work and are well motivated.

89. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. Attainment on entry to the school is generally below average. Pupils have insecure knowledge and weak practical skills. Whilst they are initially slow to adjust, they make sound progress in Years 8 and 9 and most pupils are on course to reach their target levels.
90. Achievement in the 2004 examinations was unsatisfactory, but the current pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactorily overall, and higher attaining pupils are achieving well. The impact of more stable staffing, good teaching and the monitoring of their progress is clearly beginning to raise aspirations and improve standards of all pupils.
91. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all the pupils with clear learning objectives, although these are not always effectively reviewed in plenaries. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and challenge them with a variety of tasks and tight time targets. Practical work is well organised and computers are being increasingly used in lessons to enhance the presentation of new ideas and to review key points. The good response of pupils in most lessons contributes significantly to their good learning. Homework is set regularly but the marking is inconsistent in giving pupils a clear indication of its standard in reference to set targets or giving guidance on how to improve. The needs of lower attaining pupils are effectively met. Tasks are modified to meet their specific needs and the pupils receive very good support from teachers and classroom assistants to maintain their satisfactory achievement. This good provision has been established very recently, and has not yet had sufficient time to make a significant impact on improving achievement
92. Leadership of the subject is very good. The new head of department inherited a difficult situation of falling standards, no schemes of work, serious staffing problems and low morale. She has made a major impact in a short time. Clear priorities were addressed swiftly, with intensive targeting of Years 9 and 11. This resulted in the decline in the GCSE results being halted and standards in Year 9 consolidated. Effective monitoring of the department has been carried out, a new scheme of work is in place for Years 7 to 9, and an applied science GCSE course is offered to provide a more vocational option for pupils. Initial indications are that this is proving successful. Management of the subject is good with key staff taking on specific responsibilities to move the subject forward. Team spirit is good and there is a clear focus on raising standards across the board.
93. Since the last inspection improvement has overall been unsatisfactory because standards at GCSE have fallen. However, this decline has now been arrested and standards have remained fairly stable in Years 7 to 9. Teaching has improved significantly this year, and planning for the needs of the lower attainers has improved. Target setting and monitoring of pupils' progress are assisting learning, and the subject has very clear, dynamic leadership which has already brought satisfactory improvement and is committed to raising standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good across the school.
- Teachers are specialists with good knowledge and skills.
- Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well to focus on learning and achievement.
- The curriculum does not give lower attaining pupils access to a recognised qualification.

Commentary

94. In 2003, at the end of Year 9, pupils' attainments in teacher assessments were in line with the national average and standards have risen over previous years. At the end of Year 11, pupils taking GCSE examinations attained average standards, though they declined sharply in 2004. Pupils have not been consistently entered for GCSE examinations throughout the last five years so there are no trends to record.
95. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards have improved and are now in line with national averages in both Year 9 and Year 11. The rise in standards in Year 11 is largely due to improvements in teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning. Most pupils write well and show appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show good knowledge of multi-media presentation when they tackle citizenship issues such as bullying and drug misuse. They are less confident using less common applications such as control tasks involving logical flowcharts. In Years 10 and 11 pupils write well-extended answers to examination questions. They use computers and the most frequently used software confidently, but find it difficult to apply less commonly used techniques such as interrogating a database.
96. Achievement in all years is good; pupils work hard and with enthusiasm. They have good relationships with teachers and their peers and generally present work with accuracy and care. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because their needs are not barriers to what they are asked to do.
97. Teaching and learning in all years are good. Teachers are specialists with good knowledge and skills such as their use of the interactive whiteboards, which gives confidence to pupils. Teachers prepare well for lessons with a clear structure to enable pupils to grasp ideas, and then consolidate their understanding. They ensure that the pace is brisk and the work is challenging by setting tight time constraints. This maintained urgency in a Year 11 class even though they were preparing for a practical test in three weeks' time. Teachers also make good use of their knowledge of pupils' earlier learning, and exploit good relationships to build good motivation. Their skilled use of questioning helps pupils to learn well, and gain a good understanding of new concepts. Pupils make good progress and developing their competence in a range of skills. They discuss their learning articulately and enthusiastically, work well independently and make good use of peer support. Assessment procedures are rigorous and involve pupils in evaluating their progress.
98. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision of what else needs improvement and has built an effective team of teachers and support staff. He monitors the work of the department well, using observation, work scrutiny and assessment moderation to raise standards. Training and support help build staff confidence with new approaches.
99. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but current courses do not allow lower attaining pupils to gain level 1 qualifications in Years 10 and 11. A very good enrichment programme enables pupils in Years 10 and 11 to take ICT examinations outside curriculum time, but business links for the vocational courses are underdeveloped. Very good resources are used well but some small classrooms restrict class-based teaching.
100. Since the previous inspection there has been very good improvement. This has included expanding resources, and developing both staff expertise and curriculum provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is **good**. Pupils attain above average standards and grow increasingly confident in a range of applications. There is some very good practice across the school, but teachers do not fully exploit the potential for improvement that ICT would bring. Achievement is good and pupils talk about their work with enthusiasm. There are

examples of very good teaching and learning which both enhance subject knowledge and increase ICT skills. In Years 7 and 8, citizenship lessons are taught using animation, which improves the quality of pupils' responses. In design and technology, pupils use computers to design and make high quality products to enhance coursework. In music, pupils have established effective composition and performance skills using ICT. Use of interactive whiteboards is becoming more widespread and training is being given to staff in this area of development.

