

INSPECTION REPORT

THE NETHERHALL SCHOOL

Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110873

Headteacher: Mr D Smart

Lead inspector: Mr J Bald

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

Inspection number: 268981

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: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1459

School address: Queen Edith's Way
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
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Telephone number: 01223 242931
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr M Stuart
governors:

Date of previous March 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is much larger than most secondary schools, and has a large sixth form. It is a specialist sports college, and holds a range of awards, including Investors in People, Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school population is stable. Most students are White, with over a quarter from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of these students do not have English as their first language, but very few are in the in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average, and an above average proportion of these students have a Statement of special educational needs. Most students with special educational needs have difficulties with literacy or with their social, emotional and behavioural development. Students joining the school have reached average overall standards for their age. Most continue with their education after GCSE, but significant numbers move to sixth form colleges and other providers, so that the overall standards reached by students joining the school's sixth form are below average. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds; the social and economic circumstances of the school are above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| 17932 | John Bald | Lead inspector | French (sixth form) |
| 10329 | Brian Sampson | Lay inspector | |
| 17530 | Mary Cureton | Team inspector | English |
| 24891 | Jackie Johnson | Team inspector | Mathematics (main school) |
| 20832 | Mohindar Galowalia | Team inspector | Science (main school); Biology (sixth form) |
| 28106 | Michele Majid | Team inspector | Geography (main school) |
| 1782 | Andrew Lyons | Team inspector | Design and technology; Business studies; English as an additional language |
| 32115 | John Foster | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages (main school) |
| 4223 | Garth Collard | Team inspector | History, geography (sixth form) |
| 32329 | Andrew Stafford | Team inspector | Design and technology, art and design. |
| 31701 | Graeme Rudland | Team inspector | Music |
| 18755 | Roger Whittaker | Team inspector | Physical education |
| 4451 | Roger Howarth | Team inspector | Religious education, citizenship |
| 20877 | David Pink | Team inspector | Special educational needs, work related learning |
| 23080 | Robert Isaac | Team inspector | Drama (sixth form) |
| 3643 | Derek Jones | Team inspector | Mathematics, physics (sixth form) |
| 3755 | Trevor Hulbert | Team inspector | Psychology (sixth form) |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Netherhall School provides very good education. Students begin with broadly average standards, and achieve well above average standards by Year 11. Sixth form students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good, in and beyond lessons. The sports college is excellent. Leadership is very good, and the overall quality of management is good. The school's split site is a barrier to learning and efficiency, and the lower school is inadequately cleaned. Some toilets are unhygienic. Governors are well-organised, but they do not make full use of best value principles in decisions about the sixth form, and do not monitor the condition of the buildings closely enough. Funding is well below average, and the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are very good, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form.
- Students' achievement is very good in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE; standards are rising.
- The headteacher, deputy headteachers and head of the sixth form lead the school very well.
- Most middle management is very good, but the management of cleaning and hygiene is unsatisfactory.
- Most students have very good attitudes and behave well; those who do not place a significant strain on teachers.
- There is very good provision for care and guidance, including careers education and work experience.
- The use of time in many assemblies and tutorials does not provide a purposeful start to the school day.

The school has seen significant changes in the learning needs of students since its last inspection, which took place in March 1999. It has made good overall improvements to its work. Standards remain well above average at GCSE. Sixth form standards have improved to reach broadly average levels. The quality of teaching has improved, and there has been good progress on points for action from the last report.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: | | all schools | | | similar schools |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
| Year 11 | GCSE/GNVQ examinations | B | B | A | A |
| Year 13 | A/AS level and VCE examinations | B | C | C | |

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

Achievement is very good. GCSE results show very good achievement across a wide range of subjects. Achievement in Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science is also very good. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average in Year 9 and Year 11, and showed very good achievement among all groups of students. No subjects are unsatisfactory, but achievement is satisfactory in modern languages, design and technology and citizenship. Sixth form achievement is good overall, and very good in several subjects.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Behaviour and attitudes are good, and very good for most students, who develop a strong sense of responsibility as well as working hard. A minority of students behave and work properly only in response to the very best teaching, and sometimes disrupt learning in other lessons. Attendance is well above average. Punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers know their subjects very well and plan interesting lessons that lead to very good learning for all students. They make very good use of national strategies and track progress closely and effectively. A small amount of teaching does not fully challenge students, and the school is taking action to improve it. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9.

The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities, and very good opportunities for students to extend learning beyond lessons. The sports college makes an excellent contribution. Accommodation is adequate, but there are too few books in the libraries. The school provides very good support and guidance to students, including very good careers education. It has strong partnerships with other schools and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior staff lead the school very well. Most aspects of the school are managed well or very well, and management has outstanding features. However, management of cleaning is unsatisfactory. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are well organised and give clear direction. They have good plans to improve the site, but have not ensured hygienic conditions for all students, and do not use best value principles effectively in decisions about sixth form spending. Statutory requirements are met apart from that for a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views are positive overall, but several said there were inconsistencies in teaching, homework and behaviour. Inspectors found some support for these views, but only in a small minority of lessons. Students were very positive about their education, but negative about lower school accommodation and some toilets. Inspectors agree with them. The school is taking action to tackle this issue.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Take further action to improve behaviour among the minority of students with poor attitudes.
- Improve cleaning and hygiene, and the range and quality of books in the libraries.
- Make full use of best value principles in spending decisions about the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve assemblies and tutorial time at the start of the school day, and include an act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE NETHERHALL SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Some students join the sixth form with above average GCSE results, but overall standards among those joining Year 12 are below average. Standards at A-level are broadly average overall, and this represents good achievement.. Leadership and management are good, and very good from the recently appointed head of the sixth form. The overall quality of teaching is very good, though in some subjects it has recently recovered from staffing difficulties. Learning is good. Most is very good, but some students, mostly male, do not work hard enough outside lessons. Most classes are cost-effective, but some are too small to offer satisfactory value for money. The sixth form offers good opportunities to lower-attaining students, some of whom have minority ethnic backgrounds and English as an additional language. Its overall cost-effectiveness is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers know their subjects well, and match work very well to students' diverse learning needs.
- Most students work very hard in and out of lessons, but some, mostly male, need to do more.
- Students receive very effective advice, support and guidance on their work and personal development.
- The head of the sixth form is developing good new systems to improve learning and raise standards.
- The school does not use best value principles effectively in making decisions about sixth form provision.
- The library contains too few books to support learning effectively in most subjects.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

| Curriculum area | Evaluation |
|--|--|
| English, languages and communication | Very good in English. Very good teaching, closely matched to students' needs, promotes very effective learning and very good achievement. |
| Mathematics | Good . Teaching and learning have recovered following recent staffing difficulties. Students are reaching average standards and achieving well. |
| Science | Good in biology, very good in physics. Teaching is very well organised and effective. Students achieve very well in physics and well in biology. Their starting points are significantly below average in both subjects. |
| Information and communication technology | Good . Teaching and learning are good. A-level results show good achievement, though there have been weaknesses at AS. There is good provision to develop all students' key skills in ICT. |
| Humanities | Very good in geography, where very good teaching and students' hard work leads to above average A-level results. Good teaching, learning and achievement in history. Satisfactory teaching and learning in psychology, which is still recovering from a recent staffing difficulty. |

Visual and performing arts
and media

Very good in drama. Imaginative teaching and dynamic leadership leads to high levels of creative work and above average A-level results.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and
travel

Very good in physical education. Teaching and learning are very good, and students achieve very well from below average starting points.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school has very good systems of advice, guidance and support for students. Teachers know students very well, and the head of the sixth form has established good systems for tracking their progress and providing individual support for any who are not on track to meet their target examination grades. There are effective and discrete systems to help students who need additional personal support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. The head of the sixth form provides very good leadership and management. She has established a clear strategy to tackle the weaknesses in some students' learning, and development planning has clear and realistic priorities. Other aspects of sixth form management are good overall, but some teaching groups are too small to provide satisfactory value for money.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students expressed very positive views to inspectors about the quality of education and support they received.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement in Year 9 and Year 11 is very good. By Year 11, students have progressed from broadly average standards on joining the school to GCSE results that are well above average. Year 11 standards seen during the inspection were similar. Standards are also well above average in Year 9, with very strong results in national tests. The overall standard of sixth form work is average. This is good achievement from students' starting points, though male students do not achieve as well as female students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average, and represent very good long-term achievement.
- Results in Year 9 national tests are much higher than those of similar schools.
- Students with special educational needs, including those with serious learning difficulties, achieve very well.
- Students with minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with English as an additional language, achieve very well.
- Boys achieve slightly less well than girls, but the gap is narrow.
- Achievement in modern languages is satisfactory, but standards in French are held back by low teaching time.
- Sixth form achievement is good overall, and very good in physics, physical education, geography and drama.
- Male sixth form students achieve significantly lower examination results than female students.

Commentary

1. Standards among students joining Year 7 range from well above average to very low. There is some fluctuation from year to year, but overall standards are within average bands each year. From this starting point, achievement is very good. Results in Year 9 national tests were well above average in 2003 in all three subjects, and very high in relation to those of similar schools. They fell to above average levels in 2004, but remained much higher than those of schools whose students started with similar results from their primary schools. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average. It was well above average in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and art and design, and above average in science and in all other subjects, except citizenship, design and technology and modern languages, where standards were broadly average, and achievement satisfactory. The above average standards reached in physical education and religious education showed very good achievement. This very good achievement in Year 9 reflects the high quality of teaching in the lower school.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 33.1 (36.8) | 33.3 (33.4) |

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| mathematics | 36.6 (38.0) | 35.5 (35.4) |
| science | 34.4 (35.8) | 33.1 (33.6) |

There were 251 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- GCSE results showed a sharp improvement in 2004, and the school easily exceeded its targets. Results were above average across a wide range of subjects and no subject was below average. Year 11 work seen during the inspection was of similar quality, with very good achievement in English, ICT, geography, physical education, art and design, drama and music. Achievement in most other subjects, including mathematics and science, was good, and never less than satisfactory. Overall, achievement in Year 11 is very good.

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 | 65 (56) | 51 (52) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 94 (90) | 91 (91) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 97 (96) | 97 (96) |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 313.5 (36.3) | 282.8 (34.7) |

There were 244 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. A new system of calculating points was introduced in 2004.

- GCSE results are broadly in line with those at the last inspection, despite changes in the school's intake which have resulted in a wider range of learning needs among the students. Recent GCSE results have also been achieved in the context of significant turnover of staff in some subjects, and reflect effective management. There is no clear trend in Year 9 test results, but achievement is consistently very good. The school enables all groups of students to achieve very well. Students with special educational needs benefit from very good specialist teaching, and their achievement is very good. They often achieve grade C or above at GCSE, and some proceed to the sixth form. Gifted and talented students achieve very well over their time in the school, and benefit from an effective additional teaching programme. Students with English as an additional language have their learning needs accurately assessed and their progress tracked; their achievements are very good, and sometimes better than those of others in their classes because of their consistent attitudes to work. Girls achieve very slightly more than boys at GCSE, but the gap is very small, reflecting teaching that is well matched to the needs and interests of boys and girls.

Sixth form

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 | 85.4 (90.5) | 92.3 (92.3) |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 24.9 (34.5) | 36.2 (35.6) |
| Average point score per pupil | 235.3 (234.9) | 265.2 (258.2) |

There were 115 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- A high proportion of students continue with education post-16, but many of the school's highest-attaining students move to two nearby sixth form colleges. A third of students

join the sixth form from other schools. Overall, standards among students joining the sixth form are below average, and well below average in some subjects. The school offers good opportunities for these students to succeed, and the broadly average overall results at A-level represent good achievement, despite the below average proportion of A and B grades. Overall sixth form standards were below average at the time of the last inspection, and current results represent good improvement.

