

INSPECTION REPORT

THE JOHN WARNER SCHOOL

Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117597

Headteacher: Mr D J Kennedy

Lead inspector: Mrs S D Morgan

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 4th February 2005

Inspection number: 268971

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

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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:	Stanstead Road Hoddesdon Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN11 0QF
Telephone number:	01992 462889
Fax number:	01992 470679
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Cockman OBE
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

John Warner a comprehensive school of average size. It has 922 students in Years 7 to 11 and 176 students in the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry to the school has been just below average. The attainment of current Year 7 students on entry was broadly average. On entry to the sixth form standards are below average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, at almost eight percent, is below average. Most students live in the local area which has some social deprivation. An average proportion of students has been identified as having special educational needs. The needs of these students mostly relate to learning or behavioural difficulties. A below-average proportion of students have a statement of special educational need. Over 90 per cent of students are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic groups. A slightly higher-than-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language and seven are at an early stage of learning English. The school has a number of students from traveller families.

John Warner has recently gained science college status. The school is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. It has received a number of awards, including the DfES Achievement Award and Investors in People status, Charter Mark, Sports England Sportsmark and it is involved in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Young Enterprise.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Lead inspector	
9271	Mr S Ward	Lay inspector	
24142	Mrs S Argyle	Team inspector	English 11-16, 6 th form English
1503	Mr T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16, 6 th form mathematics
34011	Mr T O'Dea	Team inspector	Science 11-16, 6 th form chemistry
25778	Mr A Hicks	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-16
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16, Work-related learning 11-16
32590	Mr R Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16, GNVQ ICT 11-16
35060	Mr K Robinson	Team inspector	Geography 11-16, 6 th form geography
18663	Mr P Birchell	Team inspector	History 11-16, citizenship 11-16, 6 th form history
31682	Ms A Storey	Team inspector	Modern languages 11-16, 6 th form French
20767	Mr J Royle	Team inspector	Music 11-16, English as an additional language
23307	Mr N McDonough	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16, 6 th form physical education
32315	Mr P Wilbroe	Team inspector	Religious education 11-16
2652	Mr R Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs
32935	Ms B Johnston	Team inspector	6 th form business education

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited

Langshaw
Pastens Road
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 0RE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

John Warner is a good and improving school. The school has a good ethos which values students and encourages them to do their best whatever their background and needs. Students are proud of the school and parents are very supportive. Standards are average and have shown continued improvement. Teaching is good and students achieve well. The leadership and management of the school are good and staff work well as a team. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results have shown continued improvement
- Students achieve well due to good teaching and their positive attitudes and behaviour
- The commitment, vision and drive of the headteacher together with the very good leadership of senior managers have enabled the school to improve significantly
- High numbers of students benefit from the very good range of enrichment activities
- The school provides a caring environment which values students and expects them to do their best
- Students' language and literacy skills are not developed consistently across all subjects and this restricts their progress
- Students do not have well-developed independent learning skills
- Excellent links have been developed with primary schools

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Almost all of the issues identified in the previous inspection report have been dealt with effectively and strengths have been built upon. The school has become increasingly popular with parents and is oversubscribed. Teaching and learning has improved and this has led to a continued improvement in standards. However, although there has been improvement in the quality of provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) weaknesses remain in its co-ordination and management. The school does not fully meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship or for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The school community shares a strong commitment to further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	C
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 similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Overall, students achieve well. Students at all levels of attainment and with widely differing needs and backgrounds do equally well.

Students' attainment on entry to the school has shown some fluctuation, and has been just below average overall. Results of the most recent national tests at the end of Year 9 are not currently available. In 2003, results were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Students achieved satisfactorily in relation to their previous results. Overall, current standards are broadly average and students are achieving satisfactorily.

GCSE results were average in 2004 when compared with all schools nationally and students achieved satisfactorily in relation to their previous results. Current standards show

some improvement and students achieve well overall. Inspection evidence showed very good achievement in design and technology. Students following vocational courses achieve satisfactorily. However, insufficient curriculum time is allocated to religious education and students' achievements are unsatisfactory in this subject. Overall, students' language and literacy skills are not developed consistently across all subjects and this restricts their progress.

In the sixth form examination results have been well below average but standards are rising. Students are now achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry, which is generally below average for a sixth form of this type.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. Students are proud of the school and their positive attitudes, values and behaviour support their learning well. Their attendance is in line with the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school is providing a good education for its students.

The quality of teaching is good overall. This enables students to learn effectively and is a major factor in their good achievement. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all subjects observed, and good in a significant number. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations. They plan challenging work and expect students to work hard. The good management of students and high expectations of behaviour make a positive contribution to learning. Teachers encourage students to work collaboratively. However, they are less successful in developing students' capacity to work independently and in some lessons there is too much direction by the teacher. This is particularly evident in the sixth form where many students find independent reading and research difficult. Assessment procedures are good.

The curriculum is good and is being developed to meet the needs of all students. The range of enrichment activities is very good. The quality of support and guidance provided for students is good and the school has an effective partnership with parents. Links with the community are good and they are very good with other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is very good and governance of the school is good. Senior staff strive consistently to improve teaching and learning and to create a climate in which students can achieve their best. The leadership and management of subjects are good. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have been successful in bringing about improvement in many aspects of the school's work. Currently, statutory requirements relating to a daily act of collective worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form are not being met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is very popular with parents and they are supportive of its work. Students are very positive about the new sports and science facilities and the range of educational opportunities provided by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Develop students' language and literacy skills consistently across all subjects
- Develop students' independent learning skills systematically throughout the school

and, to meet statutory requirements

- For religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form
- For a daily act of collective worship

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

John Warner has a good and improving sixth form. It has grown substantially over the last two years and is much bigger than it was at the time of the last inspection. Examination results have been well below average but standards are rising. Teaching and learning are good, and there is very good teaching in around a third of lessons. As a result, students are now achieving well in relation to their starting point, which is generally below average for a sixth form of this type. The curriculum is satisfactory, in that it offers a reasonable range of academic subjects. There are few vocational courses provided at the school, but more of these options are available through other providers in the area. Students' personal development and their academic progress are effectively monitored and supported. Students have very good attitudes, are very well behaved and are very positive about the school. They are prepared to work hard in all their studies. The sixth form is very effectively led and managed and is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Achievement is good as a result of the consistently good teaching
- Students are well supported and guided in their academic progress
- The very positive attitudes of students contribute well to their overall achievement and the ethos of the school
- A high number of students start courses but do not complete them
- Leadership has a clear vision for the future and this is helping to make the sixth form successful
- Students do not have well-developed independent learning skills

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 sixth form subjects were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Satisfactory in English Literature and good in French. In English students benefit from good teaching, but their progress is limited by a lack of resources. Few students join the course with the highest GCSE grades and consequently find the work difficult. In French, students learn and achieve well because teachers are effective at helping them build on what they have learnt before. Students' attitudes are very positive.
Mathematics	Very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge, and the very well-motivated students work hard and achieve well.
Science	Satisfactory in chemistry. Students benefit from expert teaching but a high number of students fail to complete the course because they find it too difficult in comparison with the double science studied at GCSE.
Information and communication technology	Not inspected in the sixth form.
Humanities	Good in geography and history. In geography, students are well motivated because they enjoy the interactive style of teaching. In history, students are very well taught and achieve very well in lessons but they are too dependent on their teachers.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Not inspected in the sixth form.

Visual and performing arts and media	Not inspected in the sixth form.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good in physical education. Students are very well motivated and participate well in lessons. The good teaching is particularly effective at engaging students.
Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	Good in business education. Students are very enthusiastic. They learn and achieve well because the teaching is good.
Health and social care	Not inspected in the sixth form.
General education	Not inspected in the sixth form.

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'.

Lessons in other subjects were sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was good and students achieved well.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good support and guidance. Teachers know how well students are doing and give them good feedback on what they need to do to improve their work. They are given good guidance on careers and university options.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Overall, the sixth form is very well led and managed and so there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The leadership team has successfully led the expansion of the sixth form and developed an ethos where all are keen to learn. There is a clear vision amongst the school leadership and governors of the place of the sixth form in the overall post-16 provision in the area.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the school and the support they receive although a significant minority would like to see a broader range of courses.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students' attainment on entry to the school has shown some fluctuation, and has been just below average. The attainment of current Year 7 students on entry was broadly average. Standards are average and students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7-9 and well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have shown continued improvement
- Students achieve well due to good teaching and their positive attitudes and behaviour
- In Years 10 -11 students' achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory
- Weaknesses in the language and literacy skills of too many students restrict their progress
- Students with special educational needs do well, because work is carefully matched to their needs
- The school meets the needs of traveller children well
- Sixth form students who complete their courses make good progress because of the quality of teaching and their extremely positive attitudes to work
- A significant number of sixth form students start courses but do not complete them because they find the work too challenging

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (34.9)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (35.6)	n/a (35.4)
science	n/a (33.4)	n/a (33.6)

Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. In the end of Year 9 national tests taken in 2003, students achieved as well as might have been expected. Comparative results for 2004 are not available as data for the English tests has yet to be validated.
2. In 2003 results were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. The trend of improvement in these results over the five years up to 2003 is similar to the national trend. Boys and girls did equally well with differences close to those found nationally.
3. Current standards in Years 7-9 are average and the students achievements are satisfactory overall. Students achieve very well in history and well in a number of subjects such as mathematics, design and technology, modern languages, music and physical education. In almost all other subjects students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' attainment in ICT is below average because they have not had sufficient experience of the full range of applications. However, a new course has been introduced and they are now achieving satisfactorily.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (51)	52(52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (89)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)

Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.2 (35.4)	34.9 (34.7)
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There were 173 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. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average and showed improvement on the 2003 results. More than 90 per cent of students attained five or more A*-G grades and nearly all students gained a GCSE qualification. Students did as well as expected in relation to their performance in national tests taken at the end of Year 6.
5. The trend of improvement in GCSE results is above that found nationally. There is little significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
6. Students did best in design and technology, science and drama, and least well in relation to their other subjects in statistics and English language. The distribution of higher grades at GCSE A* - C is similar to that found nationally and reflects the good quality of teaching seen for students of all levels of attainment in Years 10 and 11.
7. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are average. Inspection evidence indicates that students have positive attitudes towards their studies and are achieving well. Students achieve very well in design and technology. Their achievement is good in almost all other subjects. It is satisfactory in English, ICT and citizenship and unsatisfactory in religious education because curriculum time is limited and the locally agreed syllabus cannot be fully covered.
8. The students' competence in using ICT in other subjects is satisfactory and they use mathematical skills well. In subjects other than English, students show literacy skills which are average. However, weaknesses in the ability of too many students to read around a topic and to produce accurate writing in an appropriate style restrict their progress. Overall, there is an inconsistent approach to promoting better language and literacy skills.
9. Students with special educational needs achieve well. This is because the school has a well-developed and effective system for working with students, their parents and outside agencies, fully in line with the Code of Practice. The required provision is fully met. Much high-quality information is provided for subject teachers. Students achieve best where, as in some mathematics lessons, there has been joint lesson planning between the subject teacher and teaching assistant, and where, as in design and technology, the subject guidance to teachers is sufficiently detailed to enable them to assure all students progress at least as well as expected.
10. The overall achievement of students who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) is good. They are encouraged to take a GCSE early in their mother tongue. This has proved successful with students in Year 9 having completed examinations in French, Spanish and German. The one-to-one language support sessions are effective and students achieve well.
11. The school has developed considerable expertise in the education of traveller children and provides for them very well. The staff responsible for managing provision for travellers, funded by the local education authority, work very well within the academic and pastoral systems of the school. They have been innovative in using technology, such as the Elamp3 project. Parents and students are highly appreciative of the positive and inclusive attitude of the school, and its efforts to provide the same educational opportunities for them as it does for all.
12. A good range of activities and enrichment opportunities, such as links with overseas schools, is provided for students identified as having particular gifts and talents. Their achievement is monitored annually to ensure they achieve appropriately. The school leadership plans to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies teachers use in lessons to

improve the achievement of gifted and talented students, but this is not yet included in the school's improvement plan.

13. Compared with standards at the time of the last inspection in 1998, students' attainment has improved in all three core subjects for students aged fourteen, with test results indicating better achievement for students of all abilities. GCSE results are much higher now, the proportion gaining five A*-C increasing from 13 per cent in 1998 to 57 per cent in the 2004 examinations. The overall improvement in standards in the main school has been good.