102. The co-ordinator has effectively audited and mapped ICT across the curriculum but not enough has been done to equip teachers with the skills to effectively test and record pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Year 11. The team of subject co-ordinators provides a good structure for this to be effective but needs further development.
103. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Teachers are better equipped and have greater confidence in delivering ICT as part of their curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership has the capacity to improve GCSE examination standards, which are not high enough.
- Lessons are well designed and stimulate pupils to learn.
- Pupils are helped to make good progress by effective assessment linked to mentoring.
- Learning materials are not sufficiently adapted to enable the lowest attainers to work independently.

Commentary

104. The percentage of pupils reaching grade C and above in their GCSE geography examinations was falling until 2003. In 2004 there was a marginal improvement although results were still well below the national average and achievement was unsatisfactory. This was due to a combination of difficult behaviour and poor attendance. These factors were exacerbated by a timetable arrangement which clustered all the teaching time in a double lesson on Monday morning. The work seen during the inspection shows that pupils are currently working at a higher level than these results would indicate, though standards remain below average. Achievement is now good.
105. In Year 7 pupils enter the school with well below average levels of geographical knowledge. However, the well-structured curriculum in Years 7 to 9 enables all pupils to achieve well. They make good gains in both knowledge and skills. By the end of Year 9 standards, while still below average, are closer to those which are expected of pupils of a similar age.
106. Good teaching leads to good learning in all years. Sharply focused starter activities enable pupils to learn the lesson's key vocabulary. Teachers' use of new technology strongly assists pupils' learning. In a minority of lessons, too much time is allowed for some activities. Almost all pupils are effectively challenged by structured tasks but there are insufficient support materials for the lowest attainers. Nevertheless, pupils with special educational needs are able to achieve well because classroom assistants and teachers work hard to ensure that they can cope with the work. GCSE case studies and other investigations are completed to a high standard but pupils have difficulty selecting key information in order to answer examination questions. The procedures for assessment are instrumental in helping pupils to learn.

Teachers use assessment in lessons to direct work to individual pupils. Progress against set targets is reviewed regularly and teachers' comments on completed assignments are constructive and helpful.

107. Self-evaluation is characteristic of the good leadership and management of the department. Following a rigorous review of all aspects of the department, new schemes of work have been implemented and regular monitoring of teaching ensures that pupils are given good opportunities for learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because the below average standards identified in that report continued to decline. However, within the department organisation is now good; there is a team determination to improve standards and the capacity to do so.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment, though improving, is below national averages.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Raising literacy standards underpins good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Independent learning is underdeveloped for higher attainers.

Commentary

108. Attainment in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well below national averages for pupils gaining grades A*-C. This was largely because changes to examination requirements were not fully understood. There was a considerable improvement on results in 2004 and standards observed during the inspection were below average. Most pupils write competent accounts of, for example, the history of medicine. Few are able to make analytical comments. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. Pupils make simple comparisons, and write short narratives, but only a small number attempt to draw deeper conclusions. All use simple source materials and know different kinds of evidence. They describe the uses these sources can be put to. Achievement at a more complex level is limited by use of language and lack of fluency of expression, in both written work and spoken word.
109. Achievement from Year 7 to Year 9 is good. At the start pupils' abilities in history are well below nationally expected levels. Pupils are unfamiliar with where they can get information from and are unsure of how to handle it in an appropriate way for work in history. Their background knowledge is sparse. The vast majority are able to express only the simplest of ideas. This improves significantly so that in Year 9 most write accurate sentences, and divide ideas into groups. Higher attaining pupils draw conclusions and make comparisons, as they did in a lesson on the links between social conditions and disease in early industrial towns. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is satisfactory. Pupils maintain their standards as the work becomes more demanding. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 because the work they are given sets an appropriate challenge and they are well supported by classroom assistants.
110. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers need to provide significant support for literacy, and this weakens the focus on historical knowledge and understanding. They also take great care to control behaviour. They identify clear objectives and set strict timings for each activity. This ensures that pupils concentrate and collaborate effectively, and assures a rapid increase in overall knowledge of historical events for the majority of pupils. It does, however, reduce opportunities for independent work, and, as a result, higher attainers do not have enough opportunities to use higher skills such as analysis and prediction.

111. Management and leadership are now satisfactory, though unsatisfactory management contributed to the decline in the 2003 GCSE results. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results improved in 2004, so that pupils did better than in most of their other subjects. Overall there has been a good response to the issues raised in the last inspection, though there is still scope for developing independent learning. The reasons for the dip in the 2003 results were clearly identified and remedied and two newly qualified teachers are being well supported.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership by the new head of department is bringing about an improvement in standards and pupils' attitudes.
- Non-specialist teaching in some classes is a barrier to learning.
- Pupils show confidence in expressing their ideas because of the emphasis on developing language and literacy.