5. There is, however, a significant gap in the achievements of male and female students at A-level. Inspection evidence indicated that this was chiefly due to female students' more systematic attitudes to work, and particularly to their willingness to work hard outside lessons. The school is tackling this weakness by monitoring students' work closely, and has introduced a system of mentoring for students at risk of falling behind their target grades. This was beginning to have an effect on Year 12 work during the inspection, though some male students in Year 13 were still not working as hard as they need to.
6. In some subjects, notably business studies, some students with minority ethnic backgrounds begin with grades well below those expected for A-level work. The success of these students in reaching pass grades shows that the sixth form is making an important contribution to the range of educational opportunities in the area. There is nevertheless significant variation between subjects. Achievement in subjects fully inspected was very good in physics, drama, physical education, geography, business studies and English. In some other subjects, notably psychology, sociology and biology, standards and achievement have been affected by serious difficulties in staffing. The school had taken effective action to tackle this problem by the time of the inspection, and work seen showed satisfactory achievement for the classes affected.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students in the main school have good attitudes to work and school life, and behave well. Sixth form students have very good attitudes and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is well above average throughout the school. Punctuality is satisfactory in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students have very good attitudes to school life and work, and happily accept responsibility.
- Students willingly take part in activities beyond lessons; participation in sport is very high.
- A minority of students in the main school only work and behave well when closely supervised and very well taught.
- There is very good harmony among all groups of students.
- Attendance is good, but some students are late to lessons, particularly when moving between sites.
- Some students, particularly in the lower school, drop litter in and around the buildings.
- Assemblies and tutorial periods do not always make an effective contribution to students' personal development.
- There is no daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

7. Almost all students enjoy school, take part with interest in lessons and other activities, behave very well and are happy to accept responsibility. They co-operate well with teachers and other students, concentrate well, and grow in confidence as they move through the school. These attitudes contribute to the school's good working atmosphere, despite the dispiriting conditions in the lower school. Most students are proud of their school and are very friendly, open and polite to visitors. Students with special educational needs develop particularly good attitudes to learning in response to the high levels of support they receive. Participation in activities beyond lessons is often high, particularly in sport, where almost two-thirds of students are involved. Where teaching is very good or excellent, students' attitudes and behaviour rise to meet it, and their learning and achievement accelerate. A small minority of students do not share in these attitudes, and their behaviour and attitudes places a significant burden on teachers and other students. They behave well when closely supervised, and very well in response to the best teaching, but they are easily distracted, and behave poorly in the small minority of classes in which teachers have relatively weak skills in managing classes. The buildings are free from graffiti, but some students drop litter, and few pick it up.
8. Relationships are good, and often better. There is particularly good harmony among students of different ethnic backgrounds. Some parents were concerned about bullying. Extensive discussions with students suggested that there was very little, and the school has efficient methods of dealing with it. Oppressive and racist behaviour is also rare, and the school does not tolerate the few incidents that occur. Co-operation with other schools ensures that few students are permanently excluded. The rate of fixed-period exclusion has increased since the last inspection, but remains broadly average for a school of this size. Exclusion is used only in response to behaviour that seriously threatens the learning and well-being of other students.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 1070 | 119 | 1 |
| White – Irish | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 79 | 7 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 25 | 4 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 40 | 3 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 18 | 4 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 20 | 4 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 11 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|---|----|---|---|
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 39 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 67 | 1 | 0 |

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

9. Attendance is well above average and unauthorised absence is below average. Procedures to promote attendance are very good and parents give very effective support. Punctuality is satisfactory. Most lessons commence promptly, but some students are late for lessons because they take too long to walk between the school's sites.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 6.1 | School data | 0.4 |
| 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.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

10. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Across the school, students have good opportunities to reflect upon their work, and share ideas and feelings in an open, generous way. Lessons in religious education, music, history and dance, art and drama provide good opportunities to explore spiritual themes. Students were moved by the Tsunami tragedy, and organise substantial fund-raising events. Most assemblies are too short to make a useful contribution to personal development, and do not have enough opportunities for students to contribute. There is no daily act of collective worship; while this is partly due to lack of space, there is also very limited spiritual content in the assemblies that do take place.
11. Provision for moral and social development is good. Teachers ensure that students have a clear understanding of the behaviour expected of them, and that they understand the difference between right and wrong. They provide good, additional support for the social and moral development of students with emotional or behavioural difficulties. They enable students to explore issues concerning their personal and social development in a thorough but sensitive way. Teachers promote co-operation among students very well, and provide them with very good guidance on the development of learning and personal organisation skills. Students have many good opportunities to collaborate with organisations outside the school and use these fully. Most tutorial periods are too short to make a substantial contribution to personal development, and some are not effectively planned.
12. Provision for cultural development is good. Students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds regularly mix within the school. They learn about their own and other cultures, particularly in religious education, and are prepared for life in modern society. Students have many, good opportunities to learn about other cultures and belief systems not only in the United Kingdom but also internationally. They have good opportunities to take part in cultural events, and gifted and talented students have very good opportunities for performance in drama and music.

Sixth form

13. Behaviour is excellent, and students' attitudes and are very good. Almost all sixth form students have high levels of interest in their work and deeply involve themselves in all that the school offers. However, a minority of students, mostly male, do not show the same level of commitment to their work, particularly outside lessons. This limits their chances of higher grade passes at A-level. The head of the sixth form has instituted a systematic approach to tackling this issue through personal guidance and mentoring, but it has not yet had time to become fully effective, particularly for a small number of students in Year 13. Students show enterprise and are willing to take responsibility and to help others, both within and beyond the school. Their behaviour is generally exemplary and any form of bullying is extremely rare.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good, and teachers make very good use of assessment in planning work. The curriculum is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form, with very good opportunities for enrichment beyond lessons. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the lower school is inadequately cleaned, leading to unsatisfactory provision for health. Other aspects of welfare, health and safety are very good, and students receive very good support and guidance. There is a good partnership with parents, and a very good partnership with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their subjects very well, and adapt their teaching effectively to the needs of the students. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9. The overall quality and use of assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 makes very good use national strategies and is closely matched to students' needs.
- Teachers have very good understanding of their subjects, and plan lessons very well to engage students.
- Detailed and accurate assessment of progress is used very well in teaching and in planning work.
- Specialist teaching, and most support in lessons for students with special educational needs, is very good.
- Teaching is particularly strong in English, physical education, ICT, art and design and geography.
- Teachers provide effective additional support for students with English as an additional language.
- The headteacher, deputy headteachers and other managers monitor teaching closely and effectively.
- A minority of students only learn well in response to a very strong lead from the teacher.
- Most teachers make effective use of homework, but there are some gaps, mostly for lower-attaining students.

- Most sixth form students work very hard outside lessons, but a minority, mostly of male students, do not.
- Additional sixth form teaching is very good for ICT, but more additional teaching is needed for literacy.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 169 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 5 (3%) | 74 (44%) | 57 (34%) | 27 (16%) | 5 (3%) | 1 (1%) | 0 |

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

14. The commitment of teachers and support staff to providing work of the highest possible quality, and the school's very well developed systems for monitoring and improving teaching, have made significant improvements on the good teaching seen at the last inspection. Teachers have adapted their work very well to meet the changing learning needs of the students. They have made very effective use of national strategies, and in most subjects extended their provision for literacy and numeracy and their use of ICT. Additional programmes for gifted and talented students are well organised and very effective, and there is very good specialist teaching and support for students with special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to support these students. Students with English as an additional language benefit from accurate assessment of their learning needs and effective support in lessons and in the after-school club. The deputy headteachers have made outstanding contributions to the development of teaching and learning through their management systems and personal example. The result of this hard work and effective management is teaching that is very good overall, and leads to very good long term achievement. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9, where teachers have worked exceptionally hard to combat the difficult learning environment of the lower school.
15. Where teaching is excellent, it combines very high levels of subject knowledge with excellent management and relationships, and a very close match of work to the learning needs of students. While the proportion of excellent teaching remains small, it makes a lasting impact on students' learning and attitudes, and provides a very clear model for the further development of teaching across the school.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent scientific knowledge, planning and relationships enabled a lower-attaining Year 9 class to understand the concept of displacement reactions to a standard above that expected for their age.

Over half of the class had special educational needs, including a significant proportion with behavioural difficulties. The students entered quietly and settled immediately to work on their starter activity, which illustrated earlier work on the characteristics of chemical reactions, focussing on the creation of different substances. The teacher consolidated and built on this knowledge skilfully, helping students to use scientific vocabulary to express their observations, and reinforcing the key concepts of *element* and *compound* that they needed in order to understand displacement reactions. She allocated sufficient time for this part of the lesson to ensure that all students contributed and felt secure in their knowledge. A teaching assistant provided individual support and helped those with behavioural difficulties to sustain their concentration. Students then moved to a simple, carefully-designed practical activity that enabled them to observe displacement reactions (in which one element replaces another, less active element, in a compound) and make judgements on the order of reactivity of the elements based on what they observed. An ingenious template, closely based on the format of the experiment, enabled them to record their observations in a way that made analysis straightforward. Students worked with exemplary concentration and co-operation, and all completed the task. This enabled them to take a full part in the final session, in which students acted out the process of one element displacing another. The lesson enabled them to reach a higher standard than expected for their age in this aspect of the National Curriculum for science.

16. Very good teaching, which is significantly more frequent than in most schools, has much in common with the excellent teaching, although the full range of its strengths may not be present in each lesson. All of the very good and excellent teaching makes extremely effective use of teachers' knowledge of their subject. Good teaching is well matched to students' needs, offers interesting practical and creative activities, builds good relationships and confidence, and makes a good contribution to learning and achievement.
17. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers manage classes well, but do not match work closely to the learning needs of the class. In a minority of these lessons, class management is adequate, but difficult behaviour is not handled skilfully. Teachers' use of ICT needs further development in modern foreign languages and design and technology, and the school is addressing this through its programme of professional development. Most work is well marked, with good guidance on improving it, but there are occasional lapses in the quality of guidance, particularly in some mathematics classes. Homework in most subjects and classes makes a good contribution to learning, but parents told the inspectors that there were some gaps, and this was confirmed by analysis of students' planners.
18. The small proportion of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, and the single poor lesson observed, had significant weaknesses in planning, demonstrating and explaining work, and in class management. The school took action on these points following feedback during the inspection. Across the school, students respond well to the vast majority of the teaching they receive, and very well to the school's best teaching. These good attitudes contribute to their learning and long-term achievement. A small but significant minority of students, however, work properly only when they have a very strong lead from their teacher. This behaviour at times makes other students' learning more difficult.
19. The school has very well developed systems for tracking students' progress in the National Curriculum and in their GCSE courses. The assessment of students with additional learning needs is accurate and very well organised. The management of assessment is highly efficient, and gives teachers a very clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of all students in each of their classes. Across the school, teachers

make very good use of this information in planning, combine it with their own informal assessment, and support it with further guidance in most day-to-day feedback and marking. This use of assessment is a key strength in the excellent teaching, and it is under-used in classes where teaching is less effective. The use of ICT to submit work and return it marked speeds up assessment and provides immediate feedback to students and parents.

