

INSPECTION REPORT

THE QUEEN KATHERINE SCHOOL

Kendal

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112431

Headteacher: Mr S Wilkinson

Lead inspector: Mr I Thompson

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th January 2005

Inspection number: 268984

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

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

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of abbreviations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, ICT refers to information and communication technology; PSHE refers to personal, social and health education. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for national tests at the end of Year 9 and 2003/2004 for GCSE.

Little reference is made to students for whom English is an additional language. Very few students are from backgrounds where English is not the first language of at least one parent. Only one is at the early stages of English language acquisition.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1396
School address:	Appleby Road Kendal Cumbria
Postcode:	LA9 6PJ
Telephone number:	01539 773640
Fax number:	01539 741223
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Pooley
Date of previous inspection:	1 st February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Queen Katherine School is a larger than average, 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The school serves an urban area of north Kendal and a wide surrounding rural area. Students' social and economic backgrounds are average overall. There are 1396 students on roll 205 of whom are in the sixth form. Average proportions of students join or leave the school at other than the usual times. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of students are white. Some 12 students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds with no groups of significant size among them. One student is at an early stage of learning English. The school has eight students who are in public care. The school is fully comprehensive and the intake includes a significant minority of students who would not usually be included in mainstream education. Students with a range of special needs – learning difficulties, hearing impairment, visual impairment and behaviour difficulties – some severe, are supported in mainstream classes. The school is also a designated facility for students with physical and medical needs. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs is below average but the proportion with statements of special educational need is about average.

The school is a specialist technology college and is leading or participating in a number of local and national initiatives aimed at raising standards.

Due to storm damage, parts of the school were closed during the inspection week, including some specialist accommodation. A restricted timetable was in operation for Years 7, 9 and 11. A full timetable was provided for the sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12271	I Thompson	Lead inspector	
19698	D Hirons	Lay inspector	
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	Post-16 English literature
17799	A Stoddart	Team inspector	Science; post-16 physics
32211	B Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
18689	K Massey	Team inspector	Art and design
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
30749	H Boyle	Team inspector	Geography
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	History; post-16 business studies
32208	D Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
29351	L Pearson	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education; special educational needs
19241	G Price	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language
32912	J Hall	Team inspector	Post-16 physical education
33584	E O'Connor	Team inspector	Citizenship; religious education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good standard of education. Very good leadership by the headteacher provides clear direction and the school has many strengths. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were above average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Students achieve well as they move through the school. **The school provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is well led and managed.
- Teaching and learning are good but middle managers do not consistently ensure that assessment is used well enough to support planning.
- Marking does not tell students well enough how to improve.
- Standards are well above average in Year 11, in art and design, design and technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages and music, and in the sixth form.
- The school values all students equally and provides a wide range of courses to meet their needs in Years 10 and 11. Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- Students benefit from the school's very good links with the community with other schools and colleges.
- The support and guidance provided for students are good and very good for students in the sixth form.
- Homework is not used well enough to extend learning.

Improvement since the previous inspection in February 1999 has been good. The key issues have been tackled effectively. Above average standards have been maintained. Teaching is better with a greater proportion that is very good. Provision for students with special educational needs has improved. The school has gained technology college status and the curriculum offers a wider range of opportunities. Accommodation and the provision of resources, particularly for ICT, have been improved. The school still does not comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. Students achieve well as they move through the school. Students reach well above average standards in the sixth form and achieve well in relation to their standards at the start of their courses.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students have good attitudes and behave well in the main school;

students' attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are very good. Attendance is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Monitoring of attendance records is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement. Curricular opportunities are good and the school provides very good opportunities for enrichment. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good; support for learning outside the school day is very good and open to all. The school makes good arrangements for students' care and guidance with very good arrangements for seeking their views. The school makes very good use of opportunities in the community and links with other schools and colleges to support learning; its partnership with parents is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good educational direction for the school's improvement. Governors provide good support for the work of the school and hold it rigorously to account. Financial management is good. Although the quality of middle management is generally good, the monitoring of marking, homework and the use of assessment data at departmental level is not always rigorous enough. The school puts considerable effort into self-evaluation which provides an accurate view of the school's work that closely matches inspection findings.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students express a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents believe that it is a good school in which their children do well although they do have concerns about behaviour and the quality of homework. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views and agree that the use of homework is not good enough. Behaviour is generally good. Students believe the school to be good. They feel that they are well taught and expected to work hard. Inspectors agree with these views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Make use of existing good practice to improve the consistency of middle managers' understanding and interpretation of their role in
 - the use of assessment to support planning and achievement;
 - monitoring the quality and use of homework to extend learning;
 - monitoring the quality of marking so that it informs students clearly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide daily collective worship for all students.

For the sixth form

- There are no significant weaknesses in sixth form provision.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE QUEEN KATHERINE SCHOOL

The sixth form at 205 students is larger than most sixth forms. The school strongly holds the view that students should be supported in choosing the post-16 destination that most appropriately meets their needs, and as a result about half the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and about 25 per cent go to other post-16 institutions. Most students join the sixth form with above average standards of attainment. About one third of present students receive financial support. The sixth form offers mainly GCE AS/A2 courses, including general studies, and a vocational course in business studies. Nine subjects (the focus subjects) were inspected in detail in this inspection.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective sixth form with very good features. Students are achieving well, teaching is good and costs are lower than might be expected. It is, therefore, cost-effective. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because standards are higher, teaching quality is better, and other strong features of the previous report have been maintained.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards and results are well above average and achievement is good because of good teaching, very good support, and students' very good attitudes to learning.
- Very good leadership provides a clear direction for the sixth form.
- Students' personal development is enhanced very well through enrichment activities and involvement with the community.
- Links with the community and other institutions are strengths of sixth form provision.
- Students are very satisfied with and value highly the opportunities and support they receive.

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	English literature – Good. Students achieve well because they are taught and supported well by teachers. Standards are well above average. Recent results have been well above average or very high. German – Good. Though results were average in 2004, standards now are above average and in line with the more usual pattern of results. Students achieve well because they are taught and supported well by teachers.
Mathematics	Mathematics – Very good. Standards are consistently well above average. Students achieve very well because teaching is very good, they are supported very well and they show very positive attitudes to their work.
Science	Physics – Satisfactory. Standards are above average, in line with results for 2004. Students achieve as well as should be expected because of satisfactory teaching and learning.
Humanities	Geography – Good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and effective assessment. Standards are above average.
Engineering, technology and	Design and technology – Very good. Standards are well above average

manufacturing	and students achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design – Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve very well, especially because of the individual support and guidance they receive.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education – Good. Students achieve well because they receive consistently good teaching and much encouragement. Standards are above average.
Business	Business studies – Excellent. Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching that features excellent specialist knowledge and excellent assessment procedures. Standards are very high. Results are consistently very high.

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

Very good. Careful monitoring, tracking and reviewing of progress take place at regular intervals throughout students' sixth form education. As a result, individual students are well known and supported very well. Students are given very good guidance about course choices, higher education and employment at the appropriate points. The detailed and comprehensive tutorial programme helps students cope with the demands of study while preparing them very well for the future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Very good. Leadership is clearly focused on meeting the needs of individual students and assuring the quality of provision. Committed and efficient management ensures that students are monitored closely and cared for and guided very well so that they can fulfil their potential and consistently obtain well above average results.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Very good. Students enjoy the sixth form and are very positive about what the school provides for them. They like the challenging and demanding teaching and learning, helpful assessment of their work, the way they are encouraged to study and research independently, are set worthwhile and regular homework, and tutors who are easily accessible and helpful. Students appreciate the very good support they receive.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average throughout the main school and well above average in the sixth form. Achievement is good in relation to students' standards and their capabilities when they join the school and when they begin their examination courses in Years 10 and 12.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as they move through the school. Achievement is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 in art and design, design and technology, mathematics, music and modern foreign languages as a result of very good teaching.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are improving at a faster rate than the national trend.
- Standards in the sixth form subjects inspected in depth are well above average in English, mathematics, art and design, business, and design and technology.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented enables them to make similarly good progress to other students.