Sixth form

Students achieve well in relation to their starting point, which is generally below average.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	89.6 (85.2)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.4 (8.1)	36.2 (35.8)
Average point score per pupil	171.1 (156.1)	265.2(258.2)

There were 63 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

14. In 2004, results overall were well below the average of those in other schools. However, results showed improvement. The proportion of students gaining A-B grades increased with female students achieving better results than male. Results for grades A-E in A-level vocational courses were above the national average and for A-level GCE they were similar to the national average.
15. Standards currently are above average in mathematics, French, history and business education. In geography and physical education students are attaining average standards. Standards are below average in English and chemistry. Overall, current standards are average, and given the below-average starting point for many of the students this represents good achievement overall. Students' very positive attitudes and good teaching contribute significantly to their achievement.
16. Overall, the standard of students' language and literacy skills is average. Particular strengths are the maturity and flair students display in speaking and listening. However, many students have weaknesses in wider reading and higher-level, structured writing and this affects their independence and the standards they achieve. In other sixth form subjects, students make appropriate use of and extend their mathematical skills. Students use ICT well to present coursework and other assignments and to do research.
17. Since the time of the last inspection, the sixth form has increased in size significantly. Students with a wide range of prior attainment are welcomed into the sixth form and they are supported well. However, a significant proportion find the transition to AS and A-level study very challenging, particularly the requirements for research and independent study. As a consequence a significant number fail to complete their courses.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students behave well and are keen to learn. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to their work, which contributes to their achievement
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school
- Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are very good
- Good provision is made for students' personal development
- Students do not have enough opportunity to develop their independent learning skills

Commentary

18. Students' attitudes and behaviour were identified as strengths of the school in the last inspection. These strengths have been maintained. Students enjoy and take a pride in their school. In the vast majority of lessons, they settle to work without fuss and are keen to learn. A large number take part with enthusiasm in the many extra-curricular activities on offer. Students' positive attitudes contribute to their good achievement because they work hard in lessons. However, students do not

all have well developed study skills, in that they are often very dependent on their teachers. They are less confident when asked to work independently.

19. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Students get on very well with each other and with their teachers. They collaborate effectively when allocated paired or group activities, taking turns and sharing responsibility.
20. Behaviour is good around the school and in the vast majority of lessons. There have been just two permanent exclusions and short fixed-period exclusion is used as an appropriate sanction. Although, in their questionnaire responses, quite a high number of students expressed concerns about bullying, students express confidence that when incidents are reported they are dealt with well by form tutors and heads of year.
21. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are encouraged to take on responsibility, so that, for example, all take a turn manning the duty desk in the reception area. In Year 8, students act as ambassadors for the school when they meet parents of prospective students at the school open evenings. The buddy system means that younger students in Year 7 feel there is an older student who they can go to if they feel troubled.
22. Students take an interest in and play an active part in raising money for a variety of charities. They are helped to develop an awareness of their own cultural heritage and that of others, particularly through art and music. Spiritual development is satisfactory, although the quality of work done in tutor time varies very widely. Opportunities for reflection are frequently missed on those days when the students do not have an assembly.
23. Attendance rates are satisfactory, and the school makes good arrangements for keeping track of absence and for promoting good attendance. Punctuality is satisfactory. The vast majority of students arrive at school on time and move quickly to lessons.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.2	School data	0.3
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
995	65	2
2		
15	2	
4		
2		
4	1	
3		
0		
0		
8		
7	1	

Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	1		

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
Any other ethnic group	27	2	
No ethnic group recorded	16	4	

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

Sixth form

24. All of the features of personal development in the main school apply in abundance to the sixth form. Students are highly motivated in their studies and very eager to learn. Their behaviour is consistently very good.
25. Sixth form students take a significant role in leading activities within the school and contribute very positively to the ethos of the school. There are house captains and vice-captains, a head boy and head girl, and a number of students take on prefect and mentor roles, so that there are positions of responsibility for all who want to take them on. Younger students speak particularly positively of the help they are given by sixth formers who act as buddies and who help in their tutor groups.
26. As in the main school, however, independent study skills are a weakness. Sixth form students are very dependent on their teachers and many lack the skills to work independently as effectively as they should. The difficulty that some have in making the transition from the expectations of GCSE to those of an advanced-level course is a factor in the relatively high number of students who leave the sixth form before they have completed their course.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Strengths in teaching, the curriculum, support for students and partnership with parents and external organisations contribute positively to how well students achieve.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment procedures are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations
- Lessons are planned well and what is to be learnt is shared with students
- Teachers expect students to work hard and challenge them to do their best
- Good relationships and students' positive attitudes make a significant contribution to learning
- In some lessons teachers are too directive and provide insufficient opportunities for students to work independently
- The pace of learning suffers in some classes when groups are large
- Assessment procedures are good. Data is analysed carefully and used effectively to help students improve

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 171 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	42 (25%)	67 (39%)	55 (32%)	5 (3%)	0(0%)	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.

27. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The percentage of satisfactory or better teaching has increased from 87 per cent to 97 per cent. Over two-thirds was graded good or better and just over a quarter very good or excellent. Teaching in the sixth form had particular strengths. All of the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and four-fifths were good or better.
28. Considerable efforts have been made to recruit suitable staff and subjects such as mathematics have a full complement of specialist staff. Improvements in the quality of teaching are having a positive effect on students' achievement.
29. Parents and students were positive about the school's high expectations. Questionnaire responses from sixth form students indicated that they found teaching challenging and demanding. Overall, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in almost all subjects in Years 7 to 11, and good in a number including mathematics and science. However, students do not learn enough in religious education in Years 10 -11 due to a lack of curriculum time. In the sixth form teaching in all the focus subjects was at least good and very good in mathematics and history.
30. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' good levels of subject knowledge which enable them to challenge students effectively. In several subject areas strong teamwork is a feature, for example in history, teachers are reflective and keen to lead on many whole-school initiatives. They support each other and show a high level of commitment and this helps them to prepare students well for examinations. Teachers plan their work carefully with well-structured activities that are matched to students' needs in particular sets. For example in science, lesson objectives are always shared with students so that they know what they are going to learn and what is to be completed by the end of the session. Work is made interesting, for example in geography, through giving students the opportunity to work outside the classroom and apply their knowledge on fieldwork or investigative activities.
31. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching techniques which engage students' interest. For example, in the best modern languages lessons teachers ensure that students actively participate and students are given time to practise in order to consolidate their learning. Students' interest is maintained and they achieve well. In design and technology good use is made of exemplar materials so that students know the standard of work that is expected in order to achieve examination success. This motivates students to improve their work and aim for high standards. In music, high expectations of behaviour ensure that lessons have good pace and time is used effectively. Brisk starter activities capture students' interest and they are motivated to work hard. In almost all lessons students' positive attitudes to their work contribute significantly to their learning.
32. In other successful lessons, teachers use demonstration and discussion effectively to develop students' understanding and literacy skills. For example, in the best art lessons teachers demonstrated particular techniques to develop students' skills. Through skilful question and answer sessions, research and written tasks students' literacy skills are developed well. In physical education students' learning is helped through the evaluation of their own performance and that of others. In the best English lessons teachers use praise and encouragement well to develop positive relationships and to create a learning atmosphere in which students feel confident to put forward ideas.
33. Satisfactory lessons had some of the features of good and very good lessons. However, in a number of these lessons students are often not given sufficient opportunities to work independently and become self-reliant and teachers talk too much or do too much for the students. In some art lessons large classes limit students' learning. The groups are too large for most of the rooms and this limits the range and scale of work students can do.

These restrictions contribute to unsettled behaviour and a lack of concentration by a minority of boys that in turn hampers the work and achievements of other students.

34. Teaching assistants are committed and enthusiastic, and their work is valued highly by teachers and students. Their recent allocation to subject faculties is beginning to improve the flow of information about students' developing needs. Their deployment to support the achievement of individual students in lessons is under review. Currently it is not as a result of criteria based on individual needs. Some students, whose progress in lessons with a high literacy content depends on support, do not receive sufficient help.
35. Assessment overall is good with a main strength in the collection, analysis and use of data. This enables students to be placed in appropriate groups, to be set targets and have their progress towards these monitored. The marking of work is generally good and ongoing assessment is best in history and design and technology, where there are clear, thorough and constructive systems. In these subjects the students receive very good guidance about what they need to do to reach the next level. In mathematics the success at each question in examinations is analysed carefully so that teaching can be adjusted to support improvement. Across the school the least strong feature in assessment is the students' own involvement in the process, in knowing precisely themselves how they are doing and how to improve, but this is an appropriate focus for whole school development.

Sixth form

36. Teaching in the sixth form is good with a number of strong features. In all of the subjects inspected in depth, teaching was at least good. It was very good in mathematics and history.
37. Strengths noted in teaching were similar to those found in the rest of the school. A general weakness is that students' ability to work independently is not developed sufficiently. Students are too reliant on their teachers and do not undertake sufficient research and reading outside of lesson time to enable them to gain the higher examination grades. For example, in geography a number of students on the AS course have relatively low GCSE grades and they have found the requirement for extended research very challenging. This has led to them being over-dependent on the teacher.
38. Assessment is good in the sixth form. Students indicate they know the level at which they are working and they receive good feedback about how they are progressing. The school sets target grades for individuals based on their GCSE performance. The monitoring of value being added across the sixth form gives a useful guide to the needs of different groups of students. Helpful practice, for example in mathematics, involves analysing performance to help future planning and ensuring that students know how examiners mark questions. As in the main school, ensuring students are fully involved in the process is a relative weakness.

The curriculum

Overall, the main school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum and opportunities for enrichment are very good. However, statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 -11 and a daily act of collective worship are not being met fully. Throughout the school, the provision of accommodation and resources is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a good range of subjects that students can study in Years 7-11 that link to advanced level courses in the sixth form
- High numbers of students benefit from the very good range of enrichment activities
- New science and sports facilities are making a significant impact on the learning and enjoyment of students and adults in the community

- The effectiveness of ICT, citizenship and PSHE cannot be easily monitored because of the complicated amalgamations with other subjects
- Statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 -11 and a daily act of collective worship are not being met fully
- The school has been successful at recruiting good teachers

Commentary

39. The school's recently gained special status in science is beginning to influence the shape of the curriculum, and new vocational science courses are being planned. Overall, the curriculum has a good range of courses that meet the needs of the students. The length of the school week meets recommendations but there is insufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 due to an unusual combined citizenship course and provision is unsatisfactory.
40. Overall, there is a good range of subjects and good provision. English, geography, and ICT have some limitations and the provision in these subjects is therefore satisfactory. In Years 7 and 8 all students study French. The middle and higher-attaining students in Year 9 can augment their studies through a choice of two other European languages. ICT is taught through English in Year 7 and mathematics in Year 8. In Year 9 students receive a single ICT lesson each week and provision meets National Curriculum requirements.
41. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers students good opportunities to study a wider variety of subjects. The school is developing the range of courses to extend choice and reflect the specialism of the school. Vocational qualifications are available in ICT, business studies and sport.
42. Collective worship is not a daily event for each student. However, the school does provide a satisfactory weekly assembly and daily tutor periods that offer opportunities for monitoring personal development and periods of reflection. These tutor periods of fifteen minutes are short and the quality of the activities provided is too variable.
43. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in the form tutor period of Year 7; it is then combined with food technology in Years 8 and 9. There are additional special days for citizenship events in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 PSHE takes place in the tutor sessions. These complex timetabling arrangements for: ICT, PSHE, and citizenship are currently under review to ensure better cohesion. Overall, provision is satisfactory.
44. Careers education is satisfactory. Years 8 and 9 have a careers simulation game and opportunities to consider career paths. A staffing shortfall in careers education has impacted on the provision. Students in Year 9 are not having dedicated careers lessons. The school has good arrangements to ensure that Year 9 students make sensible Year 10 choices through individual interviews with experienced teachers. In Year 10 students benefit from work experience and inputs from other further education providers. This helps them to make informed decisions about their further education and career routes. Connexions advisers provide additional targeted support helping students to make decisions regarding further training and career.
45. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. A refined curriculum range is offered to some students who have particular special educational needs in Years 10 -11. This includes extended work experience and a certificated ASDAN course.
46. The school is involved with a DfES project for supporting students of travelling families. This has led to very good provision for these students. Additional support in the school ensures that these students have made very good progress.
47. Very good arrangements are in place for extending learning. Students have access to a good range of support and catch-up clubs. The library and ICT rooms are staffed every lunch-hour and after school to help students with their work. Other subjects make very good

provision for extended learning. There are visiting artists and special creative arts events including visits to galleries. Modern foreign languages has extensive enhancement through the many exchange visits and Internet links with other schools in Europe. Geography has a good range of field study visits that focus on local rivers, and urban areas, Cadbury's industrial site and ecology at Kew gardens. Many students get involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and work towards gaining recognition of their expeditions and voluntary community service.