Sixth form

20. The overall quality of sixth form teaching is very good. Teaching in almost all lessons is well adapted to the needs of students, including those who begin with below average standards for their course. Teachers almost always know their subjects very well, plan very effectively, explain difficult issues clearly, and help students to develop the study skills they need to succeed at A-level. They mark work in very good detail, and give very good feedback and guidance on improving it. Teaching is enthusiastic, and there is very effective teaching of creative work. Teaching in key skills courses is very well directed at improving ICT skills, and teachers make good use of opportunities to develop and apply numeracy skills. A more systematic approach to literacy skills, however, would benefit the growing number of students whose GCSE grades are only just adequate for sixth form work. In a tenth of lessons, teaching was satisfactory; these lessons were systematic and enabled students to make steady progress, but were very limited in their scope.
21. Teaching in several subjects, particularly in biology, psychology and sociology, is recovering from the effects of recent staffing difficulties and its recent improvements in these subjects have yet to be carried through into examination success. The school accepted that parents had grounds for concern over gaps in teaching caused by recent extended staff absence, and had taken effective action to deal with this by the time of the inspection.
22. The overall quality of sixth form learning is good. Most students respond with enthusiasm to the teaching they receive. They work hard outside lessons in the library and using the Internet, and take good care over practical work. A minority of students, mostly male, do not work hard enough outside lessons. These students do not read widely enough, do not organise their coursework effectively, and do not pay enough attention to detail in their writing. The head of the sixth form has developed good systems to detect and tackle these weaknesses as early as possible in Year 12. This work was beginning to have an impact during the inspection, particularly in biology, but had not yet fully addressed learning weaknesses in Year 13. Sixth form systems for assessing work and tracking progress are very good, and are used very effectively in planning work and guiding students. They play a key part in the overall effectiveness of teaching.

The curriculum

The curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities and meets students' needs well in the main school and very well in the sixth form. The range of enrichment activities beyond lessons is very good, and has some outstanding features. The school has sufficient, well-qualified staff and adequate resources for learning. Accommodation is adequate in size, but parts of the lower school are in poor condition, and the nature of the split site causes inefficiency and some wasted time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good opportunities to study the arts, physical education, ICT and science.
- The national strategies for literacy, numeracy and ICT are strongly in place.
- There are very good opportunities for creative work and for the enrichment of learning outside lessons.
- The curriculum makes well thought out and effective provision for students with additional learning needs.
- The organisation of the curriculum in modern languages in Years 7 to 9 needs to be improved.
- The sports college provides excellent opportunities for learning and participation.
- The lower school is inadequately cleaned, and does not provide a satisfactory learning environment.
- There are too few books and other resources to support learning in the school's two libraries.
- The sixth form curriculum offers a very good range of courses and additional activities.

Commentary

23. The curriculum in the main school provides good opportunities for students to make academic progress, to work creatively, and to take part in practical activities. There are particularly strong opportunities for sport. The grouping of students according to their learning needs in several subjects in Years 7 to 9 helps teachers provide challenging work at an appropriate level. The national strategies for literacy, numeracy and ICT are used very effectively. However, the system of introducing a second foreign language to almost all students in Year 8 leaves some with too little time for their first foreign language, and very few students now take two languages in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers a good range of GCSE courses, coupled with very work related learning. Links with outside organisations are very good and combine to make a significant contribution to the quality of learning, including that of students at risk of exclusion. Provision for those who have special educational needs, including those in vulnerable circumstances, is very good. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. Provision for citizenship and for religious education is satisfactory, but suffers from very limited teaching time.
24. Enrichment of the curriculum outside lessons is very good, and has some outstanding features. The school offers a very wide range of sports, excellent opportunities to study drama and visit the theatre, many learning opportunities in ICT, art, business studies, creative writing, history, music and science. Students benefit from visits by poets, actors, musicians, historians, and scientists, which often add great depth to their understanding. The programme for gifted and talented students is very good. It has included early morning sessions for creative writing, Russian and German taster classes, magistracy competitions, and studies of Latin, chemistry and geography. This work has made an important contribution to advanced thinking skills. Pupils with English as an additional language attend a popular homework club, where they, and sometimes their relatives, receive support of good quality. There are, however, too few enrichment activities in modern languages. Students also participate in residential visits, and work with Youth Service workers on a range of citizenship projects. A range of innovative features enhances the curriculum further: these include guidance for

students in Year 8 and 9 with thinking skills, and for GCSE students in Year 10 and 11 with time management. Links with Cambridge University have enhanced learning in a wide range of subjects and supported research in teaching and learning in science. The school places good emphasis upon ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Teachers offer a good range of revision opportunities and homework.

25. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is good in the upper school but shabby and poorly maintained in the lower school. The split site results in some wasted time as the upper and lower schools are not self-contained. Accommodation for drama and music is very good. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, and ICT facilities are good. The school's two libraries offer attractive accommodation, but have too few books to support learning effectively. Accommodation for physical education in the upper school is very good, and students have benefited greatly from the sports college. The number of teachers is sufficient and the vast majority of teachers are well qualified specialists. Support staff are also well qualified and experienced for the work they undertake.

Sixth form

26. The sixth form provides a very good range of learning opportunities, particularly for students who do not begin with the highest GCSE results, and attracts a third of its intake from other schools. Retention and completion rates are good. Sixth formers take full advantage of many excellent opportunities for learning outside lessons. They are also involved in research activities at Cambridge University and events at local and regional level in many subjects. The excellent range of enrichment activities includes many sports, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, complementary studies, general studies and the Young Enterprise scheme. As part of the tutorial system, there are good arrangements for individual counselling for careers and higher education advice. The head of the sixth form is adapting the curriculum increasingly effectively to meet the needs of students with below average GCSE results. The sixth form has good resources for learning, good accommodation and very good staffing.

Care, guidance and support

Support, advice and guidance to students are very good. There is very good involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting upon their views in main school and sixth form. Provision for the care of students is very effective and well managed. Provision for ensuring students' safety is satisfactory, but the school does not provide a healthy environment because of weaknesses in hygiene.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support, advice and guidance are based on very effective monitoring systems.
- New systems for support and guidance to sixth form students are very well thought out.
- The school actively seeks and acts on the views of students in the main school and sixth form.
- Planners are used well for day-to-day guidance in most classes, but there are some gaps.
- Provision for care and guidance is very well managed and involves the whole of the school staff.

- Girls' toilets are not of an acceptable standard in the lower school, and some boys' toilets in the upper school did not have acceptable washing facilities during the inspection.

Commentary

27. Support, care and guidance for students are very well organised and effective. Teachers know students very well, and students told inspectors that there were always adults in the school that they could turn to for academic or personal advice. Students are given clear and effective support when joining the school, including mini enterprise projects in Years 5 and 6 of their primary schools. Careful monitoring of their academic and social progress enables the school to build on strengths and provide help where it is needed. Day-to-day guidance and co-operation with parents through students' planners is effective in most classes, but there are some gaps in planners, mostly in those of lower-attaining boys, and these planners need to be more closely monitored. Students help each other through the school's system of trained student mentors, and some receive additional support from sixth form students. Careers guidance and work experience are carefully planned and effective, and students have very good guidance on options. Child protection arrangements meet local authority requirements, and there is good involvement of agencies outside the school.
28. Students told inspectors that teachers listen to them and take their views seriously. Recently, through school councils, they have influenced the building of a tarmac path from upper to lower school, dining room queues, the quality of food and the use of computer rooms.
29. The split site, and in particular the lower school building, creates significant difficulties for health and safety provision. Staff work hard to overcome these, for example, by ensuring hygienic and attractive lunches despite cramped conditions on both sites. However, the lower school site is not cleaned to an acceptable standard, and management's monitoring of cleaning had been confined to the upper school site, where problems are less serious. The school is taking action to improve monitoring of cleaning on the lower school site, and took immediate action to reduce litter following feedback during the inspection. The condition of the lower school girls' toilets during the inspection was unacceptable. Boys' toilets are of an acceptable standard, but some in the upper school had no washing facilities as the water had been turned off. Students told inspectors that this was normal. While the action had been taken in response to vandalism, the absence of washing facilities on a long term basis is unhygienic. The school took action to restore washing facilities following inspection feedback. Other aspects of health and safety, including Internet safety, are satisfactory.

Sixth form

30. The quality of care and guidance in the sixth form is equal to that in the main school, and has recently been improved by well-considered monitoring and support systems for students who do not keep pace with the standards expected in their target grades. Students talking with inspectors emphasised that all staff are experts in their field and always willing to pass on their knowledge. Enrichment for all is available in the Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise awards, both very popular. Guidance on further and higher education and employment is very good, and supported by frequent speakers

and visits to universities and workplaces by students. The sixth form council ensures that students' views are keenly listened to and acted upon by management.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents, and very effective links with the community and with other schools and colleges. Extended services and educational support programmes are very good, with outstanding features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good information for parents, and is approachable if they have problems.
- The school provides very good support to other local schools, and has very good links with primary schools.
- The school website provides extensive and very clear information for parents.
- Some parents' evenings give only a very short appointment with each teacher.
- Sports college facilities are used intensively, and make an excellent contribution to links with the community.
- Many parents and local businesses support work related learning and work experience.
- There is a very good after-school workshop for parents and students with English as an additional language.

Commentary

31. Discussions with parents and their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that they see the school as very good overall. They particularly value its high expectations, arrangements for children joining the school, fairness to children and ease of access if they have a problem. Sixth form students have a positive view of the school and teaching, support and guidance they receive.
32. A minority of parents were concerned about behaviour, both in moving between sites and in some classes, the consistency of homework and the quality of reports and information. Inspection evidence confirmed parents' positive overall views of the school. Inspectors agree, however, that there are lapses in behaviour in a minority of classes, and, less frequently, outside lessons. They found that most teachers set regular and effective homework, but that there are some gaps in homework, chiefly among lower-attaining students. Discussion with students showed that some do not write down the homework they are given, and some parents contribute to this shortcoming by not checking and signing students' planners regularly.
33. Inspectors found the quality of information for parents very good. Parents receive a clear and informative progress review each term, and an informative annual report each summer, with targets for improvement. The website provides extensive information for parents on all aspects of their children's work. Where parents do not have a computer, the school can supply paper copies. Regular newsletters, meetings with teachers and the headteacher, and educational evenings are well attended. Parents' concerns about information were mainly focused on the short length of time they had with teachers at parents' evenings. The school accepted that this was a problem where teachers saw a large number of students in one year group. The

prospectus and governors' annual report are clear and meet legal requirements. There is a regular and popular workshop and homework club for parents and students with English as an additional language.

34. Several parents help in school, sharing their expertise in fields such as architecture, presentation skills and ICT. At home, most parents are keen to help with projects and topics. The school appreciates its energetic Friends of Netherall, who raise considerable funding towards computer equipment, musical instruments and art materials.
35. The sports college has built outstanding links with the community through the intensive and very well organised use of its facilities. Professional knowledge is shared through a local federation of secondary schools and a cluster of primary and special schools. The school has very good relationships with local primary and special schools. A very productive relationship with teacher training institutions makes an important contribution to staffing.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. Leadership is very good. The headteacher, deputy headteachers, head of the sixth form, and other teachers with management responsibility provide clear and strong direction for the school, backed by effective systems for educational management. Weaknesses in the management of the premises result in unsatisfactory hygienic conditions for the students. Governance is satisfactory; it has good features, but some areas that require improvement. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, deputy headteachers and head of the sixth form provide very clear leadership and direction.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are closely monitored, and data is analysed very well.
- The management of subjects, of provision for special educational needs, and of care and support for students, is very effective.
- Leadership in English and art and design, management in ICT, and leadership and management of the sports college, are excellent.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment among the whole of the school staff.
- Governors monitor standards well, and have clear structures and good organisation.
- The school does not make effective use of best value principles in deciding on sixth form spending.