Commentary

112. Results at GCSE in 2003 and 2004 were below national averages, reflecting the lack of continuity in the teaching resulting from staffing problems. Standards in the current Year 9 meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, and both boys and girls achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject. Most pupils have a firm grasp of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions and can explain what they have learnt, such as the significance of religious symbols. Standards in Year 11 are below average because of erratic progress in recent years. Achievement is now satisfactory with improved provision. However, a minority of pupils who are not taught by specialist teachers make unsatisfactory progress in coping with the examination syllabus. Pupils new to English and those with special educational needs generally achieve as well as other groups of pupils through good support from staff and their fellow pupils.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and some lessons are of a very high quality. Teachers make good use of the best practice from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. They use constant and careful questioning to maintain a very high level of challenge for all pupils. They are developing routines within the lessons which ensure that pupils understand clearly what they are expected to do. They also make excellent use of time, ensuring that pupils are busy and absorbed, and have many opportunities to express their growing understanding of difficult ideas in their own words. However, some GCSE groups are taught by teachers with insufficient knowledge of the subject. They are sometimes unable to lead pupils to an effective understanding of difficult concepts and learning is unsatisfactory. Pupils learn well where teachers have a good command of the subject and an enthusiasm for it. The focus on developing language and literacy is a strength and there are examples in all years of careful listening, clear explanations, accurate reading and lively writing. Discussion and research on different faiths increase pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness. Marking of work is generally regular and helpful but the correction of spelling errors lacks consistency and levels of attainment are not always clearly identified.
114. The subject is well led by the recently appointed head of department whose high expectations have already raised standards and boosted pupils' morale. Management is unsatisfactory because timetabling for Years 10 and 11 has resulted in a teaching team that is not fully effective. Satisfactory improvement has been made very recently, and after a period of instability the leadership is once again positive and purposeful. There has been a period of

decline over the past two years, and improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and detailed planning support good learning in all years.
- The system for monitoring the quality of teaching has a positive effect on pupil achievement.
- The excellent strategic leadership and very good day-to-day management of the department.
- Inconsistency of assessment across different subjects in the department.

Commentary

115. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, pupils attained above average results in Key Stage 3 teacher assessments; results for 2004 have risen even further. This represents a three-year rising trend. In 2004 GCSE design and technology examination results were below average overall. By subject results were as follows: food technology and textiles technology – above average; graphic products – close to the national average; systems and control – below average; and resistant materials – well below average.
116. The work seen Years 7 to 9 is above average. Graphic skills are well developed. ICT is used effectively and work is well presented. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the nature of projects, which allow for success at a wide range of levels. Both boys and girls are achieving very well.
117. Pupils' work seen in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations at this stage of their courses. Pupils show high levels of skill in accurately creating a variety of shapes and objects using different media. They have good ICT skills, and are competent to use a range of technical software. In a Year 11 textiles group pupils correctly identified the industrial processes that they would need to refer to in their examination coursework. Pupils achieve well and good quality teaching is an important factor in pupils' progress.
118. Teaching is good overall and in Years 7 to 9 it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan very well for lessons, and this ensures that practical skills, knowledge and understanding are progressively acquired. Pupils are given good advice on the work they have completed and how it can be improved. In consequence pupils learn well over time and enjoy their work. At both key stages teachers pay attention to developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills in lessons. There are word banks to help pupils with technical vocabulary and opportunities for extended writing. Pupils are taught how to measure accurately and to work effectively with various materials and ingredients. Clear expectations lead to very good behaviour in the department and pupils are aware of the need to work safely in the workshop or food technology area.
119. The department leader has an excellent vision of what needs to be done to raise standards further. He has developed a very good system to enable teachers to observe and comment on each other's lessons. The whole school is now using this detailed and consistent approach to support the spread of best practice to all teachers. Though assessment is good overall, teachers of different subjects within the department are not yet ensuring that they use comparable standards when they grade work in Years 7 to 9. The effective technician also very successfully supports pupils as a 'Designer in Residence'. Since the last inspection

progress has been good. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have continued to rise steadily, and resources are now good across the department. The department is very well placed to carry out continued improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching engages pupils in a variety of media and processes.
- Assessment is rigorous and helps pupils to raise standards and to progress well.
- More pupils need to develop their ICT skills in GCSE courses.
- Pupils on applied art programmes need more opportunities for vocational experience.

Commentary

120. By the end of Year 9 pupils' standards in art and design are average and their achievement is good. The school has enjoyed a trend of above average GCSE results for some years up to 2003, but in 2004 problems in staffing caused standards to drop below the national average. Standards in the applied art course were well below average. There has been considerable improvement this year and standards now match the national average and this means pupils' achievement is good. Sketchbooks reveal sensitivity to pattern, and strength in designing and exploring ideas from a range of cultures and contexts. In Years 7 and 8 the use of ICT is very good and three-dimensional work is improving but ceramic skills are still weaker than drawing and design skills. Pupils' creative flair is revealed when exploring cultural references such as Aboriginal art. Those pupils with special learning needs and talented pupils make equally good progress. They are well managed and given work that suits and challenges them. Pupils on GCSE courses do not make enough use of ICT when working on graphic based projects. Consequently they are unable to evaluate the effect of digital technology on the way contemporary artists work. Links with commercial artists are not sufficiently developed so that pupils taking the applied art course are unable to reflect real world applications of artistic techniques in their coursework.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have strong expertise in art and design expertise but also place emphasis on improving pupils' literacy. Tasks are well planned and challenging. Homework is regular and reinforces coursework. Behaviour is very good and pupils are capable of sustained independent work and good concentration. Planning is conscientious; work has clear objectives and assessment is a strength. The department makes good use of exemplars to help pupils set appropriate targets but assessment in Year 9 is not consistent between different teachers.
122. Leadership and management are very good. Honest and conscientious self-evaluation based on analysis of performance has enabled the department to make good progress this year. New staff are being well supported and all benefit from working in the thriving department of design. Management of resources are good although ICT is not used sufficiently at GCSE level. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with improved standards and achievement, and a good response on all the issues raised.