48. Students enjoy using the new sporting facilities and participate well in a wide range of team and individual events. Very good use is made of the swimming pool, fitness room and outdoor sport courts in the lunch hour and after school. The arts are well catered for with music, drama and creative performances, activities and visits. Students can take advantage of a good range of music groups that include string instruments, brass, wind band, choirs and jazz groups.
49. The school has been very successful in recruiting teachers to teach mathematics and science. Both faculties have a very good balance of experienced and newly qualified staff in subjects where there are shortages nationally. The staffing in these subjects strongly supports the school's specialist status. In response to a weakness identified in the last inspection the library is well managed and is now a place where students can work independently. The school is adequately staffed with technicians in science and design and technology.
50. Teachers who carry the major responsibility for students with special needs are well qualified. However, there are too few teaching assistants - working alongside teachers in the classroom - to ensure that the students with special educational needs are given the support they need.
51. Accommodation is good throughout the school and there are very good new science laboratories and a new sports centre includes a swimming pool, sports hall, squash courts, aerobic centre, fitness suite and a crèche. The learning resource centre has been expanded and now provides good facilities for independent study. The dining hall is in good condition and attractive but is now overcrowded due to the expanded school population.

52. Teaching rooms are grouped well in most subject areas. However, in the art area the teaching rooms are insufficient for the large groups. This is having an effect on behaviour management and also limiting the scope of practical work. Similar issues exist for geography. History has rooms that can only be accessed through other classrooms. The underground heating pipes having started to show signs of corrosion, and leakage has caused disruption to some facilities. Generally, the school is in a good state of repair, well maintained and with very little litter or graffiti. Maintenance issues are reported and acted on quickly by a dedicated and effective site management team.
53. Resources for learning are satisfactory. They have improved and the recent granting of specialist science college status has led to an increase in funding for subject areas. All subject areas with the exception of business studies have sufficient textbooks. The library provides a very effective learning resource area, which is well used by children from early in the morning to late in the evening. The provision of books has been supported by donations from governors and the good number of computers means that this area can be used for teaching, as well as allowing students to use the Internet to improve the quality of their homework and coursework. However, in music there are insufficient computers. Design and technology lacks control technology equipment and inadequate benching restrict students' achievements.

Sixth form

54. The sixth form has recently expanded and half of Year 11 students joined the sixth form in 2004. The curriculum offered is satisfactory and opportunities for enrichment are very good. Students now have opportunities to study a wide range of traditional advanced level courses. Single science courses, critical thinking, general studies, and psychology have been added to the range of subjects offered previously at GCSE. Although the sixth form has grown recently many of the courses still have small groups. In some situations this has influenced the viability and effectiveness of learning. A partnership agreement exists with another sixth form to enable students to study German. Those seeking vocational courses other than child-care, sport and business tend to leave and attend other further education institutions. The entry requirements are similar to other institutions but some allowances have been made for individual students who show future potential. The school fails to comply with the requirements for religious education and collective worship.
55. Students gain organisational and leadership skills in managing student committees. Opportunities are provided for all students to become involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and through this work students develop their personal and social skills.
56. Students gain from special enhancements to sixth form courses through visits and fieldwork activities. For example students of modern foreign languages have visited the Institut-Francais and geography students have studied in Milan and the Netherlands.
57. Students are now benefiting from the new accommodation in science, sport and the learning resources centre. The latter has provided better independent study facilities that are shared with the main school and enabled the previously used study space to become converted into a social area. At peak times this area is overcrowded.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for the welfare and guidance of students are good. Arrangements for taking account of students' views are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong procedures for pupils' care are in place, including child protection arrangements
- The induction arrangements for pupils are good
- The school has good systems for monitoring students' academic standards and progress

- Students are able to express their views through the school council, but it is mainly the sixth formers who feel listened to

Commentary

58. Suitable health and safety measures are effective, with risk assessments carried out on a regular basis. The school has Healthy Schools status and a good range of healthy food is available at lunchtime. Arrangements for dealing with students' medical conditions are thorough. Two teaching staff are fully trained in first aid, as are five non-teaching staff who are always on call. Accidents and medicine administration procedures are caring and efficient.
59. The school uses a wide range of external support services including visits from a nurse. Child protection arrangements are secure. The designated member of staff with responsibility for liaising with outside agencies is properly trained to carry out the duties associated with this role. All new staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are trained as they join the school and kept up to date with relevant procedures.
60. Arrangements for the induction of students in Year 7 are good and work successfully. The induction programme ensures students' interests and aspirations are expressed from the moment they come to the school which allows them to settle down quickly. This was confirmed when speaking with a group of Year 7 students who came from several different primary schools. Further support is available to Year 7 students through the effective "buddy" system, with two sixth formers allocated to each form, and through the support of form tutors and senior pastoral staff.
61. An active school council draws representatives from each of the Year Group councils. Although this gives students a voice on school issues, the views raised by students in Years 7 to 11 are, in effect, filtered by the sixth form students who lead the Council. As a result, some younger students are sceptical about how effective their council really is.
62. Students benefit from good guidance and support, both in their personal development and their academic progress. Students throughout the school express confidence that there is a member of staff they can go to and discuss problems or concerns. Their academic achievement in each subject is tracked as they progress through the school, and students identified as being at risk of underachieving are offered appropriate help.
63. The care, guidance and support for students learning English as an additional language are good. Students' language skills are assessed on entry to the school. This information is communicated to teachers via the school database and electronic mail. However this information does not always include specific strategies and advice for teachers to meet the needs of individual students. The progress of students who are at an early stage of language development is assessed regularly. The school has access to translators for consultative meetings but prefers to use its in-house support. The school has good links with the home and works closely with parents. Pupils commented on the good support that they receive in the school.

Sixth form

64. The care arrangements for sixth form students are similar to those in the main school. There are similarly good arrangements for the induction of students who transfer to the sixth form from Year 11, although many still find the transition difficult because quite a high proportion embark on AS-level courses with lower-than-average relevant GCSE grades.
65. The students benefit from good guidance on their academic progress, so that they feel that they have a fairly good idea of how well they are likely to do in their examination courses. However, on some courses, this contributes to the low retention rate as students leave courses after the first term when they find that their expected grades are lower than they had hoped for.

66. Good advice and guidance is given that prepares students well for making university applications. A three-day workshop on careers planning and employment is organised in conjunction with the Connexions services. Good opportunities are provided to visit degree course taster days at universities. However, more than half of the students in 2004 decided to not follow a university path and entered local employment.
67. Because of the many opportunities they have to take on responsibility, including leading the school council, sixth form students feel that their views are valued.
68. Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare and health and safety are good and students receive good support, advice and guidance. Good transfer and induction arrangements are in place. The school involves students in the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are good. There are excellent links with local primary schools.

Main strengths

- Reports give parents a good, clear picture of how well their children are doing
- Strong links with local businesses have helped the school to win its bid for science specialist status and are giving students good mentoring support
- There are excellent links with local primary schools covering a wide range of different subjects

Commentary

69. Parents are very positive about the school and about the improvements they have seen over recent years. This is reflected in the increasing popularity of the school and of the sixth form, both of which have expanded considerably in the years since the last inspection.
70. Parents are given good, clear information about how well their children are doing. Reports are detailed, with individual comments from each subject teacher and giving parents an indication, for each subject, of their child's effort, behaviour, homework and coursework, attendance and organisation. Reports also give parents a good picture of their child's National Curriculum level (for Years 7-9) or expected examination grade (for Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form). A descriptive statement gives an account of the expectations of work at a particular grade or level and, for most subjects, there is a brief summary of what students need to do to attain the next higher grade or level, although these notes vary quite widely in quality.
71. Community links are a growing strength. The school is playing an increasing role in the local community association, with student representatives taking a full part in the association's committee meetings. Very effective links have been developed with some large local businesses, including pharmaceutical companies who played a key role in supporting the school's recent move to specialist status as a science college and who have contributed key staff to provide mentoring and support for students.
72. Satisfactory links are in place with other secondary schools but links with primary schools in the area are exceptionally strong. Science links, pre-dating the school's award of specialist status, involve students from primary schools coming in to John Warner for weekly lessons in the school's laboratories. In addition, the school has run forensic science sessions for able primary students and has taken part in primary environmental science projects. Unusually, however, the John Warner's links with primary schools go beyond its specialist field. There is a range of outreach provision, with teachers from the school going out to teach at primary schools, in mathematics, physical education, and French. This is much more extensive than usually seen.

Sixth form

73. Parents of students in the sixth form are kept well informed of their sons' and daughters' progress. It is sixth form students who take on the representative roles in the local community association. Partnership arrangements with other institutions are currently satisfactory and are in a process of transition. A local strategic review of post-16 provision is due to result in a broader partnership with other local institutions, and particularly another secondary school in the area, offering a wider range of course choices to students from both schools from September 2005.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is very good and governance of the school is good. Leadership throughout the school is effective and management is good. Currently, statutory requirements relating to a daily act of collective worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form are not being met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior team provide very effective leadership with a clear vision focused on improvement and raising achievement
- Governors are effective and know the school's strengths and weaknesses
- The school's philosophy of inclusion is put into practice effectively
- Evaluation is used effectively to monitor the quality of teaching and learning
- Not all statutory requirements are met fully

Commentary

74. The headteacher has a clear vision for success of the school and this is shared by governors and staff alike. The main thrust of the vision is to raise the academic profile of the school to clearly show that all students can achieve. The very strong senior team has provided the drive and dynamic determination in the dramatic improvement in GCSE results. The recent success in gaining specialist school status, the development of the school site and the outstanding work with local primary schools has also contributed significantly to improving the image of the school in the local community. It is now heavily oversubscribed with applications to join in Year 7.
75. The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and it is as a result of this that the headteacher was appointed to improve the academic profile of the school. Governors are active in supporting developments in the school through frequent visits and attendance at governors committees. The governing body has worked very hard to steer the developments of the new facilities and provided a strategic overview for moving the school forward. However, governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements are fully met.
76. Overall, the effectiveness of leadership and management at subject level is good. Leadership in some subjects such as design and technology and history is very good. In almost all other subjects it is at least satisfactory. However, in religious education it is unsatisfactory overall, as a result of the senior management decision to reduce the curriculum time for religious education in Years 10-11 to an unacceptably low level and the failure to meet the requirements of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. New leadership in English is providing a vision and has abundant energy in managing the learning of the subject.
77. The school has developed a comprehensive and effective evaluation procedure which is now part of the school's culture of accountability. All subject areas undergo an in-depth review each year. This involves the senior leadership team in evaluating strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. Individual targets are set and professional development needs identified. A whole-school performance review is undertaken at the start of each academic year when all subject leaders report on examination successes. The senior leadership team monitors all reports before these are sent to governors as part of the school's evaluation procedure to check on quality and standards.
78. Assessment data is used effectively for planning how to raise achievement. The planning process starts following the evaluation of examinations. Middle managers prepare action plans using the information from Year 6, Year 9 and Year 11 and these are included in the school's examination improvement plan. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good. As part of performance management, additional lesson observations are

used in conjunction with subject-area evaluations to help share good practice. The success of this policy is measured by the improvements in achievement as well as the open professional dialogue about teaching and learning strategies. The system does not allow curriculum time for subject leaders to observe on a regular basis but improvements are planned to give subject leaders timetabled time to observe lessons.