Commentary

36. The headteacher works closely and effectively with the senior management team to provide clear strategic direction to the school. The delegation of responsibility to deputy headteachers and to the head of the sixth form is well planned, and these senior staff provide very clear leadership and examples of high standards of professionalism to middle managers and all other colleagues. There are clear lines of accountability from

middle management, with regular and effective reviews of progress. Data on students' performance, including examination and test results is managed and analysed to a high standard, with close monitoring of the standards reached by students of all backgrounds. This data is clearly presented to teachers of all classes. Most heads of department ensure that it is used well in planning, though this is not consistent in all subjects. All staff with management responsibilities contribute to a very strong sense of teamwork among their colleagues.

37. The school improvement plan is well thought out and effective, and includes good planning for the long-term development of the school site. There are clear links between this plan and subject plans. The overall quality of subject management is very good, with excellent management in ICT, excellent leadership of English, and excellent leadership and management in physical education and the sports college. The use of national strategies is very well managed, and provision for the care and guidance of students is managed very well. The management of cleaning and maintenance does not ensure that these services are effectively monitored throughout the school, and has not done enough to ensure that all students have access to basic hygienic facilities. Governors have a programme of refurbishing toilets. However, they had not identified the full extent of the weaknesses in provision for hygiene. The headteacher took action to improve this aspect of management following inspection feedback. The school's accommodation does not allow more than one year group to assemble at a time, and this seriously restricts opportunities for the headteacher the governors to provide a daily act of collective worship. On the other hand, many assemblies and tutorial periods offer very limited opportunities for spiritual and personal development, and this aspect could be improved without major changes in the school buildings.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 4,957, 529 | Balance from previous year | 68,638 |
| Total expenditure | 4,919,362 | Balance carried forward to the next | 106,805 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3,397 | | |

38. The school receives a well below average amount for each main school student, and incurs additional costs through its split site. The number of pupils admitted each year, at 252, makes the organisation of the school into cost-effective classes difficult, particularly in the lower school. The school controls spending closely, and obtains good value for money in its purchases. The governors do not, however, apply best value principles systematically in decisions about sixth form spending, which is above the amount allocated by the Learning and Skills Council. While they are aware of the need to keep group sizes at an economic level, decisions to allow some subjects to continue with very small groups have not been taken on the basis of full analysis of the consequences. Other aspects of the governors' work are carried out well. They are well organised, with clear and consistent links to departments, monitor the school's work well and contribute effectively to policies.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **good**; it meets statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education is very well organised and students are well informed.
- There is a good relationship with Connexions, and a good careers library.
- Work experience is very well organised is matched very well to students' needs.
- Vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 meet students' needs well.
- Business studies provides very good opportunities for WRL in the main school and sixth form.

Commentary

39. The school offers a consistent, well-organised programme of WRL that begins in Year 7. Careers education is very well organised for all students from the time they join, and they are helped to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses in making decisions and choosing options. However, standards reached in Years 7 to 9 are not yet monitored effectively. The school co-operates well with the Connexions service to ensure that all students have good careers advice, and careers library is well stocked and accessible.
40. Work experience is very well organised and available to all students in Year 10. Students are briefed before and debriefed after the placement as that they can share their concerns and experiences with others. Students' record books are well structured and allow comments by the students as well as others involved. Recognition is given to students who receive particularly good reports from their placements.
41. The school offers a good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. These include vocational GCSEs in science, business, ICT, health and social care and child development. Students are well matched to the courses. Innovative use is made of ICT in Year 10 business studies by creating "a virtual work experience". A junior leader's course is available as an extra provision for students taking physical education in Years 10 and 11. A small group of students in Year 11 follow a good work-related curriculum in conjunction with a local service provider and a further education college. WRL in the sixth form includes excellent industrial links with the vocational course in business studies, and the successful Young Enterprise group.
42. The newly appointed co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and has introduced and supported several new initiatives including an effective audit of students' knowledge and perceptions. This provides a very good basis for planning further provision.

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 **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and are improving further.
- Excellent leadership has created strong teamwork and high levels of commitment among all staff.
- The teaching of language skills in Years 7 to 9 is excellent.
- Teaching is very well adapted to the needs of the students, and enables them to succeed in examinations.
- All groups of students, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress.
- There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including excellent workshops from visiting actors.
- Very effective management, including close analysis of standards, has raised standards.

Commentary

43. Standards are well above average in Year 9 and Year 11. National test results in Year 9 were well above average in 2004, and show a sharp upward trend. GCSE results were above average for boys as well as girls, and the proportion of A* and A grades was double the national average. Girls do a little better than boys, but the gap between girls' and boys' standards is narrowing. These results represent very good achievement for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, who benefit from teaching that is closely matched to their needs and interests. Standards have improved greatly since the last inspection.
44. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was high. Students are responsive and articulate. They have well-developed speaking and listening skills and readily engage in productive discussion with their fellows and with the teacher, which helps them to learn. They are capable of a close reading of text from Year 7 onwards, and make very good notes. Teachers' presentation and analysis of a wide range of different types of text in Years 7 to and 9 helps students, especially boys, to develop a range of writing styles. Higher-attaining students produce independent, extended writing to a high standard.
45. Students start to make very good progress immediately on entry because the department has good prior knowledge of students' capabilities. Lessons are very well planned to provide the right level of challenge to them from day one. Accurate, detailed and well-recorded assessment of each student allows progress to be tracked

throughout their school careers, so that help can be given if this falters. The curriculum is broad and demanding and provides a very good level of preparation in the subject for all external examinations. Excellent teaching of language skills in years 7, 8 and 9 is responsible for the very high proportion of A* and A grades in GCSE English. Drama workshops and performances given by skilful professional actors during the week of the inspection enriched some excellent teaching of Shakespeare in performance seen in Year 9.

46. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers have a depth of knowledge which interests and enthuses students. They are eager to learn. Activities are inventive and compel students' attention. Lessons are well planned and contain plenty of variety. There are good opportunities for students to take an active part in their learning.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 9 lesson on Shakespeare in performance used highly skilled questioning, with excellent ICT and video resources, to develop high levels of interest and understanding.

A brisk starter, using the interactive whiteboard to show Shakespeare's Globe, enabled students to understand and tackle the problems of setting the scene for Act Two of Macbeth in such a theatre. The teacher's skilful questioning made students think on their feet. They considered how the Tudor convention of using male actors adds layers of meaning to the text. Students were entranced by the erudite information given. When shown film clips of a Shakespearean audience from "Shakespeare in Love," the teacher's perceptive commentary added to the interest. Further searching questions helped students to appreciate the subtext of the play. The teacher set the scene well for Macbeth's soliloquy in Act Two, and once again questioned the class skilfully to extend further their understanding of the events leading to Duncan's murder, modelling annotation of text on the interactive whiteboard. A well-illustrated prompt helped pair work as students marked up their scripts for performance. This was reinforced by a clip from Polanski's Macbeth, which enhanced their understanding of text as performance. By the end of the lesson students were thinking seriously and effectively about techniques of dramatic interpretation and their effects.

47. Excellent leadership inspires teachers and students, creating a strong sense of purpose, interest and enjoyment in the work. Management is very good, and teachers with management responsibilities work together harmoniously and efficiently. Comprehensive and analytical assessment procedures, which give a clear insight into students' progress, inform and dominate all decision-making. The appointment of well-qualified teachers has been a priority and these now work as an effective team because their skills have been well developed and there are employed to best effect. There has been very good improvement in standards and provision since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Provision is very good. The school has used the national literacy strategy very well to inform and maintain the promotion of literacy in a range of subjects. Keywords and technical language are well emphasised in all of them. The development of language is particularly effective in English, drama and mathematics. Lessons in science, art, geography, history and modern foreign languages contain good opportunities for students to develop literacy skills, and there is a well-planned language development policy for physical education. Opportunities to develop technical language are often missed in music. The school identifies students with significant weaknesses in literacy before they enter the school. Each has a well co-ordinated plan to improve their learning, which includes small-group tuition. Their progress is carefully monitored throughout their school career. Co-ordination of provision for these students is very good.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good long-term achievement in German at GCSE.
- Students taking two languages do not have enough teaching time for French in Years 8 and 9.
- Very few students take two languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The department is in the early stages of using ICT for teaching and learning.
- There is very little provision of enrichment activities outside lessons.

Commentary

49. Most students join the school with no previous experience of modern languages. All take French in Year 7, and most add German in Years 8 and 9, leaving less teaching time for French for these students. Standards are below average in French, but students make rapid progress and achieve well in German. There are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls, but students with English as an additional language achieve better than others overall. Almost all students continue to study a language in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average in German and above average in French. In 2004, results were even higher in German. They fell below average in French, largely because more low-attaining students sat the examination.
50. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but it is significantly better in German than in French. There are clear signs of loss of motivation by older students of French. Work is too often shoddily presented, and too many homework assignments are not completed. Standards in Year 10 are sometimes held back by students' unco-operative attitudes.
51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in French and good in German. Teachers plan lessons well, using a variety of well-sequenced activities. They are expert linguists. Their marking is regular and constructive. They help students to understand how languages work, and so make an effective contribution to their literacy. They have begun to use ICT to enhance learning, but this aspect of their teaching is not yet well developed. Some of the most successful lessons are with beginners in French or German, where teachers speak the foreign language extensively and develop their students' listening and speaking skills well. However, with older students, there are too many lessons where students are passive. They are not required to practise speaking enough, or to be creative with the foreign language.
52. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. There is, however, not enough formal monitoring of teaching to enable the best teaching techniques to be shared effectively. Students' learning is not enriched by extra-curricular activities. There are no residential study trips and contacts abroad to inspire and motivate them. There has been insufficient improvement in provision since the last inspection, but the present team of specialist teachers is capable of making the necessary improvements.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress to reach well above average standards in national tests and at GCSE.
- Students' very good attitudes to work and effective teaching ensure that achievement is very good overall.
- Leadership and management are very good, and the whole team is committed to improving provision.
- Monitoring of progress is good but students do not always know what to do in order to improve.
- Work is not always fully matched to the needs of the highest and lowest attaining students in each class.

Commentary

53. Year 9 national test and GCSE results for 2004 were well above average, very high in comparison with similar schools. Standards in the current Years 9 and 11 are also well above average, as they were during the last inspection. Pupils enter Year 7 with average standards and achieve very well; they make slightly stronger progress in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants and also achieve very well.
54. By Year 11, students have very well developed numeracy skills and very good knowledge and understanding across all the relevant areas of work. The successful implementation of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, and increased active participation of students in lessons, has been particularly successful in raising the performance of boys, who now do better than girls at GCSE. A group of high attaining students in Years 10 and 11 attend voluntary lessons outside the normal school day to extend learning and prepare for the demands of mathematics at a higher level.
55. The quality of teaching is good. Despite a high turnover of mathematics staff in recent years, most lessons during the inspection were good, and some were very good. Analysis of students' work shows evidence of teaching of sustained good quality. Lessons are planned, organised and structured well, with appropriate learning goals shared with the students at the start. Questioning and explanations are clear, lessons are challenging and students are engaged and motivated. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students dealt competently with the simplification of an algebraic expression, solving an equation and changing the subject of a formula as part of a quick starter to the lesson.
56. In this and most other lessons, effective class management and relationships, and the very positive attitudes of the students, sustain learning of high quality and contribute well to pupils' personal development. The grouping of students contributes to learning, but the needs of the highest and lowest attaining students in classes are not always considered in planning, and this is the main issue that needs to be tackled to improve teaching. Teachers develop mathematical language and literacy well, but do not

always make the best of opportunities for discussion to extend students' speaking skills. ICT is used satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9, and well in Years 10 and 11.