Commentary

1. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were well above average in English and mathematics. They were above average in science. Overall, results were well above average in comparison with all schools nationally and above average in relation to students' performance at the end of Year 6. There were no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. Provisional results for 2004 were similar.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.1(36.6)	33.4(33.3)
mathematics	38.1(37.0)	35.4(34.7)
science	35.3(34.6)	33.6(33.3)

There were 228 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In 2004, GCSE results were above average overall; they were well above average for the award of five or more grades A*-C. In comparison with schools that had similar scores in national tests at the end of Year 9, results were above average. Students' achievement over Years 7 to 11 was good. Girls did better than boys overall and their results were further above their national average. The main reason for this difference is that, as a matter of policy, the school admits a substantial minority of students, more boys than girls, for whom GCSE courses are not suitable. The inclusion of these students in the calculation of examination average points scores has an adverse effect on the overall picture of boys' achievement. This effect is clearly seen in the proportion of students gaining one or more grades A*-G that is average in comparison with all

schools but below average in comparison with similar schools. The rate of improvement in the school's results is slower than found nationally.

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	66(62)	52(52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92(89)	89(88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97(97)	96(96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.3(38.3)	34.9(34.7)

There were 232 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, standards are above average in all subjects except citizenship, ICT and religious education, in which they are average. Overall, achievement is good in relation to students' standards on entry to the school and their capabilities. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, music and modern foreign languages as a result of consistently high quality teaching. They are above average in all other subjects except science, ICT and physical education, in which standards are average. Achievement is good overall in relation to students' standards at the start of their courses and their capabilities because they are well taught and bring good attitudes to their learning.
4. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Students do well in relation to their standards when they join the school. Specialist teachers and support assistants help subject teachers to provide good support in lessons to enable students with special educational needs to achieve well. Some students have focused help in special support lessons and this concentrated support helps them to achieve very well. In most subjects, students achieve well because teachers know them well and plan effectively for their needs. Individual students achieve well in GCSE examinations and the school is proud of its record in raising the achievement of students with special needs. Students often achieve better than might be expected because of the individual support and very good care they receive.
5. Overall, gifted and talented students achieve as well as other groups of students and provision is developing and improving well across the school. In the majority of subjects, very good results indicate that learning and achievement are good. More able students are targeted very well in music where high attaining students are 'fast tracked' from Year 9 on a GCSE course and in Year 10 students are offered a Building Bridges course which encourages students to work online on a university course. Very good opportunities exist at all levels of the national Maths Challenge initiative. There is good provision for students' needs in art and design, English and design and technology.

Sixth form

Examination results have been well above average for the last three years. Analysis shows that students' achievement, including that of students with special educational needs, in 2004 was good overall. Standards now are higher than they were at the previous inspection and achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average results have been maintained over three years. Results in business studies over this period have been notable for being consistently very high.
- Achievement is good overall in the focus subjects because of good teaching, good relationships between teachers and students and very good guidance, support and encouragement.

Commentary

6. Results in A-level examinations in 2004 based on average points scores were well above average overall. All candidates obtained at least a pass grade, and in all subjects except physics and religious studies the proportion of A or B grades was above, or well above, average. All students in English literature obtained A or B grades and their performance was very high. Other particularly successful subjects in 2004, with well above average results, were biology, chemistry, theatre studies, French, design and technology, general studies, history, mathematics and sociology. Economics, geography, music and physics all had above average results. Other subjects were average. Results in the vocational course for business studies were very high, and this subject has performed consistently at this level for the past three years.

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	99.6(99.7)	92.3(92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	55.6(48.1)	36.2(35.6)
Average point score per pupil	332.0(316.1)	265.2(258.2)

There were 123 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. For present students, standards are well above average overall. In the subjects inspected in detail (the focus subjects) standards are very high in business studies, well above average in English literature, mathematics, design and technology and art and design, and above average in German, physics, geography and physical education. Overall, achievement is good in relation to students' above average prior attainment and their capabilities. Students' achievement is supported particularly well in business studies, mathematics, design and technology and art and design. Good relationships between teachers and students and very good guidance, support and encouragement are often significant factors contributing to students' achievement as, for example, in physics, mathematics, German, English literature, art and design and design and technology.