Drama

123. Two lessons of drama were sampled in Years 7 and 8. Pupils in Year 8 lacked confidence because staffing difficulties disrupted their experience last year. English teachers who are not subject specialists are now teaching the lessons and teaching is satisfactory. They have a

clear idea of how they want to use drama to explore texts, and to develop speaking and listening skills. Pupils are enthusiastic and co-operative. As yet there are too few established conventions for behaviour within the working area, and pupils show some lack of confidence. This slows the pace of learning. Achievement is currently satisfactory as, starting from a low base, pupils are effectively challenged to work in groups, to show respect for others' work, and to begin to evaluate their work constructively. In Year 7, without last year's negative experience, standards are higher, and discussion skills in particular are above average. Collaboration within working groups was good and pupils sustained their discussion of ways to interpret 'The Seven Ages of Man' very effectively.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain well above average standards by Year 11 and their achievement is very good.
- Pupils respond with commitment and enthusiasm to the stimulating and challenging teaching.
- There is an improving trend in standards because of the very good leadership and management of the subject.
- An inability to use musical language correctly is a weakness for some pupils.

Commentary

124. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. Pupils' musical ability is below national expectations on entry to the school, so their achievement is good. This is so for all groups, including those pupils with special educational needs. During the inspection standards for some more competent pupils in Year 9 were above the national average. This is because they learn to play a musical instrument, which results in work of above expected standards. The standard of work by pupils in Year 11 is well above average and their achievement is very good. Performance in the GCSE examination was below average in 2003, but well above average in 2004, with boys and girls attaining similarly, maintaining the rising trend in standards over the last three years, and an improvement on the average standards reported at the previous inspection. Pupils attained better results in music than in any of their other subjects. More competent pupils compose pieces showing mature understanding of particular musical styles. Their work is carefully structured making effective use of instrumental colour, harmonies and rhythm. Because the department is very well resourced for computers, pupils can use them regularly in order to produce high quality coursework.
125. Teaching and learning are good for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. They are very good for those in Years 10 and 11 where smaller groups mean that teachers are better able to adapt lessons to meet each individual student's needs, and to provide continuous detailed assessment. Pupils find this highly motivating, and they are confident that music will produce their highest GCSE grades. Teachers are very competent musicians and have comprehensive musical knowledge and high expectations of pupils, who enjoy their lessons because of enthusiastic teaching. Sensitive class management means that pupils relate very well to each other especially when working in small groups. They listen to each other's work regularly and as a result learn how to improve their own. Lessons are planned carefully in order to develop musical skills systematically. Occasionally, time is not used effectively, leaving too little opportunity at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect upon their progress. There are times when pupils do not learn well because they do not use musical vocabulary correctly. For example, pupils in Year 9 find it difficult to define different musical elements, and even higher attaining students in Year 10 do not use technical language easily when evaluating their own work.
126. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The joint heads of department work well as a team to share good practice, and have a clear vision for the development of

music in the school. They have created a very good musical environment, which pupils enjoy. Over a hundred pupils recently performed in *Les Misérables*, which received high praise from many members of the local community. The experiences pupils gain through making music contributes significantly to their personal development. Since the previous inspection improvement has been very good because standards are now higher. There is a rigorous system for monitoring all pupils' progress, and there is a wider range of activities for all pupils to develop their understanding and enjoyment of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching encourages pupils to take responsibility and be independent.
- The ethos of the department and the gaining of Sports College status contribute significantly to the raising of self-esteem.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation is having an adverse impact on pupils' learning especially for indoor games.

Commentary

127. Physical education GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average but pupils gained better grades than in many of their other subjects. The established trend took a dip in 2004 but the current Year 11 pupils are now reaching average standards and are achieving well. Results in GCSE dance were just below the national average and pupils achieved well.
128. Standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are average. On arrival at school in Year 7 they are below average. All pupils including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups achieve well. Strengths are in dance and swimming where the accommodation is good. A group of girls have been accelerated to start the GCSE dance course in Year 9. They are above average in their performance and in their understanding of choreography. Pupils have average skills in basketball but are below average in badminton. The hall is small and not an appropriate area for teaching games such as badminton and volleyball. This slows progress especially for older pupils. The pupils evaluate well, but are not confident to use technical language.
129. All pupils follow courses in Years 10 and 11 that lead to a qualification such as Junior Sports Leaders Award and life saving awards in swimming. It was not possible to see these courses during the inspection. They can also follow a vocational BTEC course, or GCSE in dance or physical education. In the BTEC course, the pupils reach average standards and are achieving very well. They have a good understanding of risk assessment when working with younger pupils. Those pupils following the GCSE in physical education are below average in theory but above average in practical activities. The use of a local sports hall enables them to use facilities that are appropriate for the activities. The issues from the 2004 results have been addressed and pupils' weekly mentoring is having a positive impact on standards and knowledge of their own learning.
130. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good with very good features. All teachers encourage pupils to be independent and learn by planning, evaluating and discovery. This was especially evident in swimming where pupils' observations added significantly to the rate of learning. Their very good subject knowledge ensures that tasks progress logically to the final activity. Ongoing assessment highlights areas for development and leads to further improvement. The teachers treat the pupils with respect and provide well for their spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils have many opportunities to develop a better understanding of their own positive qualities, and those of others. They enjoy being in the

physical education environment and thrive on success. Older pupils use their coaching skills regularly to help with the good provision of extra-curricular clubs and lessons. Pupils enjoy individual and team success in local and county competitions.