57. Leadership and management are very good. High standards, very good achievement and good teaching have been maintained, and provision has improved since the last inspection despite many staff changes over recent years and problems related to a department occupying two sites. Monitoring of progress now contains more detail, including regular assessment of homework, and students now have a clear idea of their progress. However, inconsistencies in marking work leave some students without a clear idea of how to improve their work, and there were some gaps in the homework of lower-attaining students. Established and experienced teachers provide very effective support for newly qualified and unqualified staff, who now constitute almost half of the department. Overall, good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Students use their mathematical skills well in other subjects. In religious education, for example, they use graphs to compare aspects of their day with that of Joseph's. In geography, physical education, history, modern language and science data handling skills also support learning. In design and technology students measure and use scale and estimation and in art cope with spatial aspects of work as required. However, some departments are not systematic in their planning, and this results in some missed opportunities to develop students' skills and their understanding of how to apply them.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average, and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good, with outstanding features.
- Students with English as an additional language achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management have sustained standards despite staff changes.
- The curriculum meets students' needs very well.
- Students have good attitudes to work, and their response to the best teaching is excellent.

Commentary

59. National Curriculum test results are consistently above average in Year 9, and well above average for similar schools. The standard of Year 9 work seen during the inspection was above average. Overall, achievement in Year 9 is good, and higher-attaining students reach standards significantly above those expected for their age. GCSE results are also above average overall, and represent good achievement among all groups of students. Accurate assessment of the abilities of students with English as an additional language enables them to make very good progress, and they are well represented in the highest-attaining groups. There is no long-term difference in the standards reached by boys and girls, and the standard of work

seen in Year 11 was consistent with these examination results. Overall achievement in Year 11 is good.

60. Teaching and learning are good, and there is much very good and excellent teaching in individual lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm and expertise in science are consistent strengths. They make effective use of these when explaining ideas. As a consequence, the pupils remain well motivated and focused on learning. Most lessons begin with effective starter activities setting a tone for effective learning. Where teaching is very good or excellent, teachers combine these strengths with very clear match of work to the learning needs of the class. In a significant proportion of lessons, however, data from assessment could be analysed more closely to ensure that work was closely matched to students' learning needs, and that all were working at the highest possible standard. Teaching makes a good contribution to students' literacy and numeracy skills, and makes good use of ICT.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent subject knowledge, superb planning, and high expectations enabled a Year 11 class to gain very clear understanding of how light is reflected to form images.

A brisk starter activity quickly established why some surfaces reflect light to form images whilst others do not. A demonstration using a ray box was followed by a timed task in which the pupils swiftly investigated and developed understanding of the law of reflection. A data projector, focus on key vocabulary and illustrations supported a well-paced discussion that consolidated learning of this law. The teacher then introduced a picture of a person and her reflection. The discussion that followed helped pupils to understand how plane mirrors form images and to consider ideas such as the image being laterally inverted, and at the same distance behind the mirror as the object in its front. A well-planned worksheet, required pupils to draw the path of rays that formed the image. The teacher kept pupils intellectually involved with further 'bite size' activities, discussion and consolidations. This resulted in new learning of further ideas, such as the enlarged virtual image that a user sees when looking into a concave mirror, and a smaller virtual image that a user sees when using a convex mirror. All students, including an early stage learner of English as an additional language, learned and achieved highly in this double award science class.

61. Leadership and management are very good. Despite the constraints of split site that requires duplication of resources within a limited budget, the department has maintained standards and achievement very effectively since the last inspection. The department is well staffed by qualified teachers, but there has been a high turnover of staff, and management has worked very effectively to maintain the quality of teaching despite this. The curriculum meets the pupils' needs very well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where the range of courses provides scope for all students, including those capable of the highest standards. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is well established and is being refined to improve learning. Provision of enrichment activities such as visits and clubs is good. Improvement from the previous inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very high proportion of top grades at GCSE.
- Students become fluent, effective and confident users of ICT by Year 11.
- The curriculum is very effectively organised to promote very good achievement for all students.
- ICT is used very effectively as a tool for learning at school and at home.
- The school's Intranet gives pupils access to curriculum materials of high quality.

- Very good teaching sets high expectations of learning.
- Leadership is very good, and management of the subject is excellent.

Commentary

62. Students taking the GCSE full and short courses in 2004 achieved excellent results; all achieved grade C or above. Almost nine-tenths of achieved A or A* grades in the full course, and three-fifths in the short course. These results are much higher than those of most schools, and show a dramatic improvement on the pass rate for 2003. Students not taking GCSE have their achievements accredited either by a vocational GCSE or by being entered for Key Skills certification; most of these students reach well above average standards. Overall standards are well above average in Year 11. Achievement by Year 11 is very good among all groups of students, and often particularly good among those with special educational needs.
63. Students join the school with broadly average standards. Standards in Year 9 are above average; virtually all students reach average standards, and many were achieving more than this. Each subject makes its own contribution to ICT teaching, with support from the ICT teachers, and this leads to very good development of skills and confidence.
64. Teaching is very good. Teaching organisation is excellent, with materials that enable very good learning. Teachers use the innovative approaches fostered by the department very well, making the school's Intranet a valuable practical tool for learning at school and at home. Teachers set tests that are e-mailed to them to mark, and send results back by return. Coursework tasks and home works are on the Intranet and pupils send them home, work on them and then return them to be continued. Pupils then have structure to their learning that enables them to succeed and they are constantly challenged. Pupils respond to this well thought out provision with very good attitudes and behaviour.
65. The quality of curriculum leadership is very good, with a shared vision with the senior management team and the staff. Excellent management ensures that pupils have quality materials and progress at a rapid pace, and is working to develop further the skills of the small number of teachers who are in the early stages of using ICT. Technical support staff are knowledgeable, efficient, and highly valued. The maintenance and development of standards and provision since the last inspection represent very good progress.

ICT across the curriculum

66. Provision is very good. The school has placed ICT at the heart of learning, and has developed very effective systems to ensure that it makes a specific contribution to learning through units in each subject. Teachers' ICT skills are well developed, and there is effective training for teachers whose skills are less advanced. There is some variation in the extent to which ICT is used between subjects, with though it is under-used only in history, and there were several examples during the inspection of very effective use of the latest developments, such as interactive whiteboards. There is an excellent and innovative feature in the use of the school's website and the Intranet. This links teachers, students and parents, allows work to be downloaded and swiftly returned for marking, and enables students who are ill or who have fixed-period exclusions to be sent work to complete at home.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and all groups of students achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management has adapted the department's work to the changing needs of students.
- Teaching is very good, promoting independent learning and investigation to a high standard.
- Very good relationships contribute to very good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Provision for literacy, including extended writing, for data handling and for ICT is very good.
- Students have a very good understanding of how much progress they are making.
- A small proportion of work is not matched closely to individual needs.

Commentary

67. Standards among students joining Year 7 are broadly average, and their achievement from this starting point is very good. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. Students of all abilities gain extensive understanding of geographical patterns and processes, and are encouraged to use a wide range of investigative and problem-solving skills. This pattern of very good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11. Coursework is of high quality, and GCSE results are high, particularly at grades A and A*. Boys achieve as well as girls as a result of effective strategies such as individual tuition and extra use of ICT.
68. Teaching and learning are very good. Very effective class management establishes strong relationships between teachers and students. This creates a positive climate for learning, and enables students to work with confidence. Teachers have high expectations and plan challenging work for students of all abilities, using a wide variety of teaching activities is used to stimulate interest and involvement. High standards of individual teaching and support enable students with special educational needs to make very good progress. However, in a few lessons, the tasks are not adapted closely enough to the needs of other lower-attaining students. Teachers make very good use of literacy, ensuring that students remember and understand geographical vocabulary and encouraging the use of extended writing for reports and essays. ICT is used effectively to research the Internet and present completed reports. Fieldwork is very well organised, with good use of numeracy in the form of collecting data, creating graphs and interpreting these appropriately.
69. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work together to evaluate their work and to plan to raise standards. Assessment procedures are clear and consistent and all students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. The department's success in adapting its work to the needs of students, and in maintaining high standards, represents very good improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership and effective management are raising standards, and achievement is good.
- Teaching in most classes involves, interests and challenges students.
- Good relationships create a positive learning environment.
- Assessment is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Students do not make enough use of ICT, and there are too few relevant books in the libraries.

Commentary

70. Standards are above average in Year 9 and Year 11, and represent good achievement. The 2004 GCSE results were also above average, and achievement was good. Students achieve well because of good teaching, effective systems of assessment and a strong focus on examination technique. Their opinions are valued, and positive classroom relationships help to create a good working atmosphere. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, those who speak English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs.
71. Good, and often very good, teaching is a key factor in raising standards. Teachers' planning is extremely thorough, their subject knowledge is very good and they build strong relationships that encourage students to play an active role in their own learning. Sensitive questioning allows students of all abilities to play a full part in lessons, and most work is closely matched to individual needs. The teaching is especially effective in developing students' skills in the evaluation and analysis of historical source materials. However, in a few lessons in Years 7 to 9, some students were insufficiently challenged, and teachers provided too few opportunities for them to work independently. The department places strong emphasis on improving literacy. Guided writing structures, and assistance with specialist vocabulary, give most students the confidence and skill to write more extended pieces of work. Marking and assessment is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Most students are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.
72. The subject is very well led and effectively managed. There is a clear vision for improvement and a strong team ethos. Review of progress, through close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' progress, is a strength of the department. Students have too few opportunities to take part in organised historical visits, but this weakness is now being tackled. Although subject resources are very well managed and used very effectively, an inadequately stocked library and restricted usage of school computer facilities, limits opportunities for independent historical research. The head of history is very aware of both issues and has already drawn up plans to extend students' use of the Internet. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average, and achievement in this course is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good at GCSE and in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching time for students not taking GCSE is low, and these students write very little.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to students' personal development.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management.

Commentary

73. Students join the school with below average standards. Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 enables them to reach above average standards. The topics they study are relevant and make a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All groups of students achieve very well by the end of Year 9. 2004 GCSE results were well above average, and continued an upward trend over the last three years. A similar standard was seen during the inspection. These standards also represent very good achievement. Teaching time for students not taking GCSE is low. It was not possible to observe this teaching during the inspection, and, as students undertake little written work, it was not possible to make a judgement on its quality.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lesson planning is excellent. Teachers use creative and innovative activities that challenge, stimulate and motivate students. They have very high expectations and excellent subject knowledge, which is always combined with very good relationships to ensure that all students enjoy their work and make progress. Students work very well both independently and collaboratively. They respond well to challenging questions and have very positive attitudes to the subject. Very good behaviour, and a keenness to learn, helps their achievement.
75. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear determination to drive the subject forward and sustain improvement. Much effort has been spent on raising standards in Years 7 - 9 and in the GCSE course. An excellent team of specialist teachers is not afraid of using innovative and creative approaches to teaching and learning. Assessment, monitoring and reporting arrangements are very good. Monitoring and self-evaluation is very thorough and ongoing. The time allocated to religious education for students not taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11 has not changed since the last inspection, and senior managers know that this needs to be addressed. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results show good achievement, especially for boys.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and generally good in GCSE courses.

- Some teaching is less than satisfactory, and results in poor work and behaviour.
- Students taking the child development course achieve well.
- Teaching and standards are not monitored closely enough.