79. The commitment of the governors, headteacher and senior managers to promote inclusion is very evident throughout the work of the school, for example through the steps taken to prevent students from exclusion. The school also fulfils its inclusion philosophy in taking students excluded from other schools. Provision for students from traveller families is very good and students with special educational needs are almost always taught within subject classes. It is too early to judge the effect of the recent re-allocation of responsibilities by which the school's systems which support the Code of Practice and those which manage its provision are separated. The challenge faced by the school is to ensure clear lines of communication which maintain its holistic approach to provision for individual students.
80. The school has successfully recruited the teachers it needs to support the specialist science status. A number of initiatives are now running that are designed to strengthen the relationship between the school and its sponsors, and help the school establish a reputation for itself in the eyes of its students, parents and business partners. By harnessing the support of teachers, including those who have industrial experience, the students will have the chance to participate in National Science Week, explore work related opportunities in the field of science and engineering and benefit from joining a mentoring programme.
81. Performance management is organised effectively. It is informed by the school's thoroughly prepared performance data and has formed the basis from which the school has improved the examination results, raised the expectations of subject leaders and sharpened the lines of accountability for students' examination results.
82. Newly-qualified teachers are given good support by their subject mentor and through the school's induction programme. Serving teachers who are promoted from within the school are not given the same level of support and guidance to fulfil their new role. The process for induction for new teachers to the school is satisfactory. Support staff are deployed effectively, to undertake some of the secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching responsibilities.
83. Financial management is very good. Spending decisions are based on priorities outlined in the school improvement plan. The staffing review undertaken by the deputy headteacher has resulted in streamlining staff budget costs so that maximum resources are used for curriculum improvements. As a result some class sizes have been increased to give a more equitable student teacher ratio. This has led to a number of staff teaching in subjects outside their specialist area. Specialist school funding has been used to increase resources to subject areas and ICT funding has increased to improve provision across the school. An improvement since the last report. All subject leaders are involved in resource consultation and they understand best value principles. The bursar keeps careful accounts of all spending and the responsible officer oversees the financial management and report to the governors' finance committee.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,168,049	Balance from previous year	192,384
Total expenditure	4,311,793	Balance carried forward to the next	48,460
Expenditure per pupil	4,073		

Sixth form

84. The headteacher, senior managers and the head of sixth form are a very effective team. They have a clear focus for developing provision in the sixth form. Through their drive and determination and because of a strategy to raise expectation, the sixth form has grown in size during the last two years. New accommodation has now provided a sixth form base and the range of courses is developing through links with local colleges and schools. A

clear vision for improvement is shared by the governors and headteacher, and it is clearly articulated among the school staff.

85. Leadership and management of the subjects inspected in depth are good overall, and they are very effective in mathematics and history. As a result of specialist school status, good links with pharmaceutical companies have been established and a number of sixth-form students benefit from working with external mentors. Staff have good levels of subject knowledge and accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work related learning

Provision for work related learning is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are encouraged to be ambitious and to prepare for employment and advanced study
- Links with the local employers help students achieve well
- Within subjects the work related learning elements are not yet fully in place
- There are few vocational courses offered in the main school and sixth form

Commentary

86. Gaining specialist science status has enabled the school to strengthen aspects of its Year 10 careers and work related education programme. Additional placements are planned, for example, in an international pharmaceutical company and with other local science and engineering companies. These and similar opportunities are helping to raise students achievements, foster high ambitions and make them more aware of the opportunities for advanced study and employment within the sciences. The school is building on its established careers programme and endeavouring to provide increased opportunities for students with a range of aptitudes and aspirations. Sixth form students benefit from these and similar programmes for mentoring and work shadowing. In the curriculum overall however, there are very few courses offered for students wishing to take vocational options, both in the main school and sixth form.
87. Students have a sound understanding of enterprise and employability. There is an established programme of interviews and in some courses there are specific elements that enable students to practice techniques and work on improving inter-personal skills. A good example of this was seen in the ASDAN course. The school also collapses the timetable and involves students in day-long activities like the 'Real Game' and in projects designed to raise their aspirations to 'aim higher'. In Year 8 students used their ICT skills to design a web page and, following their two week work placements Year 10 students are debriefed and encouraged to reflect on and learn from the experience. Students demonstrate initiative and decision-making through the school council and the prefect system.
88. The task of overseeing and co-ordinating the different aspects of work related learning has been appropriately delegated and lies with the senior management team. A plan for development sets out the priorities and the monitoring and evaluation of the different components. A weakness of the plan is that there are no clear deadlines for completing the subject audits and incorporating the relevant additions into schemes of work. There are, however, appropriate plans to gather the views of parents, students and employers on the quality of the programmes offered, both in the school, through partner institutions and local employers.
89. The organisation and management of work related learning, and the benefits of the overlapping activities and tutorials within the citizenship and PSHE programmes are weakened by the amount of time given to these aspects of students' education. This is currently being reviewed by the school.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is satisfactory.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE English results have improved, especially for boys
- Students are interested, keen to succeed and well behaved
- Weaknesses in basic writing skills restrict students' achievements
- In the best planned teaching, students learn well and relationships are good
- Marking of work is inconsistent
- New leadership has quickly identified priorities for improvement

Commentary

90. Students enter the school with average attainment in English. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, students performed above the national average in 2003 and boys in particular made further gains in 2004. There was a significant improvement on previous years, greater than the improvement in mathematics or science. GCSE results in 2004 in English Language were in line with national averages though few students gained the highest grades. Results in the lower entry for English Literature were also in line with national averages. Although boys' results are above the average for boys nationally and have improved more than the girls', they are outperformed by girls in both GCSE examinations. Results in drama are consistently high; although few students gain the highest grade, more than three quarters attained GCSE A or B in 2004.
91. Currently, students in all years are attaining average standards in much of their work. Almost all students are motivated to do as well as they can and overall their achievement is satisfactory. When teaching is strong, students achieve well as they progress through the school. By Year 9, students are well prepared for their national tests. Speaking skills are well developed and students build confidence because they regularly discuss ideas in pairs and groups. When presenting their findings to the whole class, they listen well to each other. Reading is good in that all students read and understand a range of texts studied in class. They make effective use of the Internet for research and have good access to books and help in the Learning Resource Centre. Younger students are encouraged to read independently in some tutor periods though few admit to reading for pleasure at other times. Older students frequently word process their writing which enables them to correct and edit efficiently. When teaching is good, students produce lively writing, well planned, drafted and improved to a standard of which they are proud. By Year 11, there are many examples of high quality, personal responses to texts in literature. When teaching is not so well focused and work insufficiently marked, students fill their books with notes or copy from the board with less enthusiasm. Finished writing is careless and frequently poorly presented indicating

weaknesses in basic skills. Students with learning or behaviour difficulties make satisfactory progress, especially when taught in small classes where they have extra support.

92. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Difficulties with staff turnover have now been overcome but there is still inconsistency in the quality of teaching. At its best, teaching is enthusiastic and consistently challenging. This stems from very thoroughly planned work which is matched sensitively to students' needs. Some good and very good lessons were observed during the inspection which students enjoyed and in which they learned very well. However, not all teaching clearly identifies what students should be learning and resources are not always appropriate for the ability or age of the class. There is the temptation on the part of some teachers to talk too much or to do too much for the students which limits self-reliance and independence. Marking of students' work is either meticulous and helpful or insubstantial with no guidance on how to improve. Nevertheless, all teaching seen was characterised by good relationships. At the end of lessons, students always attempted to evaluate how successful their learning had been and this was a useful activity when the teacher had defined the learning objectives beforehand.
93. Energetic new leadership has already identified clear priorities for improvement and has the determination to raise standards. There is a common will to build on and share the strengths in the subject area and, after many recent changes in leadership, to achieve a united team approach. Although it is too soon to see the impact of recent initiatives, teachers are committed to do their best by the students and expectations of work and behaviour are high. Plans are already in hand to revise some of the teaching material, introduce more drama in Years 7-9, and make greater use of ICT. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

94. The standard achieved in reading and writing in subjects across the curriculum is average although the school has no system for monitoring this. Students speak confidently and opportunities are frequently given for lively discussion. Most students listen well to each other and show respect for others' views. However, weaknesses in students' ability to read around a topic and to produce accurate writing in an appropriate style restrict their progress. Individually, many teachers give good guidance in structuring written work, for example in history and geography where they create writing frames and list key points and important words for students to use. However, there is an inconsistent approach to promoting better language and literacy skills. The school has yet to raise awareness of different types of reading and writing in each subject in order to improve standards.

Drama

95. GCSE results in drama are consistently high and teaching is very enthusiastic.
96. GCSE results for drama in 2004 were very good with almost every student attaining grade A*-C. Results are consistently well above the national average. Although drama is taught only occasionally within English lessons in Years 7-9, the high standard reached in examinations is reflected in the work seen in current Year 10 and 11 classes where drama is taught as a GCSE option. Students' strong motivation and willingness to think helps them make very good progress. For example, a Year 10 class studying the various family feelings in *Romeo and Juliet* read closely between the lines to find the nuances of meaning.
97. The quality of teaching seen was all very good. Lessons were well planned. The old sports hall offers a good space but has yet to be adapted for teaching drama. Students enjoy the subject, respond quickly to instructions and work co-operatively. They have many opportunities to visit high- quality professional theatre.

Modern Foreign Languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to learning
- Teaching has improved through applying more consistent strategies
- Students have access to a good range of extra-curricular activities
- Schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed

Commentary

98. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were above average in German and Italian and below average in French. In 2004 the school entered above 60 per cent of its students for French alone which is well above the national entry. The number of A*-A grades in French was close to 21 per cent which is high against results achieved nationally.
99. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations with girls achieving slightly better than boys. All students study French in Years 7-9 and the majority study either German or Italian as a second Modern Foreign Language in Year 9. Lower-attaining students are given the opportunity to work towards The Certificate of Achievement in French. Achievement overall is good in all three languages. The study of a modern foreign language is now an option in Years 10 and 11 and standards in both years are good in writing, reading and listening – speaking is less developed overall. Students are focused on GCSE and apply themselves conscientiously. Higher-attainers are making good progress.
100. Overall, teaching and learning are good. All teachers are able and proficient linguists but as a result of staffing difficulties not all classes are taught by a specialist in German. Apart from one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. It was good in most. Where teaching and learning are very good the pace is lively with activities which are varied and challenging, giving sufficient time to practise in order for students to consolidate learning. However, in many lessons there are few opportunities for independent learning as the teacher tends to lead for a large portion of the allocated time. The best teaching has high levels of the foreign language used by skilled teachers who demand student's active participation. For example, very good teaching was seen with a Year 8 low-attaining group who were all actively engaged. Students are not encouraged enough to do their best to use the language for routine requests or to answer questions. Teachers manage their students well, which leads to good relationships and positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are well planned: they are well structured with good starter activities and a clear focus. The review of the objectives at the end of the lesson is sometimes forgotten or missed out altogether because of lack of time.
101. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the subject and the further developments needed to raise standards are stated in the subject improvement plan and annual review. Schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed and do not give enough guidance on the sort of tasks students might be expected to do during a unit of work or how these tasks might be assessed. Teachers work mainly from textbooks and have not got the

time and opportunities to work as a team to produce resources and to share effective practice. Students benefit not only from the opportunities for studying three languages but also from taking part in extra-curricular activities for example residential trips to Paris, visits to partner schools in Germany and Italy and exchanges. Good liaison exists with a local primary school where a weekly hour of French is taught in Year 6 by a member of the subject area. Overall, accommodation is good with colourful wall displays but some of the blinds are badly damaged. Resources are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the study of two languages was introduced in Year 9, as well as more appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11. Standards at GCSE have risen significantly in German and Italian. A wider range of learning activities including ICT opportunities were included in the schemes of work which the subject area is now well placed to develop further. This represents good improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are above average because teaching and preparation for GCSE examinations are good
- Students of all levels of attainment make good progress due to their hard work and the help they receive
- Assessment data is analysed and used well to guide teaching
- GCSE Statistics results in 2004 were very good
- Teaching methods, especially in Years 7-9, tend to lack variety and challenge

Commentary

102. Results in both Year 9 and at GCSE were above the national average when compared with all schools and with similar schools nationally. Boys' results are higher than girls' but there is little significant difference in their achievement. Results have been improving in recent years.
103. Standards are broadly average when students start in Year 7. Students achieve well to reach standards that are above average by Year 9 and Year 11. Average and lower-attaining students in particular are successful in a good range of mathematics. This is echoed in the high proportion entering GCSE and the quality of work in the lower sets. Middle-set students confidently tackled challenging GCSE simultaneous equations because of the excellent guidance and encouragement they received. Students generally are strongest at applying routine methods they have been taught. They are less strong when having to think for themselves, discuss methods or explore ideas. In most classes students behave well and work hard, and this has a positive impact on achievement. In 2004, about one third of Year 11 students achieved A*-C grades in GCSE statistics, which was a highly commendable performance, as the subject was studied alongside mathematics.
104. The school has a full complement of mathematics specialists. Lesson preparation is good. Objectives are shared with students making it clear what they have to learn, which is checked at the end of a lesson. The teachers encourage and support the students well. Students are helped to make good progress as the teachers know individuals well, and work is planned to match their needs in the different sets. For example, in a very good

lesson, the low-attaining students successfully learnt how to find a fraction of an amount because this skill was taught incrementally whilst building confidence. A major strength is the use of assessment data to track students' progress and to focus teaching on topics that need attention. This works particularly well in Years 10 and 11. The marking of work is satisfactory, although students are not always fully aware of how to improve.