131. Leadership and management are good and have ensured good progress since the last inspection. The newly gained Sports College status is already having a positive impact on the range of opportunities on offer to pupils. However, the sporting facilities, with the exception of the swimming pool, are not good enough to attract the local community or accelerate learning in sports such as basketball, volleyball and badminton.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

One Year 11 lesson in **leisure and tourism** was sampled. Teaching was very good. The teacher's very good subject knowledge and the very good relationships contributed to the brisk pace of the lesson. Standards were average in this group who were working to improve the grades they had already achieved in this vocational GCSE subject. Very good questioning and careful assessment enabled the teacher to gauge the right level of challenge and support for each pupil of different ability. As a result pupils learned very well to develop a mind map of the leisure industry, ready for the forthcoming examinations.

One Year 11 lesson in **health and social care** was sampled. Very good planning and a very good variety of teaching strategies meant that pupils enjoyed the lesson and achieved very well. Standards were average, and pupils were articulate and showed a good understanding of the way that socio-economic factors can lead to depression in pregnancy. Pupils worked hard, though a significant number preferred to take the lead from the teacher rather than working independently.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE)

Provision for PSHCE is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- PSHCE is not explicitly taught in Year 9.
- Careers education is not taught in Years 7 and 8.
- An effective new head of department is managing the development of the subject methodically.

Commentary

132. Provision for PSHCE is in transition. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are average as pupils explore issues of bullying and drug abuse. Attractive ICT software enables them to focus on the crucial difference between what people think and what they say. This effectively clarifies their understanding of attitudes to these difficult and sensitive topics. Standards are also average in Years 10 and 11. Current arrangements for the course prioritise work on study skills because of recent concern about standards in examinations. However, the emphasis on thinking skills and self-awareness is achieved by focusing on a wide range of personal and social issues. In each situation pupils move from consolidating their knowledge to deepening their understanding, and then applying their concepts on, say, prejudice or human identity to other topics. Achievement is good in the taught sessions in Years 7 and 8, and in Years 10 and 11. Provision is now more structured and coherent, and consequently pupils make good strides in understanding both the issues and their own attitudes. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory because PSHCE is not taught in Year 9, and issues are not always explicitly identified when they arise in lessons in other subjects. Additionally, the school is not meeting the recent statutory requirement to teach careers in Years 7 and 8.

133. Teaching in the lessons that are scheduled is good. In Years 7 and 8 teachers combine a good understanding of the issues they are exploring with very good skills in ICT. This enables them to fully exploit the computer simulations and to make absorbing presentations. Consequently pupils enjoy the lessons and learn well. Teachers support pupils to develop their own ideas, giving them sufficient time to reflect on initial examples which show them how they can use the cartoon-based software to full effect. They use questioning well, both to develop ideas and to check pupils' understanding. This ensures that pupils remain engaged as the lesson moves on from one task to another. Teachers plan effectively so that in Years 10 and 11 pupils progress from understanding how to produce a mind map about harmful CFCs and then apply the skill to another topic such as molecular structure. This develops both independence and a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is currently unsatisfactory. Teachers monitor ICT skills in Years 7 and 8, but personal development and learning skills are not currently assessed.
134. Leadership of the subject is good. Until this academic year the subject was taught by non-specialists and the provision was neither coherent nor effectively planned. The new head of department is managing the transition satisfactorily. She has a clear understanding of what needs to be done, having quickly assessed what is currently in place – both in the timetabled course and within other subjects. She has identified the right priorities for further development during this year, and though improvement since the last inspection has not been satisfactory, progress so far this year has been good.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship is not effectively taught in Year 9.
- The school is not meeting statutory requirements to assess and report on citizenship.
- A new head of department is improving the provision methodically.

Commentary

135. Citizenship is taught within lessons in PSHCE. The course is currently in transition since the school recognised inadequacies in the provision. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are average. Pupils explore such issues as bullying and drug abuse, and in doing so reflect on power within society, and the influence of groups and gangs. In Years 10 and 11 the work on study skills involves pupils exploring issues such as prejudice, human rights, inclusion and poverty. Though the themes are rightly fully integrated in the work to develop learning techniques they are explored in detail. Pupils show good interest as they analyse and interpret data. In a Year 11 lesson on government funding there was some lively and thoughtful discussion as pupils related new information on tax legislation to their own experience coming through customs at airports. Achievement is good in the taught lessons. It is currently unsatisfactory overall because citizenship is not taught in Year 9, and issues are not always made explicit when they arise in other subjects. Consequently the good achievement from the earlier years is undermined. Outside lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to participate in elections to the school council, and to be involved in an enterprise project to improve the school environment. This aspect of the provision is not yet effectively developed across all years, and features appropriately among development priorities for this year.
136. Teaching and learning are good in the timetabled lessons. Effective use of ICT enables pupils in Years 7 and 8 to explore sensitive issues so that they understand them and are able to apply their understanding to make predictions about attitudes and behaviour. Work is challenging, for example when pupils in Years 10 and 11 examine their own attitudes to social

class and refugees. Teachers manage discussion well, varying the pace of lessons to allow necessary periods of reflection. They have a good command of the subject, and use this to draw out pupils' understanding. They are scrupulously careful not to take responsibility for thinking away from the pupils. Assessment is unsatisfactory, though plans are in place to assess and report on the subject at the end of this year.