Commentary

76. GCSE results in 2004 were above average. They were strongest in electronics, graphical communication and resistant materials. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and shows good achievement. Boys did better than girls, except in food studies. Standards in child development are below average, but represent good achievement for students taking the course. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average throughout the school, and represented satisfactory achievement overall, despite weaknesses in teaching and learning in some classes. Standards tend to be stronger in designing than in making, where students could often pay more attention to detail and accuracy.
77. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is generally good on the GCSE courses, where it includes effective individual help and guidance to lower-attaining students. Most teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, with good features in some classes, particularly where there is discussion of wider implications of the subject, such as the effects of packaging. In some classes in Years 7 to 9, however, students spend too long listening to the teacher, and are given unchallenging work. In a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 11, unsatisfactory to poor teaching led to abrasive relationships, poor work and poor behaviour. The school planned action to tackle this teaching following feedback during the inspection. Teachers across the department make good use of ICT. Assessment is satisfactory, and linked well to GCSE grades.
78. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department offers a good range of courses, and has developed this aspect of its work well since the last inspection. The head of department promotes a good, cohesive team spirit among the experienced teachers and support staff. Day-to-day management is smooth and the large examination entry is organised efficiently. There are clear lines of communication, and good support for teachers. Teaching and standards are monitored, but this is not always followed by strong enough action to deal with weaknesses or to build on the department's most effective work. Overall, the development of the department's work since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to high standards, creativity and enjoyment for all students.
- GCSE results are high and show very good achievement.
- Excellent leadership inspires teachers and has built a strong sense of teamwork.
- Assessment systems are excellent.
- Displays of students work build confidence and contribute much to the school's climate for learning.

Commentary

79. Students join the school with average standards. Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 enables them to reach well above average standards, and encourages an above average proportion to choose art and design at GCSE, where results are also consistently well above average. Similar standards were seen during the inspection, and there was some excellent work. All students are able to draw well from observation and use their results to develop good quality concluding pieces in a variety of different media. They make very effective use of sketchbooks. Achievement is very good throughout the school.
80. Teaching is very good across the full range of the subject. Teachers' subject knowledge is extremely wide and they deliver it expertly. Planning and preparation is detailed and thorough, always identifying students' specific needs and reinforcing literacy links within each lesson. Teachers use ambitious topics, with a level of demand that challenges students to achieve highly. Strict time constraints are imposed that ensure that learning is at, or close to, capacity. Learning is very good because teachers are very good at giving individual tuition. Very good relationships are established that lead students to be very effective partners in their learning. Students' work is reviewed regularly and targets are set so that they know what is required for them to improve. This information appears on the school's Intranet and can be accessed by parents. This system has a strong motivating effect on students. ICT is very effectively incorporated into the broad curriculum. Students learn equally well how to apply the formal elements of art through ICT, alongside traditional methods. Extra-curricular opportunities are very wide; local galleries, visiting artists and competitions are used for the benefit of all.
81. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership is assured and inspirational. Two inexperienced teachers are being very expertly inducted into the very strong team that exists. The head of department is a very good role model for teaching. She has a sharply focused vision for the development of the department, especially in the drive to achieve more A* GCSE grades. The monitoring of both teaching and standards is very good. The results of monitoring is used to very effectively to manage continuing professional development. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because very high standards have been maintained and students now achieve very well throughout the whole school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 9, and well above average at GCSE.
- There is a good time allocation to music in Years 7 to 9.
- Some lessons use a narrow range of teaching strategies, and the use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities enable students to extend their learning and performance.

- Accommodation is very good and is used intensively throughout the day and after school.
- The department is well led and managed, resulting in a positive ethos and working atmosphere.

Commentary

82. Students enter the school with average standards, and reach above average standards by Year 9. This is good achievement. Students develop good understanding of musical techniques, which they apply to their work. They perform confidently, using their voices and classroom instruments. They evaluate their own work and that of others in the class, using musical vocabulary. Students choosing to study GCSE music begin with well above average standards. They reach well above average standards at the end of Year 11, and their progress is satisfactory. Most students are confident players and some perform to very high standards. The most able compose imaginatively.
83. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges in individual lessons from good to satisfactory. Teachers know the subject very well, and plan thoroughly, with good extension tasks for the highest-attaining students in Years 7 to 9. Good use is made of published resources, but teaching strategies do not always focus enough on motivating and challenging students to improve. Behaviour is good because teachers are confident and assertive. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory. However, in a significant minority of lessons, the range of teaching strategies used does not inspire students, and some boys occasionally lose motivation. In Years 10 and 11, an overemphasis on music theory impedes the learning of all but the most knowledgeable students.
84. Leadership and management are good. Leadership is committed, and the department has clear agendas for development. Its very good facilities are used well by students at all times of the day and a positive ethos exists. Schemes of work help teachers new to the department, although the lack of clarity about what students will learn in each unit is reflected in some of the less effective lessons. Good progress is being made in developing a strategy to involve students more closely in the assessment of their work, although the impact is currently limited. The use of computers to support musical activity is underdeveloped. The provision of three lessons per fortnight in Years 7 and 9 supports good achievement. In Year 11, the group size is too large to enable students to receive sufficient individual support.
85. There are very good opportunities for enrichment through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Performances in school and in the community are regular features of school life. Instrumental tuition is very well managed and the number of pupils learning has doubled since the last inspection. Some tutors make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning by running ensembles. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The profile of the department has been maintained and the overall quality of teaching and learning remains good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, with strong co-operation between teachers and students.
- Students achieve very well at GCSE and in the National Curriculum for physical education.
- Leadership and management of the department and sports college are excellent.
- There is a very wide range of opportunities for participation and learning outside lessons.
- Assessment systems and procedures are very good, but assessment is not consistently used as part of learning.

Commentary

86. Students join the school with average standards. They receive very good teaching, work very hard, and reach above average standards in Year 9 and well above average standards in the National Curriculum in Year 11. The GCSE course is popular and involves a wide range of activities, including dance. Results are above average, and most students achieve better in physical education than in their other subjects. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. The sports college makes a major contribution to achievement through the quality and range of activities it promotes, and many students gain accreditation through the Junior Sports Leader scheme. Very good participation by boys and girls supports progress and provides continuity in learning. The quality of work seen during the inspection showed a rising trend of achievement, and overall achievement is very good.
87. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic, plan their work very well and have high expectations. Relationships are very strong. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that students know what they are learning and why and regularly check progress by intervention with individuals and groups of pupils so that they know what they can do and how to improve. Students in these lessons know at what level they are working, are given tasks, which are appropriate for their level and are developing skills, which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students make good use of opportunities to enhance their learning through very good information and communication technology provision. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, assessment is under-used to match work to students' learning needs, and they depend too much on the teacher.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent subject knowledge and creative use of varied teaching and learning styles enabled a class of lower-attaining students to understand patterns in learning, and to reach above average standards.

The class included several students with behavioural difficulties, and the lesson required careful planning in order to meet the requirements of the course as well as the students' varied learning needs. The students knew from experience what the teacher expected of them, and settled immediately to their starter activity, which recapped earlier work on common sports injuries. The teacher help them to develop their skills of working as a team, and their use of accurate terminology when discussing parts of the body. Students then completed an imaginative activity, which had them working as a whole group constructing a body shape, to show parts of the body affected by different sports injuries. The teacher used questions very effectively to check students' knowledge and understanding, and to open discussion about their experience of using a range of learning styles. The main part of the lesson was based on a simple practical activity that enabled students to experience and observe different learning styles. Students were actively involved in a range of interesting tasks in order to learn a complicated combination of hand movements. They then tested each other, and used a review activity to check the relationship between the learning style and their success in developing the technique. This analysis enabled them to identify and understand their own preferred learning styles, and to reach above average standards in this aspect of their GCSE short course.

88. Leadership and management of the department and sports college are excellent. They head of department and director of sport make excellent use of facilities and funding, and act as excellent role models for other teachers and the students. They have a group of specialist and non-specialist teachers who work very well as a team. They share good practice and are developing strategies to improve pupils' achievement. Enrichment activities are varied and their overall quality is excellent. The department has made excellent progress since the last inspection, and the sports college has played a leading part in this improvement.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

89. Vocational courses in business studies, science, ICT, health and social care and child development were sampled. Students are well matched to the courses, which include innovative and very effective use of ICT. The quality of work sampled was good in health and social care and child development, with very good features in students' attitudes and in provision for special educational needs. It was very good in business studies and in ICT.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

90. The school's two-week timetable did not allow sufficient observation to support a judgement on provision in citizenship, and in personal, social and health education. Both subjects were sampled. The quality of teaching and learning seen in personal, social and health education was satisfactory overall, and some lessons made a very good contribution to careers education. The quality of work sampled in citizenship was also satisfactory. The subject has a very good scheme of work, and there are extensive opportunities within the curriculum and enrichment activities for students to develop clear understanding of citizenship and the responsibilities of living in a community. Students' written work in Years 7 to 9 shows satisfactory standards and achievement, but there was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11, caused by teachers' limited knowledge and understanding of the subject. The school meets statutory requirements for assessing and reporting on citizenship, but the range of achievement assessed is limited. The head of department does not have opportunities to monitor teaching in citizenship, but she has identified the steps needed to improve provision, and development planning is good.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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 | 8 | 87.1 | 78.3 | 12.5 | 21.6 | 30.0 | 28.5 |
| Biology | 5 | 60.0 | 63.5 | 0 | 10.4 | 18.0 | 19.8 |
| Business Studies | 13 | 23.1 | 75.3 | 0 | 15.4 | 6.2 | 25.7 |
| Chemistry | 6 | 50.0 | 70.3 | 12.5 | 13.2 | 16.8 | 23.0 |
| Communication Studies | 1 | 100 | 87.2 | 0 | 24.9 | 40.0 | 32.8 |
| Drama | 5 | 100 | 86.6 | 40.0 | 19.8 | 42.0 | 30.9 |
| Economics | 1 | 0 | 71.6 | 0 | 18.6 | 0 | 25.8 |
| English/English language | 9 | 66.7 | 85.3 | 22.2 | 16.1 | 22.2 | 29.0 |
| English Literature | 4 | 75.0 | 86.2 | 0 | 17.4 | 27.5 | 29.7 |
| French | 3 | 33.3 | 79.8 | 0 | 19.4 | 6.7 | 28.2 |
| Design and technology | 6 | 50.0 | 72.6 | 0 | 13.9 | 10 | 24.3 |
| Geography | 6 | 83.3 | 75.5 | 0 | 20.4 | 25 | 27.0 |
| General studies | 65 | 63.1 | 73.6 | 1.5 | 16.9 | 16.5 | 25.5 |
| German | 1 | 100 | 81.6 | 0 | 18.9 | 30 | 28.8 |
| History | 7 | 85.7 | 99.0 | 14.3 | 45.6 | 22.9 | 29.2 |
| Information technology | 11 | 72.7 | 96.3 | 0 | 25.7 | 17.3 | 20.6 |
| Mathematics | 12 | 33.3 | 96.8 | 0 | 56.6 | 9.2 | 20.5 |
| Music | 3 | 100 | 98.2 | 0 | 37.1 | 23.3 | 27.5 |
| Other sciences | 2 | 100 | 67.4 | 0 | 14.8 | 25.0 | 22.8 |
| Other social studies | 16 | 43.3 | 97.4 | 0 | 42.5 | 11.9 | 23.2 |
| Physics | 7 | 28.6 | 96.7 | 0 | 45.3 | 8.6 | 22.4 |
| Religious studies | 3 | 66.7 | 99.1 | 0 | 49.3 | 20.0 | 31.2 |
| Sociology | 2 | 50.0 | 98.2 | 0 | 53.5 | 10.0 | 25.9 |
| Sports/PE studies | 3 | 66.7 | 72.2 | 0 | 11.8 | 13.3 | 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 | 6 | 100 | 98.3 | 66.7 | 50.2 | 96.7 | 87.1 |
| Biology | 20 | 80.0 | 96.6 | 20.0 | 40.0 | 53.9 | 79.3 |
| Business Studies | 19 | 94.7 | 98.9 | 31.6 | 39.4 | 76.8 | 81.8 |
| Chemistry | 8 | 100 | 85.7 | 25.0 | 50.0 | 70.0 | 85.7 |
| Drama | 8 | 100 | 99.6 | 75.0 | 42.8 | 105.0 | 85.1 |
| Economics | 6 | 100 | 98.8 | 16.7 | 54.3 | 73.3 | 89.8 |
| English/English language | 19 | 100 | 99.2 | 42.1 | 36.4 | 78.9 | 81.1 |
| English Literature | 12 | 90.9 | 99.4 | 45.5 | 44.9 | 83.6 | 85.5 |
| French | 5 | 100 | 98.8 | 20.0 | 46.4 | 58.0 | 85.2 |
| Design and technology | 6 | 83.3 | 97.8 | 33.3 | 35.0 | 60.0 | 77.9 |
| General studies | 37 | 89.2 | 94.9 | 10.8 | 30.5 | 55.1 | 72.9 |
| Geography | 26 | 100 | 98.8 | 46.2 | 46.4 | 87.7 | 85.2 |
| German | 2 | 100 | 98.6 | 0 | 49.6 | 70.0 | 86.3 |
| History | 25 | 100 | 99.0 | 28.0 | 20.8 | 72.8 | 29.2 |
| Information technology | 14 | 92.9 | 96.3 | 7.1 | 8.8 | 62.9 | 20.6 |
| Mathematics | 17 | 70.6 | 96.8 | 29.4 | 14.1 | 52.9 | 20.5 |
| Music | 7 | 85.7 | 98.2 | 28.6 | 37.2 | 71.4 | 79.5 |
| Other languages | 3 | 100 | 97.3 | 100 | 47.7 | 113.3 | 37.8 |
| Other sciences | 4 | 100 | 97.4 | 0 | 44.2 | 55.0 | 82.5 |
| Other social studies | 29 | 100 | 97.4 | 37.9 | 15.1 | 76.6 | 23.2 |
| Physics | 5 | 100 | 96.7 | 40.0 | 14.8 | 80.0 | 22.4 |
| Religious studies | 9 | 100 | 99.1 | 88.9 | 26.1 | 102.7 | 31.2 |
| Sociology | 13 | 100 | 72.1 | 30.0 | 19.6 | 76.3 | 25.9 |
| Sports/PE studies | 11 | 100 | 97.8 | 18.2 | 30.9 | 70.9 | 75.4 |