105. Especially in Years 9-11, teachers sometimes make insufficient use of discussion and exploration of ideas, practical resources including calculators and computers, and problem solving activities. Weaknesses occur in some teaching because it is not mathematically rigorous or challenging enough for the abilities of the students. Behaviour and attitudes in these classes also suffer. The use and development of literacy is weak generally within the learning of mathematics, with too little attention to vocabulary or the development of students' communication skills.
106. Overall, leadership sets high expectations for the achievement of students in mathematics. This ambition is matched with good systems that prepare students for examinations. The use of assessment data to check the effectiveness of teaching has also supported the good improvements in recent years. However, both leadership and management are less strong in Years 7-9, where there are greater inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in the students' attitudes, coupled to their learning of mathematics. Some very good teaching does match the national expectations for this key stage, and could contribute to improvement.
107. The subject area can also enhance provision through the very recent move to new accommodation, which previously housed science laboratories. The school recognises the need for this to be fully refurbished and equipped to suit mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

108. Students make sound use of their mathematical skills in other subjects. A good whole-school policy is helpful and teachers of other subjects are generally aware of opportunities. Good practice in science included for example calculations of speed and the incorporation of lots of data and graph-work. However, the quality in the way mathematics is used and developed across other subjects is currently dependent on the individual teachers.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and are above average for Year 11
- Teachers have a good level of expertise and work well as a team
- Teachers build good relationships with students that lead to positive attitudes towards the subject
- Insufficient opportunities are provided in lessons for students to develop their own ideas and practise spoken and written extended scientific descriptions
- Review sessions at the end of lessons do not support learning and assessment sufficiently
- Excellent accommodation supports students' learning well

Commentary

109. In 2001 and 2002, results for Year 9 were well above the national average, followed by a fall below national standards in 2003. The results for the 2004 national tests rose again to be in line with the average for all schools, although still below average when compared with

similar schools. Through careful analysis the school has identified areas for improvement and appropriate steps to ensure further improvements have been taken.

110. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above the national average and have been improving over the past four years. Boys attain better results than girls in Year 11.
111. Present standards for Year 9 students are average. Higher-attaining students are able to predict which reactions between metals and salt solutions will occur based upon the reactivity series and write word equations. Average students in Year 7 are able to write extensively about the causes and effects of acid rain. The current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. In Year 11 high-attaining students are able to deduce the molecular structure and formulae of a series of alkane compounds based upon knowledge of the valencies of carbon and hydrogen using models. In Year 10 lower-attaining students were able to carry out a series of forensic laboratory tests, record and interpret their results, conclude and present the evidence behind their deductions in front of a small audience.
112. Students overall attainment on entry to the school is now broadly average. By the end of Year 9 it is currently average and the achievement of all groups of students is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11 students' attainment is above average indicating good achievement in Years 10-11.
113. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with particular strengths in Years 10 and 11. It has improved since the previous inspection and has resulted in students making better progress. Lesson objectives are always provided, discussed and referred to at least once directly during the course of a lesson. Where the teaching was good or very good, teachers challenged and motivated students through a well-structured series of tasks that required students to work independently and collaboratively, often drawing upon ideas from the National Strategy. For example, in a Year 10 lesson following discussions based on feedback from marked homework the teacher carried out a number of demonstrations, following which students practised using the kinetic theory to explain to each other how heat transferred by convection and conduction in each situation. This led to further class discussion clarifying specific details. Following a well-executed class experiment with potassium permanganate highlighting convection current pathways, students confidently completed a number of well-designed written tasks to support their learning. Expert management and organisational skills resulted in the students achieving very well. Relationships between teachers and students are good and lead to students demonstrating positive attitudes and good behaviour. Assessment procedures are good. Marking is thorough and students know the level or grade to which they are striving. However, they are less clear from the written feedback about what their next steps ought to be. Review sessions at the end of lessons are not always effective in checking on what students have learnt in order that the teacher can plan future work. A weaker area in teaching is that students are given too few opportunities to develop their own ideas and think independently.
114. The subject area is well led and managed. A regular schedule of meetings between the head of subject area and key stage co-ordinators enables important issues to be prioritised. Strategic planning and monitoring meetings are held at the start of the year and at least four times a term. Teachers and technical support staff are enthusiastic and well-qualified and work very well as a team. Good quality documentation demonstrates the many subject area activities that support good communication, professional development and performance monitoring and response.
115. Excellent new accommodation supports students' learning very well. Primary liaison work is excellent and feeder school pupils in Years 5 and 6 regularly visit the science laboratories to use the facilities and resources. These opportunities and experiences develop their skills, knowledge and understanding very well.
116. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen and good leadership is supporting further developments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons for students taking GCSE and GNVQ courses are organised well to meet course needs
- The ICT curriculum has improved
- Good student attitudes contribute well to lesson ethos and achievement
- In Years 7-9 students' ICT skills are being developed satisfactorily although teachers could make more demands of higher-attaining students

Commentary

117. In 2004, the overall performance of students in Year 9 was just below the national average and few students attained at higher levels. GCSE results were disappointing. Standards rose steadily in previous years, and were average in 2003. However, in 2004 difficulties with unreliable computer equipment interrupted the completion of course work and led many students to lose time and enthusiasm. The number of high-grade passes was low in comparison with the national average and overall performance was below average.
118. It is too early to assess the impact of the recently introduced programme of ICT lessons in Years 7-9 on students' achievement and standards of work. However, students produce good quality text and graphics-based work in many other subjects. For example, reports on life in the army during the American Civil War and multimedia presentations on recycling are well up to the standard expected for students in Year 9. They use the Internet effectively for research. Other strands of ICT are less well developed. Standards on entry to the school are below average. Students make satisfactory progress, and although standards are below average by the end of Year 9 their achievements are satisfactory. Students in Year 11 are on course to attain average GCSE and GNVQ grades overall. Coursework is well presented and includes appropriate detail for the level of entry. For example a higher tier GCSE "Netball Club" project is thorough and well designed. Successive drafts show how work has progressed and finished work is of good quality. A "Motocross" multimedia project prepared by a student taking the foundation GNVQ course is a sound combination of text and pictures, including information found on the Internet.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are usually a mix of class discussion and short periods of practical computer work. This step-by-step approach is satisfactory for most students and ensures that they learn new skills systematically. However, the method restricts opportunities for higher-attaining students to work independently and limits their achievement because lessons cover skills that they already possess. In Years 10-11, good use of examination board assessment criteria ensures that students are clear about what is expected at different levels of performance and helps them to monitor their own progress. Teachers explain work well and support individual students effectively, for example encouraging them to think imaginatively about how to improve multimedia presentations using video clips. Students are expected to take responsibility for organising much of their own work. In the best lessons students respond well to the independence that this gives them. There is a good learning atmosphere and lessons are brisk and purposeful. However, some lower-attaining students taking foundation level

courses, including several students with special educational needs, lack motivation. Unless directly supervised by the teacher students sometimes lose concentration and waste time. There was no additional adult support for lower-attaining students in lessons seen during the inspection. However, in the longer term, students with special educational needs attain the grades expected of them and achieve satisfactorily.

120. Senior school managers have managed a difficult period of expansion and teacher recruitment well since the last inspection but it is only relatively recently that the school has been able to make significant progress in dealing with weaknesses in standards, staffing, resources and the curriculum identified at the last report. Improvement overall is satisfactory. Resources for ICT are now good. The new management team is working hard on a large number of development targets for ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

121. Students throughout the school use ICT well to present coursework and other assignments and to do research in subjects across the curriculum. This is good provision and contributes well to overall achievement in ICT. Students who take technology courses make good use of specialist design software and produce high quality work. However, students do not make enough use of ICT to collect and analyse data or to develop fully their understanding of control technology and the use of ICT in automatic data collection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in Geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results achieved at GCSE have shown improvement but are still below national averages
- Teachers make good use of ICT to support learning
- Relationships within the classroom are good and support students' learning well
- A very good range of fieldwork and trips is provided to extend students' practical experiences

Commentary

122. Results in GCSE have improved in recent years but in 2004 they were below national averages and slightly down on those achieved in 2003, girls did better than boys in 2004. At the end of Year 9 the teachers' assessments are broadly in line with national averages and the girls are again doing relatively better than the boys.
123. Students enter the school with geographical skills and understanding which are just below expectations and by the end of Year 9 they are broadly in line, this represents satisfactory achievement. Evidence from samples of work and lesson observations indicate that students who are currently taking geography at GCSE, in Years 10 and 11, are making good progress and achieving well. In Year 7 students have a good knowledge of plate tectonics and its links with volcanic activity and by the end of Year 9 they have acquired a sound knowledge of place and improved their geographical skills. In a lesson in Year 9 students demonstrated a good understanding of the implications and uncertainties surrounding global warming whilst in another lesson students discussed the issues surrounding the exploitation of fragile ecosystems such as Antarctica. The coursework produced by some Year 11 students is of a very high quality.

124. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share the learning objectives for the lesson with students so that students know clearly what they will be doing. Lessons are generally well planned with a range of activities but there are not always sufficient opportunities for the higher-attaining students to research extensively or to critically evaluate in order to achieve the higher levels of attainment. Teachers use ICT effectively as a teaching tool in particular using the Internet to provide a range of resources.
125. All students are given an information sheet at the beginning of the year, which describes what will be taught in the lessons and how the work will be assessed. This means that students have a clear understanding of what they will be doing and what is expected of them. However, little use is made of National Curriculum level descriptors or GCSE grades in the marking. New procedures for assessment have been introduced which use enquiry-based exercises to assess students progress, although this is a good development the subject area does not yet standardise these assessments.
126. Every student has the opportunity to undertake fieldwork or investigative work, learning outside the classroom is therefore a strength with trips to Kew Gardens, Cadbury Factory and a local river study.
127. The quality of leadership and management in recent years has been good. The subject area is now following GCSE Avery Hill Scheme, which is a more appropriate course. The work of the subject area is monitored by senior staff however there is insufficient involvement of the subject leader. Teacher assessments for geography in Year 9 are not used to set meaningful targets for students in Years 10-11.
128. As standards have improved and there is now a greater range of successful teaching strategies used in lessons, improvement since the last inspection is good.

History

Provision in history is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Very strong leadership has resulted in a successful focus on improvement
- The quality of teaching is very good with a strong focus on active learning
- Teachers' energy and commitment leads to exceptional support for students and large numbers choose it as a GCSE option

Commentary

129. In 2004 results of Year 9 teacher assessments were better than recent years, and were above those reported nationally, including at higher levels. Far more students take GCSE than in most schools, and results were average. After decline in 2000-2003, these results for 2004 are similar to those of 1999. Girls under-performed compared with boys, particularly at higher grades.
130. Standards are above average in all years and recent improvements in results are being sustained. Students enter the school with below average attainment and achieve very well to end Year 9 securely above. GCSE is taken by students of all levels of attainment, who achieve well to obtain average results, but marginally less well overall than in their other subjects. The subject area has had increasingly stable specialist staffing since 2003, which is having a positive impact, and students see history as a subject in which they can do well.