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

Students' behaviour and attitudes to their work are good overall. Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good; their social development is very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students behave well and show good attitudes to their work.

- Many opportunities arise for students to develop very good social skills.
- Students' personal development is good; students develop good spiritual, moral and cultural awareness.
- The number of fixed term exclusions is high.
- Monitoring of attendance records is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

8. Attendance rates are satisfactory. The majority of students arrive in school and for lessons on time, even when having to move significant distances across the campus.
9. The behaviour of the overwhelming majority of students is good overall. When teaching is challenging and brisk, students are motivated to behave well and engage enthusiastically in their work. This was evident in a religious education lesson in Year 7 where stimulating room preparation and an exciting lesson introduction promoted an atmosphere of suspense, with students eager to learn.
10. The recently introduced withdrawal procedure for students with behavioural difficulties is beginning to impact positively. However, the level of fixed term exclusions remains high, a feature identified in the previous inspection report. Inspection evidence confirms that the school considers each case very carefully and only after thorough questioning by the headteacher and governing body is exclusion sanctioned. Fixed term and permanent exclusions are applied only for the most serious of incidents which are clearly identified in the behaviour policy and procedures are in line with the school's commitment to inclusion.
11. The school provides good opportunities for students to develop good personal skills. It promotes students' very good social development through their work, during breaks and through the very good provision of extra-curricular activities. For students in Year 7, the residential visit to Conway promotes the development of meaningful and lasting social bonds. This was confirmed by inspectors during discussions with older students, who have pleasant memories of this enjoyable experience and the lasting friendships forged.
12. There are many opportunities for students to develop good spiritual awareness in such subjects as religious education, history, music, English and art and design. Assemblies provide students with opportunities to celebrate their own and other world faiths. In addition, they promote good awareness of multi-cultural issues, such as co-operation in times of crisis such as that experienced by the Tamil Tigers following the Tsunami. However, the school does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
13. The school promotes the moral and cultural development of students well. Students develop good awareness of their own cultural heritage and those of others through their studies and regular visits in support of the curriculum.
14. The recording of attendance is satisfactory. However, the monitoring of attendance records is unsatisfactory. The current manual systems in place do not ensure that registers are routinely and regularly checked. Information is missing that would otherwise be available through efficient monitoring, enabling form tutors and members of the pastoral team to identify early students whose attendance patterns have changed, or those whose learning is disrupted. This is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of the problem and has plans to deal with it.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.4
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1355	155	1
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
1	4	0
5	0	0
26	0	0

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

Sixth form

Attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good. Students are very well motivated and have a mature and independent approach to their work. Students' personal development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are enthusiastic learners and display very good attitudes to their work.
- Relationships at all levels are very good and students appreciate the considerable time staff devote to supporting their achievement.
- Students' involvement in school and community life makes a significant contribution to their own personal development.

Commentary

15. Students' very good attitudes and behaviour contribute positively to their learning. Students are very positive about their sixth form education and demonstrate this by regular and punctual attendance to lessons. They are very well motivated to achieve in their chosen subjects. Students take increasing responsibility for their own research and learning in the knowledge that support is immediately at hand if they are experiencing difficulties. They readily acknowledge the considerable personal support

they receive which keeps them well motivated and focused. The strong climate for learning that pervades the sixth form is a product of the very positive relationships that exist between students and their tutors. It is a significant strength of the school and plays an important part in students achieving high standards.