137. As with PSHCE leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. The new head of department has quickly acquired a thorough understanding of what is unsatisfactory, and is developing sensible plans to put things right.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, four 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 AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2	100	80.1	0	23.7	25	29.9
Biology	11	9.1	65.2	0	11.1	1.8	20.6
Chemistry	4	0	72.7	0	13.9	0	24.1
Communication studies	6	100	86.4	16.7	23.8	30	32
English literature	5	60	85.9	0	19.1	12	30.2
French	1	0	78.2	0	18.9	0	27.6
Design and technology	1	100	74.9	0	15.1	30	25.3
Geography	5	40	74.3	0	19.8	10	26.5
German	2	50	81.5	0	19.3	10	28.9
History	13	53.8	80.7	7.7	19.5	14.6	28.6
Information technology	1	0	67	0	10.9	0	21.4
Mathematics	19	36.8	61.9	5.3	17.1	11.1	22.1
Music	4	50	86.5	0	21.4	12.5	30.7
Other sciences	2	50	71.4	0	15.8	10	24.3
Other social studies	1	0	69.7	0	16.7	0	24.1
Physics	1	0	68.6	0	14.4	0	22.7
Religious education	7	14.3	80.2	0	22.6	2.9	29.8
Sociology	2	100	71.8	0	18.4	25	25.4
Physical education	3	33.3	73.2	0	11.4	6.7	23.1
Vocational studies	5	0	62.8	0	12.3	0	20.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2	100	98.6	0	50.2	80	87.5
Biology	6	0	96.4	0	39.2	0	78.6
Business studies	6	100	65	33.3	14.6	83.3	60.1
Chemistry	2	100	97.6	100	49	100	84.9
Media studies	11	100	99.4	9.1	37.8	72	82.1
English literature	11	100	99.5	27.3	46.5	63.6	86.5
Design and technology	4	100	97.8	25	35	70	77.9
Geography	5	100	98.7	0	44.5	68	84
German	2	50	98.4	0	47.9	20	84.8
History	10	40	99	10	44.6	24	84.6
Mathematics	7	14.2	96.7	0	55.6	11.4	88.8
Music	1	100	98.8	0	38.9	40	81.1
Other sciences	7	85.7	97.3	42.9	41.5	60	80.3
Other social studies	4	25	97.4	0	42.7	20	81.8
Physics	4	100	96.7	75	44.6	85	81.7
Religious studies	4	50	98.8	0	46.7	35	85.6
Sociology	6	50	98.2	0	44.3	26.7	83.6
Physical education	4	100	98	0	30.9	60	75.2
Graphics	4	3		1		70	
Electronics	5	4		3		68	
Music technology	2	2		0		60	
Psychology	1	1		0		80	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus of the inspection was English literature but one lesson in German was sampled. Two Year 13 students listened to a discussion about patterns of television viewing. Students enjoyed their work because their teacher knew them well and maintained just the right level of challenge to stretch them beyond the level which they were easy with. Standards were below average, though students' achievement was satisfactory.

English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and students' excellent attitudes have resulted in improved achievement.
- There is very good retention and recruitment in A-level English.
- The high quality of class discussions is not always reflected in students' written work.

Commentary

138. Current standards in the A-level English literature course, although below average, are better than earlier results suggest. Results at A2 level were well below average in 2002 and 2003, and declined further in 2004. Since students' attainment on entry to the course has been consistently well below average, achievement has been satisfactory. In 2004, however, the majority of students failed to meet their targets, and achievement then was unsatisfactory. AS-level results have also been well below average. However, in 2004, eight out of ten students met or exceeded their target grades and achievement was good.
139. Achievement is now good, partly because teachers have increased the level of support and monitoring and emphasised strongly the development of independent reading. This improved picture is seen in both the current Year 12 and Year 13 groups. In both years, but particularly in Year 13, students display an impressive level of confidence in articulating their views. Year 12 students have a good grasp of the essentials of plot, theme and character in the texts they are studying. Most students in Year 13 are able to express an independent viewpoint and justify it by reference to texts that they clearly know well. Their enthusiasm and engagement result in very lively class discussions, showing perceptive critical insights. In their written work, Year 12 students are coming to terms with the increasing challenge of A-level. At this stage in the course, there is evidence of much discussion but relatively little sustained writing. There are weaknesses in the quality and effectiveness of some students' notes. In Year 13, the best writing uses abstract concepts confidently and has a mature style. However, the essays of weaker students do not always do justice to the insights shown in discussion. There are too many basic errors of literacy, and the style is inappropriate.
140. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' considerable subject expertise inspires the respect of their students. Teachers use skilled questioning to probe for further precision of thought. This promotes understanding and develops students' analytical skills very well. Active learning methods are very successful in engaging students' interest and challenging and developing their ideas. Students' learning is very good: they respond with interest and enthusiasm to the stimulating teaching. The difference between students' oral skills and understanding and the quality of their writing explains why very good teaching and learning only lead to good achievement. Students chose to study English literature because they justifiably felt they would be given good support from teachers who knew them well. Recruitment is very healthy. Most students complete the course and particularly appreciate the benefits they are gaining in terms of preparation for further study.

141. Leadership and management are both good. As in the main school, the head of department is a very good role model, taking a clear lead in reviewing practice and implementing improvements. Monitoring has been strengthened, as well as the teaching team. All of this has already had a beneficial impact on standards of achievement.
142. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. The decline in standards has been halted, major changes to the examination system have been successfully implemented, and the introduction of A-level media studies gives students a wider choice. English is deservedly a popular subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

143. Standards of literacy are average overall, and sufficient to support learning but the strengths noted in English are not seen in other focus subjects which were inspected in detail. Chemistry students are competent at reading for information. Research opportunities in art lead to well-organised personal studies, although in discussion students are reluctant to express their opinions. The lack of writing in mathematics notebooks provides a poor basis for learning. There is little evidence of planned provision for the development of literacy across the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching supports competent students.
- A significant number of students start the course without the necessary skills or understanding.