131. Consistent teaching over time leads to very good learning. A strong focus is placed on active learning and thorough assessment. Teachers know students' needs very well and have very high expectations. Work is very well planned, sequenced and resourced: it is challenging yet enjoyable, and varies in content and methods. Students are encouraged to present work in imaginative and interesting ways, using oral, aural and visual skills: they listen to each other particularly well. For example in a Year 11 lesson students worked as individuals and in groups to sort evidence cards into well formed arguments about Nazi motives for persecution, adding their own ideas and, in several cases, making complex links between them. Exam technique was well woven into this by the teacher. Students know their own broad strengths and weaknesses from the good assessment system, but are not yet made fully clear how to use skills, ideas and learning processes to develop independently.
132. The subject area has a positive and rigorous commitment to improvement and is very reflective. It takes a lead in many school initiatives like peer marking, progress files, developing citizenship and outreach activities. Mutual support is strong, especially for new teachers. All relative weaknesses seen during inspection had already been identified by good evaluation, but some action plans were at early stages of development. Data use can be more focused in some areas, particularly to improve achievement. The extensive programme of visits and extra-curricular support clearly shows the subject area's commitment to students. Some work remains to be done on improving use of ICT by teachers and students, but overall improvement since the last inspection has been good: all issues have been dealt with systematically and many innovations made.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	No work available for scrutiny
Achievement	Satisfactory	No judgement possible
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	No teaching observed
Leadership	Unsatisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of a decision at senior management level to limit the curriculum time available for the subject insufficient religious education is being taught in Years 10 and 11 to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject. Behaviour is generally good, enabling students to achieve well during lessons in Years 7-9

Commentary

133. There are no examination courses in religious education, so it is not possible to report on results. Standards reported by the subject area for Year 9 in 2004 were average overall.
134. During the lessons observed achievement among students in the upper sets in Year 7 and 8 was good and in the average set in Year 9 it was satisfactory. Where achievement is good, it is because the attitudes and behaviour of the students are very good and lessons are well structured with appropriate levels of challenge. Students are encouraged to give reasoned and thoughtful answers to questions. They are very keen to share their opinions and the research they have completed as part of their homework. However, the scheme of work for Years 7-9 is wide ranging and does not allow students to study topics in enough depth, particularly in Years 8 and 9. There are insufficient opportunities to explore religious teachings and moral perspectives in depth and relate them to the

students' own lives and those of others. This limits students' achievement which overall is satisfactory.

135. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good in Years 7-9. It was not possible to observe any teaching in Years 10 and 11 or to scrutinise any work as the subject is not being taught this term. Lessons are well prepared and structured with good resources. For example, good use was made of video material to explore the religious ideas, symbols and emotions surrounding the story of Noah. Students have a good understanding of the rituals and beliefs surrounding rites of passage in different cultures (for example, celebrations of birth). Lessons are generally purposeful and well paced with clear objectives, though they tend to come to an abrupt end, and there is not enough time to recap and summarise learning. The feedback provided to students in relation to their work is superficial, focusing on attitudes and presentation rather than achievement in relation to learning objectives. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and different cultures and religious traditions are positively presented and understood.
136. Leadership and management is unsatisfactory overall, as a result of the senior management decision to reduce the curriculum time for religious education in Years 10-11 to an unacceptably low level and the failure to meet the requirements of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. This makes provision unsatisfactory overall and progress since the last inspection unsatisfactory. There are, however, significant strengths within subject area leadership and management. An innovative approach has been taken to the creation of the scheme of work, which has captured the imagination of students. Appropriate assessment arrangements have recently been introduced, enabling the attainment of students to be measured more accurately. Good arrangements are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the subject. Priorities have been appropriately identified and the leadership has a clear plan of action for the subject. Resources are used well in lessons.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

The subject area offers a foundation course in product design. Students can then specialise in GCSE product design courses using electronic, graphic and resistant materials. Food technology is also made available for students in Years 10 and 11.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership has significantly improved standards
- Students and teachers are very dedicated and work together to raise achievement
- Inadequate computer-aided-manufacturing equipment and old work benches are affecting achievement
- Very good programmes of work are in place
- Food technology is not contributing to assessments in Years 7-9 and the subject area does not offer textiles design

Commentary

137. The 2004 Year 9 teachers' assessments showed standards to be above the national average. Girls did better than boys at this age. GCSE results A*-C were well above the national average and the subject gained the best results overall in the school. Boys did better than the girls in these examinations and nearly all of the students in the school took the examination. Over the last five years there has been significant improvement in the results.
138. Students start in the school with varied past experiences in design and technology and many are below average. Good progress is made in Year 7 particularly in designing skills and in the very good use of ICT. Practical work is very good overall and by the end of Year 9 all students have achieved well, due in no small part to their strong commitment to learning. The very good use of monitoring systems ensures that all students are driven to reach the national average.

139. GCSE work is very good overall and students produce high-quality design work. Students develop very good understanding of the social moral and cultural issues influencing designing. The new ICT facilities are helping to raise standards. However, opportunities to attain highly in the use of computer-aided manufacturing are restricted by the lack of equipment. The achievements of many students are outstanding because of their additional efforts made in lunch times and evenings.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some is very good, for example in Year 8 when making a weather vane, the students acquire very good practical skills. Very good programmes of work and exemplar materials promote students' achievement. These are tied precisely into the assessment requirements, they help to ensure consistency, and provide excellent support to less experienced staff. However, in some lessons there are missed opportunities to promote literacy.
141. In Years 10 and 11 the significant contribution made by teachers to provide extra-curricular time is enhancing students learning. Students also have excellent guidance and the use of CD Rom materials to support their learning. However, the GCSE food technology course does not contain sufficient opportunities for students to explore multicultural influences. The quality of teaching and learning also suffers when large groups have to be accommodated in workshop areas with inadequate benching.
142. The leadership is highly dedicated and has created very successful teamwork. The high-quality documentation and very well-organised resources provide very effective support to teachers and students. Assessment is planned carefully into each unit of work. Teaching and health and safety monitoring are not formalised sufficiently. Students do not have opportunities to study textiles design. The faculty area does not manage food technology. Therefore food technology work done in Years 7-9 does not contribute to students' assessments. Over the last five years standards have been significantly raised. There has been substantial improvement since the last report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is underpinned by a clear plan for improvement and a strong determination to raise standards
- Some very good teaching was seen in Year 11 where the pace was brisk and purposeful and students achieved very well
- The unsuitable accommodation coupled with large groups limits the range of activities students can attempt
- In some groups the behaviour of a minority of boys limits their own and others' achievement

Commentary

143. In 2004 teacher assessments showed standards to be broadly average with some students attaining the higher levels. The GCSE results in the same year were average, with the

proportion of A* grades above the average. Few boys were entered and so comparisons between the performance of boys and girls are inappropriate.

144. Standards in all years are affected by three important factors. The groups are too large for most of the rooms and this limits the range and scale of work students can do. These restrictions contribute to unsettled behaviour and a lack of concentration by a minority of boys that in turn hampers the work and achievements of other students. Some teachers manage these situations better than others. In several lessons students did not achieve their potential because the working environment was not conducive to high quality work. Rooms lack easy access to different resources that allow students the chance to make their own decisions about the scope and scale of their work rather than work to the templates and dimensions given by the teacher. In a Year 9 high-attaining set students' positive attitudes helped compensate for the cramped conditions and non-specialist facilities. In their keenness to see their work completed to a good standard several had brought in beads and feathers to embellish their masks and their sketchbooks showed evidence of their research, of tribal headdresses and masks from different cultural traditions. The room did not allow students to see what others were doing or to make connections between their own and others' work. In a lower-attaining group students were slow to find their work and materials and this led to some restless and unsettled behaviour. The quality of modelling lacked sustained effort and concentration. A weakness of sketchbooks was the quality of presentation.
145. Standards in current Year 11 classes are higher than in previous years with significant numbers of students demonstrating very good drawing skills. Some students take advantage of after-school workshops. Here they can experiment with different techniques and there is space to make large-scale work. In Year 10 standards are lower and the lack of access to computers and the limitations posed by the accommodation are seriously affecting the work of high numbers of boys. Students regularly use computers for their homework but too few opportunities exist for them to learn to manipulate images.
146. Teachers have very good specialist skills, used to good effect to demonstrate techniques and skills. Students' literacy skills are developed well, through research tasks, in question and answer sessions and in written tasks. The most effective teaching and learning were seen in Year 11 and were characterised by teachers' high expectations and their very good short and longer term planning. Students could track their progress and see where their current work was heading. For the most part all year groups receive good-quality information about their achievements and most are aware of their grades and levels. Occasionally however, where the assessment criteria are not explained and understood the students lack the information they need to set challenging targets.
147. This is an improving subject area. There is a very clear picture of what has to change and how standards can be raised. Leadership promotes high quality teaching and learning and the very good teaching is a model for other, less experienced, teachers. To date there have been too few opportunities created where effective practice can be shared and successful teaching methods and strategies analysed within a subject specific context. The curriculum is very well planned and is considerably enhanced by the range of extra-curricular activities, visits and trips abroad.

Music

Provision in music is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Detailed lesson planning is contributing positively to students' achievement
- The emphasis on developing students performance is adding to students' good rhythmic skills
- Good assessment procedures are contributing to students' progress
- The use of ICT music programs in Years 7-9 is underdeveloped and not supporting students creative skills

Commentary

148. The teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards are above the national average. Although the numbers entered for the 2004 GCSE music examination are too few to make a national comparison all the students achieved grades between A*- C.
149. Students join the school in Year 7 with skills that are below average. However, with the emphasis on developing practical skills progress is rapid and by the time they reach Year 9 standards are average. As a consequence achievement is good. This emphasis on performance has resulted in students developing good rhythmic skills, copying rhythmic patterns with accuracy and confidence. Students have knowledge of the main elements in music and use the appropriate musical vocabulary when talking about the music they have listened to. They have an understanding of how to construct primary chords on the keyboard and are beginning to use them to support their simple compositions.
150. The good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11 and students in the GCSE groups are overall above the level normally seen at this point in the academic year. A particular strength is students performing skills. All are committed instrumentalists, performing on their individual instruments at an above-average level. Although students creative skills are developing these are not as well developed as performances. Compositions show a sense of structure with supporting accompaniments that fit harmonically with the melody. The melodies however tend to be somewhat mundane and lacking in creative development and excitement.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good. Teachers have good practical skills and use this expertise well to demonstrate to students and to accompany group performances to help maintain a steady beat. Teachers manage students well, have high expectations of behaviour allowing all the lessons seen to proceed with pace and without interruption contributing positively to students learning. A particular strength of the teaching is the planning. Lessons commence with brisk starter activities that quickly engage students' interest with appropriate tasks to lead well into the main focus of the lesson. The range and variety of carefully planned activities in lessons not only holds students' attention but build on their existing knowledge and practical skills leading to overall good learning. Good assessment procedures are contributing positively to students' achievement. The assessment statements, that are relevant to the activities, are displayed in a simplified form for students to understand. Students know the levels they are working at and how they can improve.
152. The leadership and the management of the subject are good. Leadership has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and the need to continue to raise standards. Previous examination results have been analysed, weakness highlighted and appropriate strategies put in place to ensure that students achieve their potential. Good support has been provided for colleagues. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is providing good opportunities for the musically talented students. The use of ICT has been highlighted in the schemes of work to support students' composing skills. However, it remains underdeveloped in Years 7-9.
153. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Under the present leadership the extra-curricular opportunities have been developed and examination results have improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is taught to all students as a core activity. It is offered as a GCSE option as sports studies and dance. BTEC first diploma is also offered but this was not inspected.