16. Students make a considerable contribution to the life of the whole school and the wider community. In return, the school makes a very good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are keen to accept responsibility. They provide very good role models for younger students. Individual sixth formers have had a very good impact on library provision, for example in running book clubs and designing an animated and interactive introduction to the library for younger students. They take the lead in organising fund-raising events for charities and supporting the learning of younger students through peer mentoring. Through their community service work and involvement with the school council, sixth form students gain a very good understanding of citizenship and democracy. They become independent, mature and responsible adults and are very well prepared for life as citizens in modern society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Curriculum provision is good; enrichment, extra-curricular provision and support for learning outside the school day are very good. Students receive good support, advice and guidance; support is very good in the sixth form. The school's partnership with parents is good and its links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects very well.
- Very good relationships and students' good attitudes to learning support classroom management so that little time is wasted.
- Teachers plan lessons well to engage and maintain students' interest.
- Marking is not done well enough overall to tell students what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers and learning support assistants provide good support for learning.
- Homework is not used consistently well enough to support and extend learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 116 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3(3%)	26 (22%)	60(52%)	26(22%)	1(1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

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

17. Teaching is good overall and promotes good learning and achievement. Teachers know their subjects very well, which enables them to plan interesting lessons so that students learn well. In the best lessons, a combination of a variety of well-planned, interesting activities matched accurately to the needs of all students, together with challenging, fast-paced teaching methods, results in very good learning. Very rarely, lesson planning takes insufficient account of students' needs so that they lose interest, do not work well together and learning becomes unsatisfactory. Teachers' expertise means that they are able to provide clear explanations of difficult concepts and ideas in ways that give students confidence in their learning. The great majority of students respond to teachers' expectations with good attitudes to their learning and relationships are very good overall. As a result, in most lessons teachers have to spend little time on classroom management so that time is used effectively for learning. On occasion, low level disruption by a minority is allowed to pass unchecked for too long, reducing the effectiveness of otherwise good lessons. Overall, the good classroom relationships across the school make a good contribution to students' personal development.
18. Teachers provide good support in lessons for students of all levels of attainment and capability to ensure that they learn well. The quality of support provided across the school is particularly evident in the arrangements for students with special educational needs. Teachers are supplied with good information and know students well. Most teachers make good use of students' individual education plans in planning to meet their needs. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are effective when they are deployed in lessons because they are well trained, make good contributions and know the needs of students well. LSAs and support teachers are attached to year groups; this works well because there are close links with heads of year and form tutors that help rapid action when necessary. Good cooperation between teachers and LSAs in planning for students' needs assists those with special educational needs to achieve as well as others. Where there is a weakness in teachers' support for learning is that marking of work is too often not done well enough. Although there is some good practice, for example in English and ICT, too much marking is superficial and does not give students a clear picture of how well they have done, or what they need to do to improve.
19. In an otherwise positive picture, homework is not used well enough to extend or reinforce learning. Parents expressed concerns in letters, questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting about the quality of homework. The inspection team agrees that parents are correct in their views that teachers' use of homework is inconsistent in setting, relevance and challenge.
20. Assessment is satisfactory. The school provides a good range of data to enable comparisons to be made against national benchmarks and for individual achievement to be identified. Most subjects are thorough and constructive in their procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress, although marking of students' work does not always provide sufficient information for students about what they need to do to improve their standards. Procedures for students with special educational needs are good. Target setting to promote and measure achievement is not yet firmly established.
21. Senior and middle managers, and most subject teachers, make good use of the available assessment information to respond effectively to the needs of students. In many subjects, however, assessment information is not being used well enough by

middle managers for planning within their department. Very good assessment practice exists in ICT, music and art and design.

Sixth form

In the focus subjects, teaching is good overall with very good features, and students learn and achieve well as a result. Students' work is assessed well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge, additional support and guidance, and use of assessment are often very good and help students learn and achieve well.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students promote good, and often very good, attitudes, confidence and motivation.
- Learning in some subjects is hampered by teachers doing too much for students or by restricted opportunities to try out different strategies or to broaden students' experience.