Commentary

144. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 are difficult to compare nationally because of the very low number of entries. One student gained a C grade at A-level and six students failed. Over recent years AS results have been well below average so that very few students have continued into Year 13. This has been a consistent trend in recent years.
145. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average. The five students in Year 12 have entry grades lower than are commonly accepted as appropriate for A-level study. Only one student has studied GCSE at the higher level. The pace of work is therefore slow and progress through the course so far is limited.
146. The overall achievement is currently satisfactory. For example, in Year 13 higher attainers are confident with trigonometry, calculus and elements of algebra. Note taking is of a high order and suggests an appropriate level of independence. However, the work for others is less well advanced with some uncertainty with algebraic expressions. In Year 12 much of the current work focuses upon consolidating prior learning and work on a second module relates to fresh material not found at GCSE. The more testing and complex topics are yet to be encountered in the course.
147. Teaching is good. Teachers have a good command of the subject and as a result the most competent students learn well. In Year 13 the teaching of partial fractions was clear and model answers well recorded. As a result competent students are able to confidently explain their method and when errors occur check back to rectify the mistake. Pace is appropriate and reflected the students' obvious talent for the subject. Learning is satisfactory which does not match the teaching because some students do not develop their understanding sufficiently

quickly to maintain momentum through the course. For example in a Year 12 lesson students were successful, with support, in learning a higher level GCSE concept. However they found it difficult to apply their understanding or to grasp some of the wider implications. Therefore progress is heavily reliant upon the teacher, independent learning is weakened and the pace of work compromised.

148. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department does not teach at post-16 level, but maintains an awareness of current outcomes together with the second in department. Management, however, is currently unsatisfactory because students are being recruited onto the course with too little chance of success. A strategy is now in place to address this issue but its impact is yet to be realised. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory; in more recent years the number of students dramatically increased but results have remained poor.

Mathematics across the curriculum

149. In post-16 studies, students have the grasp of mathematics required for the study of their subject. For example in geography, technology, science and business studies, students identify and successfully apply equations, interpret graphs and use roots and squares.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

The provision for chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students generally achieve well, particularly in Year 12.
- Monitoring of students' progress is good.
- The subject is not yet successfully recruiting the best potential students from Year 11.

Commentary

150. The number of students in chemistry is low, so no meaningful trends in results can be detected or comparisons made with national standards. In three of the last five years all students have achieved pass grades in the GCE A-level examinations in Year 13, but results in the AS-level examinations in Year 12 have been much more variable.
151. Standards seen in Year 12 and 13 are average. Students respond well to the challenge of the higher level concepts and find the work stimulating. Files are well set out with clear and concise notes. Calculations and data are presented in a very orderly manner. Students have good understanding of the mole concept, reaction rates, equilibrium and pH, and apply it successfully in a variety of calculations. They have a sound grasp of chemical bonding and of the shape of simple covalent compounds. Students enjoy practical work. They are careful and accurate in their work and are aware of and observe all safety precautions.
152. Students overall achieve well. Attainment on entry to Year 12 is overall below average. Due to strong competition from other local schools and colleges the subject is not yet recruiting the most able pupils from Year 11. However, students' commitment and hard work, coupled with good support and guidance from teachers, enable students to successfully make the difficult transition from GCSE work. As students progress into Year 13 they find the work increasingly challenging, and some find it hard to cope with more complex concepts though the overall trend of achievement has been satisfactory.

153. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and their clear delivery ensures that students learn well and have good notes on the work covered. Lessons are characterised by good relationships, an informal style that involves all students in the development of the topics and good learning. Practical work is well integrated into the teaching and is well organised and supervised. Homework exercises are regularly set and marking is supportive.
154. The subject is well led and managed. The curriculum is well planned and students are generally well prepared for the module tests. Targets are set for students early in Year 12 and their progress is well monitored through the various regularly set exercises. There are no established links with institutes of higher education, but sound guidance is available on courses and potential careers. Since the previous inspection improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have broadly been maintained and students' achievement is satisfactory although numbers remain low.

HUMANITIES

One lesson in **history** was sampled where two Year 13 students considered what it was like to be a Catholic in fascist Italy. The good teaching ensured that both students maintained good concentration and understood the essential ideas. Standards are average, but these two students are all that remain from an initial Year 12 group of 14, seven of whom took the AS-level examination.

One lesson in **geography** was sampled where an individual Year 13 student was using a spreadsheet to analyse challenges and changes in the human environment. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in this session which took the form of an individual seminar. The student spoke appreciatively of the good level of support which was helping her to maintain an average standard.

Work in **psychology** was sampled. Two students follow a self-study course with weekly on-line support via a video conference with a teacher. The students said they were unsure how well they were doing. The demands of the self-study materials were not well matched to the students' prior attainment, and as a result achievement was unsatisfactory.