Provision in physical education is good.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are above average
- Good teaching is contributing to student achievement
- Good relationships and students' positive attitudes help improve their learning
- The extensive extra-curricular programme provides many opportunities for students to develop their sporting skills
- Assessment is not fully effective in Year 9
- Very good facilities support students' learning well

Commentary

154. In GCSE 2004 results for students gaining A*-C grades were above the national average. Boys' results were well above average and those for girls were broadly in line. Teacher assessments in Year 9 were well above average for students achieving level 5 and above.
155. Students enter the school with below-average levels of attainment but because of the good teaching they soon develop a wide range of skills. In Year 7 basketball, students dribble confidently with their dominant hand and change direction using a cross over and spin dribble. In, Year 8 swimming, students use the correct arm position in backstroke and know about water safety. Year 9 girls pass a football accurately over a ten metre distance and understand the technique for passing over a greater distance and the need for accuracy. In hockey, boys in Year 9 have good stick control and use a push pass to good effect. Boys and girls evaluate their performance and suggest ways to improve. In Year 10 football boys keep the ball close to their feet when dribbling and use this skill to good effect to beat an opponent. In Year 11 dance both boys and girls understand how to use choreography to improve performance. Boys and girls in GCSE basket ball have above- average standards and girls' standards in GCSE dance are average.
156. Teachers have high expectations and this ensures that students are challenged to improve. The very good facilities help teachers to plan lessons so these have a range of interesting activities to maintain motivation. The use of the swimming pool, fitness room, dance studio, sports hall and the all weather pitches provide students with a good environment that helps their learning. Teachers plan activities for all abilities and groups of students to improve their learning. Teachers have a good knowledge of students' needs and lessons move at a pace which helps all to learn well. Students are encouraged to evaluate their work throughout lessons and this helps their learning. Teachers have developed an assessment system which focuses on individual sports but it is not used fully and so some students do not know their levels. Assessment in GCSE classes is effective and students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Many students are learning to improve their skills through participation in the extensive extra-curricular programme.
157. The subject area is evaluated annually and this leads to an improvement plan with a clear focus on raising standards. The subject area has developed very good primary school links with one member

of staff teaching across thirteen schools to help develop sport. The facilities are first class and good relationships with the sports centre manager help in curriculum planning. All staff are suitably qualified and all contribute to the extra-curricular programme. All staff are involved in performance management and benefit from professional development. The subject area makes a good contribution to the development of student teachers. Since the previous inspection curriculum time for Year 9 has increased, students now evaluate their work and make good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship in action is a priority for the school
- The curriculum for all years is relevant and has a number of strengths
- Monitoring and evaluation of curriculum impact and quality are inadequate
- Students are not fully aware that they are doing citizenship when it is taught by other subject areas

Commentary

158. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were above those reported nationally. However, this was only for the humanities components of citizenship and the results do not necessarily reflect standards overall.
159. Current standards in Years 7-9 are average in spoken and written work, as are those in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but varies according to lesson quality, and is generally not as good as in most other school subjects. Unsurprisingly, it is best when teachers provide high enthusiasm and challenge, with good support and resources.
160. The core scheme of work supports teachers' basic planning well, but the five-year programme is based on a wide, and complex, range of curriculum arrangements, involving many teachers. Although a full audit was done, all subject areas are not yet fully implementing their agreed components of the work, nor is specially designated time fully adequate to ensure good quality work results. In the absence of a full in-service programme for staff, the quality of learning and teaching is, therefore, variable. When students are challenged to discuss and think about real issues for themselves, good work results: as in a Year 11 lesson on human rights where they discussed newspaper reports the teacher had collected over the last six months. Where teachers' own resources are not adequate, interesting or immediately relevant, and where time allocation is short, as in Year 8 form time, learning is only satisfactory.
161. Clearly students in the school are becoming good citizens as a result of the school's broad focus and effective work on this issue. Statutory requirements for assessment and reporting are met, but current arrangements are comparatively recent: there is little monitoring of teaching and learning in place and no effective evaluation has yet been done. Consequently the leadership of the subject has lacked a complete understanding of progress made and

focus on work yet to do. Inconsistencies have resulted. Some students do not realise that they do citizenship in other subjects because the links are not made clear enough; others are confused about the differences between citizenship and PSHE. Against this must be set the school's exemplary active involvement of students in their local community via, for example, The Hundred Acre Estate Committee, the work of the School Council, their recent fundraising for the Tsunami appeal and their mature and constructive involvement in some staff appointments.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. With a then much smaller sixth form, there was little detailed reporting on subjects in the last report and so inspectors are not able to comment specifically on improvement since the last inspection. In subjects where the number of students taking examination courses is small, inspectors have not commented on results because the attainment of just one student can have a disproportionate effect on the overall results in that subject.

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	50	78.3	50	21.6	25	28.5
Biology	11	63.6	63.5	9.1	10.4	20	19.8
Business studies	5	80	75.3	0	15.4	22	25.7
Chemistry	4	50	70.3	25	13.2	20	23
Drama	3	66.7	86.6	0	19.8	13.3	30.9
English literature	4	100	86.2	25	17.4	40	29.7
French	6	33.3	79.8	0	19.4	6.7	28.2
Design and technology	1	100	72.6	0	13.9	30	24.3
Geography	5	40	75.5	0	20.4	12	27
History	3	66.7	82.2	0	20.8	20	29.2
Information technology	9	77.8	66.6	22.2	8.8	27.8	20.6
Mathematics	6	100	59.9	16.7	14.1	33.3	20.5
Music	2	100	59.9	50	16.9	40	27.5
Other languages	1	100	82.5	0	47.7	20	37.8
Other sciences	4	25	67.4	0	14.8	5	22.8
Other social studies	7	57.1	67.8	0	15.1	17.1	23.2
Physics	7	28.6	66.4	14.3	14.8	10	22.4
Sociology	4	100	72.1	0	19.6	32.5	25.9
Sports/PE studies	3	66.7	72.2	0	11.8	16.7	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

Art and design	4	100	98.3	50.0	50.2	85	87.1
Biology	8	100	96.6	25	40	60	79.3
Business Studies	4	100	96.6	0	39.4	60	81.8
Chemistry	3	100	97.7	33.3	50	66.7	85.7
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Drama	2	100	99.6	0	42.8	70	85.1
English literature	20	100	99.4	10	44.9	63	85.5
French	5	100	99	0	53.1	64	88.9
Design and technology	5	100	77.9	20	35	80	77.9
Geography	3	100	98.8	66.7	46.4	86.7	85.2
History	9	100	99	22.2	45.6	77.8	85.1
Information technology	8	100	96.3	12.5	25.7	75	71.1
Mathematics	10	100	96.8	40	56.6	84	89.5
Music	1	100	98.2	0	37.1	60	79.5
Other languages	5	100	97.3	20	66.7	80	95.6
Other sciences	5	40	97.4	20	44.2	28	82.5
Other social studies	3	100	97.4	33.3	42.5	66.7	81.6
Physics	2	100	96.7	50	45.3	90	82.6
Sociology	7	100	98.5	14.3	45.3	74.3	84.6
Sports/PE studies	15	100	97.8	13.3	30.9	66.7	75.4
Business (VCE)	16	100	91.6	50	24.1	75	67.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

Provision in English literature is satisfactory.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes to their work and relationships are very good
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are thoroughly planned and tasks varied so that students are fully engaged
- Weaknesses in students' higher-level literacy skills restrict their progress and independence
- Many students leave the course after one year or retake AS modules to improve their grades
- New leadership has quickly identified priorities for improvement

Commentary

162. Results in English literature A-level in 2004 were well below the national average. Apart from the occasional high performing boy, girls outnumber and generally outperform the boys. Many students leave the course after AS level and some retake modules to raise their

grades. Students tend to do less well in English than in their other subjects and many find the extensive reading of the course very demanding. There is a variation in the size of groups from year to year, but the subject has increased in popularity, particularly with girls, as the sixth form has grown.

163. Although standards are below average, students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting point. Many students start the course not having gained the highest GCSE grades in English and find the transition to AS and A-level very demanding. However, they are motivated to work hard and this is an important factor in their progress. Standards seen in class are below average but higher than indicated in last year's results. Higher-attaining students produce carefully structured writing, showing insight and understanding of the studied texts. They edit and improve their writing with sensitive help from their teachers and they achieve well. However, most students find the amount of reading, the depth of analysis and the higher-level of writing required at advanced level very challenging after GCSE. The lack of these higher-level literacy requirements and the ability to work independently, limits their achievement. Although there is much highly skilled teaching, students are over-reliant on teachers to help them understand the broader context of the work. For example, students in Years 12 and 13 were dependent on the good stimulus materials provided by the teachers to gain an understanding of sixteenth century attitudes to hell and damnation in 'Dr Faustus', of the subtle relationships in 'The Duchess of Malfi' and in exploring the history and conventions of the sonnet.
164. The quality of teaching is good and students learn well in class. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they choose texts that are intellectually demanding. Although expectations are high and involvement in class is very good, students do not always show the required independence outside lessons to read around a topic for themselves. In most lessons, teachers make effective use of small group and paired working to ensure that all students participate actively in reading, discussion and note-taking before feeding back to the class. Prepared writing frames and worksheets assist students in organising their thoughts. In this way, students gradually build the confidence to express their views. Teachers have a clear idea of students' prior attainment and of their current performance and they make very good use of this information to help students make progress.
165. New leadership has quickly identified strengths in the teaching but also areas for development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

166. Standards of literacy are satisfactory across the sixth form curriculum. There are many opportunities in all subjects for discussion, debate and collaborative group work. Particular strengths are the maturity and flair students display in speaking and listening. However, many students have weaknesses in wider reading and higher-level, structured writing and this affects their independence and the standards they achieve.

Modern Languages

French was inspected in detail but Italian was also sampled. Students studying German are taught at the local college. Four students are studying **Italian** in Year 12, two of whom are native speakers. Fluency in spoken Italian is sound overall. The standard of work is above average. The lesson seen was well planned and presented a good level of challenge. Students' positive attitudes also contributed to their learning and achievement.

French

Provision in French is good.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that students make good progress
- Students learn well partly because of their mature attitudes to work
- Students have too few opportunities to develop their oral skills

Commentary

167. Few students study French in the current sixth form but the evidence seen in lessons and in written work shows that standards are rising. In both Years 12 and 13, current work is above average and students' achievement is good. Written work is mostly accurate and contains some complex sentences structures. During a lesson in Year 13, students listened to audio material on 'green' issues and showed good levels of understanding. Most students understand the detail of authentic spoken and written French but are not confident in speaking and giving their views in French.
168. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. High expectations encourage students to give their best to improve their knowledge of grammar and to apply examination techniques. Teachers provide good strategies for developing students' reading and listening comprehension but do not always communicate exclusively in French. They encourage students to do research on topics prior to the lesson and to use resources such as the Internet and the French Cultural Institute's Library in London. Class work tends to be dominated by listening and reading activities and grammar, with a large contribution from the teacher. Students have few opportunities to give their opinion on given topics in the foreign language in order to develop their oral skills.
169. Leadership and management are good. The subject area is keen to attract more students in the sixth form and is looking at strategies to increase numbers and to raise standards. A formal review of teaching and learning was conducted last term and areas for improvement have been identified but are not yet in place. These include, for example, a greater emphasis on oral participation from students and methods to give students greater responsibility for their learning. The teaching of French is shared between teachers and this is managed effectively with a clear remit for each teacher, linked to the structure of the examination. The course is appropriately resourced.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very good.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths

- Standards are rising and the subject is growing in popularity
- The students are very keen and enjoy the subject; they work hard and achieve well
- Teaching is enthusiastic and reflects expertise and experience
- Flexible course organisation is matched to students' needs and is enriched by additional activity

Commentary

170. The 2004 A-level mathematics results were in line with the national average. Analysis of the AS results for the current Year 13 shows they achieved well. Results and numbers of students have been improving, and an increasing number of girls are taking the subject. Students are very positive about learning mathematics. The A-level students' previous attainment is broadly average, but their transition between GCSE and A-level mathematics is eased by an innovative summer course, provided by the school via the Internet. In pure mathematics work, the Year 12 students accurately apply algebraic skills, as in solutions to demanding questions on quadratics. A mechanics module is taught to a group of Year 12 and 13 students with varied needs, which for some is supporting their A-level physics. This

group achieved well in applying the law of conservation of energy to practical problems. Written work in lessons is presented thoughtfully, showing increasing confidence and the mathematical rigour demonstrated in the teaching. In a re-sit GCSE group drawn from both Year 12 and 13, the students make good progress, all due to very good teaching.

171. Relations between staff and students are excellent and this promotes both enjoyment and serious study. Those teaching A-level have considerable knowledge and experience, so explanations are mathematically rigorous and course planning is good. In lessons, the learning is very effective, for example when students discuss mathematics and have to explain solutions at the board. Assessment and the tracking of progress are particularly strong. They both guide the teaching and check its effectiveness. Students' self-assessment in one very good lesson required reflection on an "examiner's report" of a recent test. Whilst a need for some students is to extend their thinking and to appreciate the full beauty of the subject, the opportunity is much better than usual. For example, students are taken on trips to universities, experiencing lectures on topics such as chaos theory. Teachers recognise the need to extend the use of other learning resources, such as ICT, to further enhance teaching and learning.
172. The popularity and increasing success of mathematics in recent years reflect the strong leadership and the quality of the small team involved in teaching the subject in the sixth form. The co-ordination and on-going development of courses are both very good. Making A-level Further Mathematics available for talented individuals, organising modules to suit different needs and providing enrichment opportunities are further strong features in the management of the subject. Appropriately, it is planned to monitor the effect of the new syllabus on results, in order to maintain mathematics as a high-performing subject in the sixth form.