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected fully, and provision for French was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning sampled in French was good. Teachers know the subject very well and prepare interesting lessons that help students to adapt to the requirements of A-level. They explain grammatical issues well, mark work carefully, and make good use of textbooks to present language in a clear and accessible way. Most students worked very hard, but a minority were not paying enough attention to detail in their written work. There is a good introductory study guide for students, but there are too few relevant books in the library. Teaching groups are too small to be cost-effective.

English

Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, well matched to students' needs, leads to very good achievement at A level.
- Students are receptive, keen to learn and work hard. Discussion is a strength.
- Excellent marking and assessment gives students a very clear idea of how to improve their work.
- Courses meet the needs of a broad range of students.
- Provision is led and managed very well.
- There are too few books and other resources for learning in the library.

Commentary

91. Standards are consistently at or above national average levels at AS and A-level, and girls do particularly well. This represents a very good level of achievement for all groups of students. Students regularly exceed targets set for them at the beginning of the course. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average in Years 12 and 13 in English literature, with strengths in oral work and confident and perceptive writing from higher-attaining students. Learning is well supported by well-established literary criticism, which allows them to compare critical readings to deepen and extend their knowledge. Standards were below average in the new course in English language and literature, though this represented good achievement from these students' GCSE results.
92. Teaching is erudite and stimulating. Lessons are well focused on the requirements of examinations and well adapted to individual learning needs so that all make very good progress. The promotion of literary analysis is a strength, and is particularly important for those students who start the course with below average analytic skills. Students are receptive, listen carefully and are eager to learn, and take full advantage of the very good opportunities they are given to speak and be heard in lessons. Teachers work hard and successfully to stimulate students to learn independently, though this is made more difficult by a lack of suitable books and resources in the library. Work is marked in excellent detail, with very clear feedback to students on how to improve their work.

93. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. Sixth form provision was not reported in detail during the last inspection. However, the department is adapting its work very effectively to meet the changing needs of students, and this has enabled it to maintain standards over the past three years, despite the declining GCSE results among students joining the sixth form.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

94. Provision is satisfactory. Departments ensure that students understand the reading materials put before them in lessons, and there is some use of prompts and work frames to assist them in their writing. Communication skills, however, are not taught systematically to the same level as other key skills, and some low levels of literacy, particularly seen in ICT, remain to be addressed. Students are welcome to attend the homework club where help and advice is on hand, and there is some additional specific literacy help available to them if requested.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have recovered standards following severe staffing difficulties.
- Students achieve well from the consistently good teaching.
- Good assessment procedures enable students to learn from their mistakes.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

95. Standards were above average in 2003, but declined to below average levels in 2004 because of severe staffing problems. Very good leadership and management have solved these problems, and standards have recovered. One student earned a grade A in further mathematics in 2004. Standards seen in the inspection were close to the national average for the number of students on course for A and B grades and above average for the proportion of students who were on track to pass at A-level. This represents good achievement, as students' GCSE results do not include the highest grade. All groups of students achieve equally well.
96. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers' very good subject expertise gives students clear, precise and accurate information; this is the key to their good learning. Teaching is closely focused on students' needs, particularly in the basic skills of algebra and the need for attention to detail. Lesson planning is good, and overall course planning is very good. Students know how well they are doing from good formal and informal assessments, enhanced by excellent individual support from their teachers. Explanations are thorough. Students' learning is monitored in class by good, extensive use of questions. These seldom lead to whole class discussions, inhibiting the development of independent problem solving techniques. Insufficient use of ICT is restricting visual learning.
97. Leadership and management are very good, overcoming severe staffing difficulties by recruiting and supporting very well a good team of hard working teachers, some from overseas. The department has a very good handbook for students' information. Management's overview of the subject is very good. Gifted and talented students are supported well, studying further mathematics outside the normal timetable. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The curriculum and the quality of teaching have improved. Standards have been maintained.

Mathematics across the curriculum

98. Provision is good. Teachers understand the contribution of mathematics to learning in their courses, and identify and make good use of opportunities to develop students' mathematical and data handling skills.

SCIENCE

99. The main focus of inspection was on biology and physics. Chemistry was sampled, and the quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with a clear focus on points of detail required for examinations.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards show good recovery from a recent fall in examination results.
- Teachers know the subject well, and adapt work effectively to the needs of students.
- New leadership is improving the subject, but assessment and tracking of progress need development.
- The curriculum meets the needs of a wide range of students effectively.
- Year 12 students' use of scientific language, and their retention of earlier work, are weak.

Commentary

100. A-level results fluctuate. They above average in 2003, but well below average in 2004, and AS results were low, particularly at grades A and B. The standard of work seen during the inspection, however, showed good recovery, and was broadly average, though there are still weaknesses in Year 12 students' knowledge of scientific terminology and in their recall of information from their GCSE studies. Their current achievement, under the influence of a new teacher, is satisfactory. Year 13 students are achieving well. They reach average overall standards, and have very good understanding of aspects of the subject they have investigated closely. Standards are higher overall in biology than in human biology.
101. Teaching and learning are good, with very good features in some lessons. Teachers know the subject well, plan carefully, and teach well-structured lessons, with brisk pace and high expectations. Teachers enthuse students. They use a good range of resources to illustrate work, and use questions well to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' thinking. The subject leader has improved the quality of marking and feedback on progress, which is now of a good standard. Students who have difficulty with their work receive effective individual support.
102. The subject leader was appointed in the term of the inspection. She provides good leadership and leads by example in the classroom. She has clear understanding of

strengths and weaknesses in the subject, and of the need to improve assessment and tracking procedures. The curriculum provides a good choice of courses, and matches students' needs and interests well. The subject was not reported on in sufficient detail at the last inspection to support a judgement on improvement.

Physics

Provision for physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching has led to consistently very good achievement among all students.
- Practical work promotes a very good understanding of physics.
- Students are committed to their work, and co-operate very well with teachers and each other.
- Assessment systems are very effective, and ICT is used very well.
- Very good leadership and management ensure success for all students.

Commentary

103. In GCSE in 2004 numbers were too small for national comparison but all five students entered earned a grade. This success has been a feature of the department's results over the years, due to very good leadership and management. Two students earned A or B grades. Standards In Year 13 reflect these results for the eight students concerned, matching national averages. This represents very good achievement, since students' GCSE results did not include the highest grade and a significant proportion were at minimum course requirements. All groups of students achieve equally well.
104. Teaching and learning have many strengths. Very good subject expertise enables the very good use of questions to relate very well to students' needs, ensuring all students understand what they are to learn. Students are encouraged and engaged very well in their learning and work very well together in their practical work. Students' discussions promote very good understanding. Assessment is also a very good feature of the teaching because the small group size enables all students to recognise their mistakes and to see how to improve. Independent learning skills are well used and are improving, but the coursework of a small minority of higher-attaining students could explore mathematical aspects of physics in more depth.
105. Very good leadership and management have led to all students earning grades A to E over the years, many from the minimum GCSE grades allowed for the course. Very good use is being made of the new physics curriculum. The use of ICT is very effective in students' learning, providing problem solving tasks and complete notes for the course. The physics teachers work very well together, supported very well by the technician and the very good practical resources. Students' progress is monitored very well. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have been maintained, and achievement from students' starting points has been improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high levels of subject knowledge give students high levels of technical understanding.
- The AVCE course makes very effective provision for lower-attaining students.
- Leadership and management are focused on evaluation, innovation and improvement.
- Students and staff are committed to raising standards and work closely together.
- AS results in 2004 were low, and some students had difficulty meeting the requirements of the course.
- Some teaching groups are too small to provide satisfactory value for money.
- Assessment helps students to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work.

Commentary

106. AS and A-level results have been inconsistent over the past three years. In 2004, A-level results were broadly average, but AS results were low, and indicated that some students had serious problems in meeting the requirements of the course. A review of admission criteria for Year 12 led to a much better match of students to their course by the time of the inspection. Standards in Year 12 during the inspection were broadly average overall, and above average for some students. Standards among students joining the AVCE course are well below average. Students in Year 13 are working to gain an E grade, which is very good progress for them. However, there are only three students. This restricts group working and the range of teaching styles, and the group is not cost-effective.
107. Teaching is very good. All teachers have great technical expertise and enthusiasm. They provide demanding and effective lessons that lead to very good learning. Teachers are determined that their students will succeed. This motivates the students and they respond very effectively. Very good assessment strategies tell students where they are in relation to national standards, and make clear use examination success criteria. Teachers train students to look at their work through the eyes of an examiner and to identify how improvements can be made.
108. Very good leadership which produces a very strong structure for teachers to work together. Management thoughtfully identifies where things are good and what needs improving and there is a commitment to ensuring that technology is a servant to learning. In consequence there is constant innovation. There is good accommodation and very good computer systems, but there is an absence of storage. Technical support staff are valued, and make an important contribution to learning. The department keeps in constant touch with best practice that enables it to develop. Despite last year's setback at AS, provision by the time of the inspection represents good progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

109. Provision is good. Teachers in most subjects understand the potential contribution of ICT to their teaching. They use available software well, and give good guidance on the use of the Internet. Provision is very good in physics and physical education, but needs further development in French. There is a very effective contribution to ICT key skills in general studies. The strengths of provision in the main school in promoting communication between teachers, students and parents are maintained in the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and psychology were fully inspected, and sociology was sampled. Teaching and learning sampled in sociology were satisfactory. Teaching had very good features in aspects of the subject where teachers' knowledge and understanding was particularly strong, but was not always matched closely enough to students' needs. Most

students were making steady progress, but teachers had identified that some male students' coursework was not well organised, and was taking action to have them improve it.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management provides vision, support and excellent organisation.
- Teaching, learning and students' independent research skills are very good.
- Relationships are very good and students are well supported in their studies.
- Very good assessment and target setting is helping to raise standards.