Work in **sociology** was sampled. The group which took the AS examination last year had not continued onto the A-level course. One student had moved away from the area; one had left the course before the examination, and two had failed. The students had been recruited onto the course with lower grades than is usual for level 3 courses. Three students are currently following the course in Year 12, with more appropriate qualifications from Year 11. For them the step up from GCSE to AS-level has been challenging but manageable. Teaching and assessment are clearly well organised and students are making good progress in understanding new concepts, and developing essential evaluation skills.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

One lesson in **design and technology** was sampled. The teacher's good subject knowledge and careful planning enabled a very small group of Year 12 students to make good progress both as individuals and as a group. Excellent working relationships contributed to the success of the lesson as students began to make initial sketches for their project study. Standards in this section of the work were above average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus was on art and design, but one Year 13 **theatre studies** lesson was sampled. Standards are below the national average. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. The two students lacked a wide experience of dramatic techniques, and the teacher found it difficult to generate sufficient pace into their work. Because the students lacked confidence, the teacher took too much responsibility in the lesson, providing evaluation of the students' work instead of requiring

them to develop this skill. Discussion was focused on what they were doing in their improvised piece, rather than why they were working in particular ways. There was too little emphasis on the effect of their words and actions on an audience. Achievement was satisfactory as both students were developing ideas which were beyond their direct experience.

Two lessons in **music technology** were sampled. Very good teaching is supporting very good learning and achievement. Students are highly motivated and enjoy developing their skills with the professional quality equipment. They are able to use the sophisticated technology with creativity and confidence. Standards are average, with students more competent in exploiting the technology than identifying the nuances within music. They appreciate both the support and the complementary skills which the teachers provide.

One lesson was sampled with a Year 12 **media studies** group. Teaching was good with effective questioning. This extended students' understanding of the way the scene and tone of a film are initially established. Standards, particularly oral skills, were below average. The lesson effectively established some basic concepts as well as consolidating beneficial relationships. Achievement was good.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some students have well-developed independent research skills that include the use of ICT.
- Critical and contextual study consistently informs practical work.
- Students are not sufficiently challenged to extend the scale and range of their drawing skills, or to develop their skills with different media.
- Course planning does not ensure that skills are deepened over the two years.

Commentary

155. Standards at AS and A-level are average and overall achievement is satisfactory. In the AS group some students have made good progress from low GCSE grades last year. Oil pastel observation drawings show sensitivity to complementary colour. The overall composition in some drawings is weak and students are failing to carefully select when working from direct observation. Students' drawing is not being sufficiently stretched and challenged by exciting stimulus and work on a larger scale. The work of too many students is small and lacking in confidence. Some students have produced fascinating personal investigations, and the best display individual research and first hand engagement with artists' work. One student studied the work of William Morris and showed a unique insight into his use of four colour blocks by separating out each colour on acetate. While writing is consistent and personal in quality the overall presentation of the studies is lacking in imagination and creativity. Strong research and investigation skills include the use of digital cameras and ICT applications.

156. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The development of language skills is sound but when focused on describing skills some students showed language difficulties and needed considerable extra help. The way the two-year course is planned does not provide opportunities for students to revisit skills that they learned in Year 12, and develop them in different ways, with greater maturity in Year 13. In Year 13 students are not sufficiently deepening their acquired skills sufficiently. The introductions of new media skills such as mono printing are not appropriate at second year level and result in below average quality work. Critical and contextual study is taught effectively and research skills are developed well. Students are able to work independently and consistently on their personal investigations. There is an emphasis upon first hand experience and students are regularly taken to galleries

as part of their studies. Assessment is consistent and students are given detailed feedback on each aspect of their coursework.

157. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory as standards have been maintained, staffing has been strengthened, and the head of department has helped the subject leader to develop her own self-evaluation skills.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One lesson of advanced level **physical education** was sampled where students were discussing motivation and goal setting. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher showed good subject knowledge but needed a wider repertoire of teaching strategies to generate pace within this small group. Standards were below average, and students lacked the depth of knowledge or wider reading to cope with some of the psychological concepts they were considering.

In a Year 12 **leisure and tourism** lesson students were researching local employment opportunities. They achieved well, and imaginative timetable arrangements have set them on the road to completing an advanced level qualification within one year. Standards are average but the teacher's very good subject knowledge and brisk style are challenging students to expand and deepen their understanding

BUSINESS

Two lessons in **business education** were sampled. Standards are below the national average in Year 13, but average in Year 12. Teaching and learning were very good. The knowledgeable teacher gave the students confidence to cope with concepts that they found initially difficult. They were willing to take risks and speculate in their bid to clarify their understanding. The teacher used questioning well to ensure that each member in the small groups was making progress. Materials were carefully prepared so that once the students began to gain an understanding of the concept, they faced progressively more challenging tasks to consolidate their grasp. Working relationships between students and teacher were positive with good levels of care, guidance and support. As a consequence of the quality of the learning environment, student achievements were good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

One lesson in **health and social care** was sampled. Good teaching and very good use of discussion motivated students of average ability to share ideas and to develop and defend their opinions about group dynamics. Achievement was good. There was a good pace to the learning and students were challenged to be reflective and to think laterally.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No personal development provision was observed. Key skills have been provided for students in previous years during the latter half of Friday morning before formal teaching ended for the week at lunchtime. Attendance was poor and the provision was discontinued. An alternative level 3 course in critical thinking has been established. Attendance has improved, though it remains unsatisfactory. Students say that they enjoy the course, and appreciate the fact that it will contribute to their points tally for university applications. They also find that the disciplines learned in the lessons are helping them to plan and structure their writing in other subjects.

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	5	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	5	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	5	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	5	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	5	4
The effectiveness of management	5	4

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