Mathematics across the curriculum

173. In other sixth form subjects, students make appropriate use of and extend their mathematical skills. Good A-level examples were seen involving work on complex distributions in chemistry and on the interpretation of data in history.

SCIENCE

The focus was on chemistry, but lessons in biology and physics were sampled. In the **biology** lesson seen, a clear teacher exposition led to a lively discussion, and good questioning by the teacher enabled students' misconceptions to be corrected, so that students achieved well.

In **physics**, the students set up an investigation to observe the effect of an electric field on a flame. The teaching was effective because the lesson was adapted to meet the students' needs, so that students were able to go on to relate their work to relevant mathematical models.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students benefit from good teaching
- Very good relationships between staff and students contribute to students' achievement
- Students are too dependent on their teachers

Commentary

174. Although standards are below average, students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. Many students starting the course with a GCSE double science find the transition to AS and A-level chemistry very demanding.
175. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The very good relationships between teachers and students enable students to discuss the points at hand in a free and open manner conducive to effective learning. In a Year 12 lesson, students demonstrated good laboratory skills and a concern for precision and safety when they successfully carried out hydrolysis reactions on three halogenoalkane compounds. In a Year 13 lesson, the teaching of the Born-Haber energy cycle was enhanced by the excellent use of an animated PowerPoint display reinforcing graphically how the steps in the cycle being studied needed to be arrayed and calculated. Students were also provided with an innovative card sort activity requiring them to discuss and apply the key ideas in solving one example. This enabled them to freely discuss the intricacies of the calculations and also be supported individually by the teacher.
176. In another Year 13 lesson a complex topic involving a graphical analysis of the distribution of molecular energies in a reaction was clearly taught using a range of resources. Students' questioning indicated a good engagement with the topic. Subsequent practical work provided students with relevant evidence to apply their theoretical understanding in a manner that consolidated the key ideas very well. Students find working independently outside of the classroom difficult and remain too dependent on their teachers. This limits their achievement and progress. However, further support has already begun to be implemented by the subject area's staff to develop students' study and research skills.
177. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Good liaison exists amongst the staff within the subject area. A strong scheme of work provides good support materials and structure for students and for teachers new to the profession. The leadership having already identified the need for better support of all its A-level students is closely monitoring effectiveness to ensure that students develop their independent study skills. Consideration for new and broader courses is also underway to improve the range of provision at Post-16.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

178. Although **ICT** was not inspected in the sixth form, the subject was sampled. In a very effective lesson, the small group size enabled the teacher to support each student individually, resolving problems as they occurred and helping them to develop their ICT systems. Students were well motivated and good discussions in the lesson and comments on written work gave them clear guidance about how to rectify errors and on what they needed to do to improve.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

179. Students in the sixth form use ICT well to present coursework and other assignments and to do research. ICT is used particularly well in some subjects, such as mathematics, to enhance teaching and learning.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history, but psychology and sociology were sampled. **Psychology** has become an increasingly popular subject. Standards are above average because of very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of the students. Notable features in the lesson seen were the questioning which encouraged students to be logical thinkers, and the focus on exam technique which helped students to give precise and relevant answers.

In **sociology**, students in Year 12 were applying their understanding of feminist and neo-Marxist approaches to the sociological definitions of leisure. Students made steady progress in building on what they had learnt before in a lesson that focused well on the requirements of the AS examination.

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The number of students choosing geography in Year 12 is increasing
- Students achieve well because they are well motivated and appreciate the interactive style of teaching adopted by teachers
- Students are too reliant upon their teachers
- Marking does not give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work

Commentary

180. The work seen in lessons shows that students are generally achieving well. They often start the course with GCSE grades which are below average for A-level students but, by the end of Year 13, they are doing better than expected. This is partly the result of the intensive support and attention students receive in small groups and partly due to their own self-motivation. Students are consistently challenged by their teachers to think about geographical issues and to make conclusions. In one Year 12 lesson, for instance, students were challenged to apply their knowledge of urban models within developed cities to those in less developed countries, using Nairobi as a case study. The quality of the discussion demonstrated a very thorough understanding of the key ideas and issues involved in urban growth.
181. Teaching and learning are good because teachers know the subject well. Students feel well supported and when they have difficulties they appreciate the willingness of staff to give up their own time to help them overcome those difficulties. They also enjoy the course and rate the teaching highly. In particular, they appreciate the interactive style of teaching, with an emphasis on discussion and collaborative work. Relations between the teachers and the students are good, and teachers use their knowledge of the students to ensure that their teaching meets their particular needs. Taking students on to the AS course with relatively low grades in GCSE geography has led to a style of teaching where the teacher is the main source of learning and, as a result, students rely too much on their teachers. In the work seen, there were, therefore, relatively few opportunities for the type of independent, extended research likely to lead to the higher grades in the examination. The use of examination grades to mark work is insufficient, and so students are not clear about what they have to do to improve their work.
182. Geography is becoming a more popular option and the numbers taking this course are steadily increasing. Leadership is new but there is a clear vision for the development of this subject in the sixth form.

History

Provision in history is good.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership provides firm direction and focus on improvement
- Teachers' high expectations are matched to strong support for students in an atmosphere of relaxed, but challenging productivity
- History's reputation attracts a very large number of students and serves them well
- Students do not have well-developed independent study skills which limits their achievement

Commentary

183. Standards are above average in both Years 12 and 13. Students' achievement is good. They enter the sixth form with lower-than-average GCSE grades and are currently attaining above average standards in lessons and course assessments. Past results have been below average, partly because the entry policy has allowed some students to take history with a D grade at GCSE. All students are very positive about the opportunities they are offered and believe that they are doing well because of the subject area's support, which many feel is stronger than they might receive elsewhere.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and some is excellent. The best features of teaching are its high pace, focus and challenge, but with very good structure and sequence. Lessons are made engaging and enjoyable. Teachers' expert knowledge is interwoven with emphasis on meeting examination criteria, so that students are very well supported both in lessons and in the longer term. Strengths are that very good sources are often used, and teachers help students to analyse in a way that promotes good thinking skills. Students value teachers' understanding and support for their learning styles. However, students do not always take enough control of their own learning. As a result some lack the ability to perform as well as possible under exam conditions.
185. The subject area has the same rigour and drive noted in the main school. Leadership has a self-critical focus on improvement. Communication and relationships are very strong, which results in shared aims, and supportive staff development and resourcing. All management systems work well, and the subject area has a sound agenda for review and further improvements.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

186. These subjects were not inspected in the sixth form, but inspectors sampled lessons in electronics, design and technology and food technology. In the **electronics** lesson seen, the teacher's very good subject knowledge led to very effective questioning where students had to carefully account for their choice of components for the projects they were each working on. Students were achieving well despite shortfalls in the resources available to them.
187. Students achieved well in the **design and technology** lesson sampled. Students were supported well with their completion of design work for their final course work project and good use was made of a computer aided design program. High expectations and very good working relationships were evident and students' confidence was developed well through discussion with the teacher during the lesson.
188. In the **food technology** lesson sampled, very good planning and preparation by the teacher enabled students to undertake a practical experiment as well as revision and discussion on how to tackle examination questions. Very good pace was maintained throughout and questioning was matched well to students' level of understanding and encouraged them to apply their knowledge. The teacher's high expectations resulted in students developing their understanding of complex chemical vocabulary and processes.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

189. Although none of these subjects was a focus in the sixth form, inspectors sampled lessons in art and design, music and theatre studies. Teaching and learning were good in the **music** lesson sampled. Discussion with students and the work seen show that standards are above average.
190. Very small numbers are currently studying **art and design** in Year 13 and standards are well below average. Most were struggling with the rigors of an advanced academic course, reflected in their approach to independent study. Students were achieving satisfactorily, often from low starting points - some did not have a relevant GCSE qualification prior to joining the course. Teaching and learning were satisfactory.
191. In **theatre studies**, knowledgeable teaching and students' enthusiasm and commitment, enabled an able Year 12 group to achieve very well in developing their analysis of the characters in a play by Federico Garcia Lorca, drawing thoughtfully on the text to strengthen their interpretation and performance.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is good.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn and achieve well because the teaching is good
- Students have positive attitudes to learning
- Students are too dependent on their teachers

Commentary

192. In 2004, 15 students were entered for the A-level examination and results were below average. The highest grades were achieved by the female students. All students achieved A-E passes.
193. Current standards show improvement and are average. A-level students understand the need to know all parts of the subject from AS to A2 so as to plan an answer which shows that they have made appropriate links between the two. Students know how to use this technique when explaining the interrelationship between physiological and psychological aspects of elite performance. AS students know how sporting organisations influence participation in sport and how sports' governing bodies promote sporting excellence. BTEC students develop and analyse specific techniques in badminton.
194. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Students have positive attitudes and are eager to learn. This helps to build very good relationships and it helps students' achievements. Teachers plan interesting lessons using a range of activities, including ICT, and this encourages students to work in groups and individually. However, teachers tend to lead too much which restricts the development of independent learning. This occurs more in Year 12 than in Year 13. The facilities are beneficial to BTEC students as they carry out practical activities in the sports hall and then use the adjacent classroom to complete an analysis of performance. This immediate recording helps to promote good learning.
195. The qualities of leadership are as in the main school. The subject area is evaluated annually and this leads to an improvement plan with a clear focus on improving standards. Teachers of A-level have had appropriate training and the BTEC course is taught by a specialist teacher. The facilities are first class and good relationships with the sports centre manager help in curriculum planning.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is good.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of industry links are used imaginatively for coursework and to enhance lessons
- An emphasis is placed on independent learning which leads to good achievement
- Good relationships are evident and students are positive and well-motivated
- Resources for classroom teaching and student research are insufficient
- The highest-attaining students are not challenged enough

Commentary

196. In 2004, results in AVCE Business Studies were above the national average. In 2004, the AS and A-level groups were too small to make comparisons to national expectations but standards on these courses are improving over time. The current standards of work in lessons and in coursework are above average. This is particularly the case for AVCE coursework where students also display very good ICT skills both for research and for presentation. Students of low and average attainment achieve very well. Higher-attaining students work hard in lessons on the work set for them, but this does not always stretch them to achieve their full potential.
197. Teaching is good and this has a positive impact on students' learning. Most work is challenging and there is a focus on the application of business concepts to real companies. For example, in one lesson, students used economic terms fluently to analyse the impact of the business cycle on business activity. Lessons are well-planned and include a range of teaching strategies. The effect of this is that students are well focused and eager to learn.
198. The school's very wide range of industry links are used imaginatively in lessons and for coursework. For example, in one lesson on consumer protection, two visitors from Marks & Spencer provided information on customer relations and the law, which the students then immediately applied to their coursework.
199. Students respond well in lessons, ask searching questions to check their knowledge and they show positive attitudes and an appropriately business-like approach to their work. They are well motivated, courteous and well-behaved. Many of them progress to business studies courses in higher education.
200. Teachers create many opportunities for independent research and students have good access to ICT for their coursework, but resources for teaching are limited. This leads to a reliance on worksheets and means that the most up-to-date current affairs are not readily available for use in lessons. The key skills of communication, ICT and numeracy are integrated into the work. For example, in one lesson, students worked on producing a spreadsheet to calculate changes in the economy and teachers constantly encouraged them to express their views and to use a good level of business terminology in their explanations. Students are provided with detailed feedback on how to improve their work and there is good information to them about their course content.
201. The leadership and management provide good support and a sense of direction to the new members of the teaching team. Subject-area priorities are clear and action taken on these is beginning to be successful in terms of raising achievement, improving assessment and recruiting more students to the courses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

202. **Child development** was sampled. In the lesson seen, students were not given enough opportunity to contribute their own ideas, or to work in pairs or groups. They were not developing their independent learning skills and the pace was too slow.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

203. There was no focus subject in this area. The **critical thinking** course was sampled. In the lesson seen, the teacher's very high expectations meant that Year 12 students tackled

some challenging work and made very good progress in identifying the different fallacies used in argument, as well as in resolving a logic problem.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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