Commentary

110. AS and A-level results, and the standard of work seen during the inspection, are above average. This represents very good achievement. Numbers studying the subject are increasing and there are no significant differences in achievement between male and female students.
111. Students adapt very well to the study techniques required in the sixth form, and there is clear progression in their thinking and learning. Year 12 students demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of the problems associated with rapid urbanisation in less developed countries. They use a wide range of statistical methods and graphical techniques. Year 13 students have deep knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of global hazards. They absorb knowledge quickly and are able to use it to support their arguments in extended pieces of writing. Teachers encourage students to voice their opinions, and they make substantial contributions to class discussions.
112. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject, and pass on their enthusiasm to their students. Very good lesson planning, based on selected case studies, results in interesting lessons that fully engage and extend students. Very good working relationships create a relaxed yet fertile learning environment. Students are encouraged to undertake their own enquiries and research, and this approach ensures that they acquire the essential factual knowledge needed for productive classroom discussion. Assessment is very good, and all students are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work. Examination technique is taught throughout the course and regular test essays ensure that progress is very closely monitored. Students spoke positively about their teaching and were enthusiastic about their fieldwork. Access to computers is good and they made extensive use of the Internet when researching new topics.
113. Leadership and management are very good. Self - analysis , through close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' progress, has made a significant contribution to raising standards. There is a strong team ethos and all members of the department are encouraged to contribute to the development of the subject. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are sometimes below average, but show good achievement from students' starting points.
- Teaching helps students learn good skills of historical analysis.
- Effective assessment and target setting is helping to raise standards.
- Some students depend too heavily on the teacher, and further work is needed to improve their learning.
- Very good leadership and management are adapting provision to changes in students' learning needs.

Commentary

114. A-level examinations were broadly average in 2002 and 2003, but were below average in 2004. These results represent good achievement from students' starting points, which were well below average for those taking A-level in 2004. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average, and achievement is good. Student numbers are rising, and the subject attracts large numbers of lower attaining boys. Very good management strategies have been devised to deal with the challenges presented by this changing pattern in students taking the subject, but these are not yet fully embedded in practice.
115. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, are able to examine complex historical problems from different perspectives, and are developing their capacity for critical thinking. Year 13 students can make mature value judgements on historical sources, and most respond enthusiastically when encouraged to discuss issues or undertake their own research. Higher-attaining students' coursework shows significantly above average historical understanding. Over the two year course, most students improve their analytical, presentational and discussion skills. Some students are still a little too dependent on their teacher.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and often very good. Teachers know the subject very well, and lessons are very well planned. Their clear enthusiasm for their subject has a considerable impact on the students' response. Students are given the confidence to test out their own ideas and take risks, and this creates a positive working atmosphere which helps to motivate all students, especially those who begin with lower GCSE results. Highly constructive marking provides detailed feedback on the quality of written work, and specific guidance on how to improve. Year 13 students spoke very positively about the help and guidance they received from their teachers. They are encouraged to undertake their own research enquiries, and this prepared them for further study after they left school.
117. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities for history and has created a strong team spirit. His involvement in national developments in the teaching of history has helped to raise standards. The performance of all students is rigorously monitored and evaluated, and the progress

reports are of a high standard. Students have access to a comprehensive range of resources including a wide selection of departmental books and websites. Day-to-day management is highly organised and longer term development is directed very effectively towards improving student achievement. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high pass rate, but mostly at lower grades.
- The interim subject leader has worked hard to reduce the impact of recent staffing difficulties.
- Some students, mostly male students in Year 12, do not work hard enough.
- Work is marked regularly, but feedback is not specific enough on ways of improving it.
- The range of resources in the library and the subject base is good.

Commentary

118. Students begin with below average standards for their course. A-level results were broadly average in 2004, but there were few high grades. AS results in 2004 were poor. This was chiefly because of a serious staffing difficulty., which the school has recently stabilised. Standards in Year 13 during the inspection had recovered to broadly average levels. Standards in Year 12 are also broadly average overall, but there are some weaknesses. This is because a minority of students, mostly male, have not adapted to the demands of sixth form work, and do not read widely enough or prepare work in enough detail outside lessons. Current achievement is satisfactory, but the improvement has been very recent and is not yet reflected in examination results.

119. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The temporary subject coordinator, well supported by a part time colleague, possess good subject knowledge in most aspects of the course. This results in well-planned lessons that cover key elements of the course, and students receive appropriate supplementary materials and good guidance on further reading. The range of teaching styles is limited, partly because of pressure to cover the content of the course. Some lessons depend too heavily on direct presentation from the teacher, and there is too little use of ICT. Most students' learning benefits from their own motivation and hard work, but a significant minority, especially in Year 12, are not prepared to work as hard as their teachers do. Students ask and answer questions confidently and those who have undertaken appropriate preparation work are good at making links between different strands of psychology. Too many, however, rely on teachers asking supplementary questions, and these students' written work does not sufficiently analyse or compare key features of topics. Teachers mark with regularly, but their comments identify only a general need to improve the quality of analysis and explanation, without specific guidance on how this can be achieved. In consequence, students are at a loss to explain how to improve particular pieces of work

120. Subject leadership is satisfactory and management is good. The interim subject leader has worked effectively to tackle the effects of the staffing difficulties, and the school has supported her hard work in securing additional temporary staffing of good quality. The new specialist room and the Library house a good stock of books and articles, though more guidance on achieving the highest standards could be included in displays. Support for colleagues and students is good, includes arrangements for students to attend subject and examiner conferences. The subject was not reported on during the inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Drama was fully inspected, and media studies was sampled. AS results in 2004, the first year of the course, were well above average, with practical work a strength. Teaching and learning seen were good, and work sampled showed very good achievement, especially in practical aspects of production.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average, and achievement is very good.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management.
- Teachers provide students with a strong, thought-provoking curriculum.
- Drama has made very good progress since the school's last inspection.

Commentary

121. Standards are well above average. A-level results in 2004 were very high. All students gained grade C or better and exceeded their predicted grades. This was a significant improvement on results in 2003. Students achieve very well, particularly in terms of textual analysis, character interpretation and overall performance. Their written work is thoughtful and analytical about many aspects of stagecraft. They write good production notes, which are supported well by textual evidence. Students have a very good idea about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.
122. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilful, and inspire students to achieve their full potential, often going well beyond targets set on the basis of their GCSE results. Students develop the co-operative skills of an ensemble company and their choral work often possesses a haunting quality. They show great commitment to their work and enjoy it greatly.
123. Drama is led and managed very well, with real vision. The subject is flourishing and vibrant. The head of department is supported very well by the second in department. The department works very productively with other subjects to the great benefit of students. Teachers provide students with a strong, thought-provoking curriculum. Drama is enriched excellently outside lessons with many major and minor productions, project work with visiting specialists and a well-organised programme of theatre visits. Drama makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. They have many, very good opportunities to reflect upon and respond to the comedy and tragedy of the human condition.

124. Drama has made very good progress since the school's last inspection. Standards have improved, the number of students has increased, and the department has made a significant contribution to the school's award of the Artsmark and to the overall quality of education offered in the sixth form.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical Education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because teaching and learning are overall very good.
- Students enhance their practical skills through participation in extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership and management are focused on raising standards and developing independent learning skills.
- Some students are not able to take part in the recreation and leisure enrichment programme.

Commentary

125. Students join the sixth form with well below average standards, have reached standards that are a little below average for their course by the end of Year 13. This is reflected in 2004 examination results, which were below average at AS and A-level. Students have excellent opportunities to take part in sports through the sports college, but this does not form part of all students' enrichment programme. Students tend to reach higher standards in this subject than in their other A-level subjects, and their overall achievement is very good. Their weaknesses at the start of the course were apparent in a Year 12 lesson, where most students were unable to recall information without using notes or worksheets.
126. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic, plan lessons well and enable students to take responsibility for their own learning. They demonstrate and carry out practical work to a high standard, and make very effective use of ICT. They form strong and productive relationships with students, and promote high achievement by adapting work closely to their needs. In some theory lessons, however, there is too little variety in teaching, and too few opportunities for students to develop independence.
127. The leadership and management are very good. The head of department is aware that the entry standards of students to the A level course is below national averages. Strategies to prepare students, with more independent learning skills, during Years 10 and 11, are being implemented. The community sports leadership award offers an opportunity for a wide range of students to gain certification in the sports area. Many students take advantage of the opportunities to enhance practical skills through the

schools excellent extra-curricular activities. Sixth form provision was not reported on in detail at the last inspection.

BUSINESS

AS, A2 and AVCE courses were inspected in Business Education, and are reported below. Economics was sampled. One lesson was seen, in which the quality of teaching and learning was very good and students achieved very well.

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching encourages students to work hard and achieve the best standards of which they are capable.
- Students are treated as adults, and their work and attitudes reflect this.
- Teachers know the subject very well, are well organised, and use up to date materials.
- Provision for students with low GCSE results is very effective.
- Teachers support students very effectively, enabling very good attitudes to learning.
- Students use ICT very well to draft their coursework to a good standard.

Commentary

128. A-level results were average in 2004, an improvement on the below average results from 2003. AS results, and the vocational AVCE results, were well below average in 2004. As students join the sixth form with well below average GCSE results, the current pass rate, though mostly at low grades, represents very good achievement. The standard of work seen during the inspection was similar, and showed particularly good achievement among students with English as an additional language, some of whom started with GCSE grades that would normally be considered too low to give them a realistic prospect of success. Business studies is a new subject for some students, but a number have followed a double vocational GCSE course; most of these students take AVCE.
129. All teaching seen during the inspection was very good. Teachers are experts and use their experience of industry and commerce to make lessons relevant and up-to-date.
130. Teachers focus very effectively on enabling students to develop the study skills needed for advanced courses as well as teaching the complex subject matter. They make very good use of ICT in this work, so that students on all courses learn very well and make very good progress. Students are very mature because they are treated as adults, and teachers set high standards of work and behaviour. Students recognise the opportunities offered to them by the school, and form very good working relationships with teachers. ICT is very well included in the learning and this allows students to reflect on their work, gain information readily from a wide range of sources and present their work well. Teaching takes place in the context of commerce and industry, with regular reference to the stock exchange and current affairs. This brings the subject to life to the students and makes the work relevant to them and their experiences. Very good assessment identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, and is followed up with very effective individual support.
131. Leadership and management are very good. Each teacher contributes his skills and expertise, and all are valued and very well deployed. Management is very good, ensuring that real world is used as a context for learning, and motivating pupils effectively. Assessment systems and the management of learning are very effective. There have been very good developments since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

132. General studies and personal, social and health education were sampled. Teaching and learning observed were of very good overall quality. General studies lessons were closely focused on key skills in ICT. Provision for personal, social and health education

was also very good, and made very effective use of experts from outside the school in work on homelessness.

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 | 2 |
| How inclusive the school is | | 2 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 3 | 3 |
| Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school | 4 | 2 |
| Overall standards achieved | | 2 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 | 2 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos) | | 3 |
| Attendance | 2 | 2 |
| Attitudes | 2 | 3 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 1 | 3 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | 3 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | | 2 |
| The quality of teaching | 2 | 2 |
| How well pupils learn | 2 | 2 |
| The quality of assessment | 2 | 2 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 2 | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | | 2 |
| Accommodation and resources | 3 | 4 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | | 5 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 2 | 2 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | | 3 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 | 2 |
| The leadership and management of the school | | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 4 | 4 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | | 2 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 2 | 2 |
| 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).