Commentary

22. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are often very good. Concepts are very clearly explained so that students learn well. Teaching in business studies is distinguished by the constant challenge to students to take their learning further and by the highly successful step-by-step approach to new learning. Very good relationships exist between teachers and students and as a result most students have very good attitudes to their work that play a significant part in their achievement. Teachers provide much effective support for learning. In design and technology, for example, teachers' excellent support and guidance about the requirements for coursework and deadlines for its completion are significant factors in ensuring students' very good achievement. At times teachers do not push students sufficiently or do too much for students so that they become dependent on teachers for their learning. Students' achievement in physics is restricted because they have limited opportunities to broaden their experience of the subject outside the classroom. The limitations of classroom accommodation in physical education prevent teachers from exploring a wider range of strategies. Teaching is not so effective in these circumstances.
23. Assessment is good. The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment are at least good in most subjects. The available data is used well to enable comparisons to be made against national benchmarks and for individual students' achievement. Students' standards and achievement are closely monitored and good systems are in place to chart academic progress and effort. Value added approaches and target setting are well established. Good use is made of the available assessment information by senior and middle managers, and most subject teachers, to respond effectively to the individual needs of students. Marking is thorough and usually linked well to examination criteria. In some subjects, such as English literature, art and design and music, assessment is used very well. Assessment is excellent in business studies.
24. Teaching was judged to be good in the previous inspection. A greater proportion was found to be very good in this inspection. Inconsistencies in marking and assessment noted in the previous report remain issues to be tackled.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is good overall. Innovative curriculum leadership has resulted in a curriculum that includes a good range of courses and extensive enrichment activities. The match of staffing to the curriculum is good. Provision of learning resources is good. Accommodation is sufficient for curriculum needs and is of a good standard overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good individually designed programmes of study for students not suited to GCSE courses help them achieve well.
- There has been good development of the curriculum as a result of technology college status.
- Provision of enrichment activities is very good overall and exceptionally good in music.

- Good support is provided for students' personal development through the curriculum.
- The very high quality learning resource centre supports learning both during and outside of lesson time.
- Extra-curricular support for students with special educational needs is exceptional in promoting social development and achievement.

Commentary

25. The school's curricular provision is good in its breadth and balance. Technology college status has supported the development of the curriculum well, particularly in design and technology and ICT. The school has developed innovative practice in the teaching of subjects associated with technology and promoting an ethos for learning that is technological, enterprising and vocational. This is reflected in students' confidence, good quality learning and the high standard of personal development. The many partnerships developed and fostered with other schools, colleges, universities, industry and the community are central to the school's development. There is an increasing interest in technological subjects across the curriculum, notably the increase in students now studying design and technology in the sixth form.
26. The curriculum reflects the school's inclusive outlook and provides well for the wide range of students' needs. A good example is the high quality individual programmes of study developed to meet the individual needs of the substantial minority of students for whom GCSE courses are inappropriate. These programmes, which have a large element of vocational learning, pull together resources in the school, the local college and an Outward Bound centre to meet the needs of these students. This is particularly evident in college courses, which meet a variety of special needs of students very well. These work-related courses develop problem-solving and social skills, preparing students well for career development and work outside school.
27. The effectiveness of the school's good provision for students' personal development is to be seen in overall good attitudes and behaviour. The well-organised PSHE programme makes a significant contribution to personal development, augmented by curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. For example, a residential course for students in Year 7 links the study of geography, history and PSHE well.
28. Arrangements for developing students' literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies. There is some very good practice in developing literacy, often linked to the learning resource centre, but not enough attention is given to building on planned development opportunities in some subjects, such as science. Planning for the development of numeracy skills is managed better overall and here there is good practice in science.
29. Students with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum. Experienced LSAs support students and well-developed strategies ensure good links and communications between departments and special needs support. Students with special educational needs are helped to improve their personal development and social, literacy and numeracy skills in intensive courses in Year 7 in particular. Exceptional support is provided for students during lunchtimes. Students are helped to catch up, complete homework, improve skills and make use of all specialist facilities. Staff guide and care for students excellently and ensure that literacy, social and personal skills are developed very well.
30. Satisfactory additional opportunities for gifted and talented students are offered through some curricular enhancement. Extra-curricular opportunities target this group of students in some subjects. Good examples are in music, where students are enabled to reach high standards of performance, and in design and technology, where some students prepare to take electronics, graphics and resistant materials

examinations in their own time. The local education authority provides summer courses to raise the interests and aspirations of more able students; the school is beginning to take advantage of some of these 'Aim Higher' courses to extend opportunities for students.

31. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment of the curriculum are very good. There is excellent enrichment in music where ensembles and bands perform, instruments are played and choirs practise. Outstandingly good recordings of performances reflect the quality of learning that results. Support for learning beyond the school day is good overall and many departments provide opportunities that extend learning and support personal development. In design and technology, provision is very good; for example, students are given opportunities to participate in technological competitions and produce hovercraft and solar-powered buggies. The Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA) introduced by the physical education department successfully assists partner primary schools and there is a good choice of extra-curricular sporting activities that are well attended. Learning in modern foreign languages is enriched very well through lunchtime and after-school 'booster' classes, theatre trips and overseas visits.
32. The match of teachers and their subject qualifications to curriculum needs is good. The clear expectations of management and good quality professional development do much to enhance the skills and abilities of staff. The school has worked hard to recruit and retain well-qualified teaching and support staff. It also has a pool of highly qualified supply teachers who are used regularly and are well known to both staff and students. This highly focused support enables teaching to continue with the minimum of disruption. Staff working with students who have special educational needs and those who require motivation are effective and support the teaching of the curriculum well. Teachers who are new to the school are encouraged to develop new ideas and they receive very good support and care through the school's induction programmes. The level of non-teaching staff across the school is good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. Administrative staff make a similarly good contribution to the smooth running of the school and provide an important support for the senior management team. Site management is very good. Staff provide an efficient service which ensures the safety of the schools' staff and its students.
33. Accommodation for teaching is good overall. The learning resource centre provides an exceptional support for learning and is used well by students. The centre contains a very good range of books and other resources. The centre library provides very good support for students with visual impairments; there is a good selection of audio cassettes and CDs as well as facilities to play these without interference to other library users. Very good links with departments enhance provision within departments. Planning to support learning is very good. Books are purchased in advance for project work in departments with 'book boxes' provided and special displays mounted centrally. The library is well managed to involve students and to stimulate their interest in reading through, for example, competitions, displays and clubs. Resources to support learning are good overall. They are at least satisfactory within all departments and good in some. ICT provision is good. The community is very well used as a resource, for example links with local writers and musicians contribute to learning.

34. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The curriculum has been developed well with better provision for ICT and very good improvements in library resources.

Sixth form

The courses offered suit students' needs and aspirations well. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of academic courses and a varied enrichment programme that match students' needs and interests well.
- Students have good facilities that support learning and social development well.

Commentary

35. About half the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. This is a relatively low proportion, but it reflects strongly the philosophy of the school that individuals should be supported in choosing the most appropriate destination to meet their skills and needs. As a result about 25 per cent of potential sixth formers choose to enrol at other post-16 institutions. Those who remain can choose from a large number of GCE AS/A2 courses, including general studies, and a vocational course in business studies. The 'enhancement studies' programme provides extensive opportunities for students to have work experience and do community service. Students can also obtain the Community Sports Leadership Award and take part in Young Enterprise. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are provided through subjects.
36. Accommodation is good overall and resources are good. Students have their own common room and resources room with ready access to ICT. In physical education, the department still has no dedicated classroom base for the teaching of theory. As a result of an increase in numbers the sixth form design and technology base is far too small. Resources to support learning are good. The learning resource centre contains a good range of materials including books and journals specifically to support sixth form courses. Resources are easily accessible and well used by sixth formers who currently use the learning resource centre as their study base. There is a very good match of teachers to the needs of the subject curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support for students are good. The provision for students' health and safety is good. The involvement of students in the work of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of a sensitive and close team of support staff.
- The school is a secure place where students can learn in an environment that is safe and secure.
- Relationships throughout school are very good.
- The induction arrangements for Year 7 students are very good.
- The school council works very effectively in communicating students' views to staff.

Commentary

37. This is a large, caring and inclusive school where students are well known by tutors, heads of year and all members of the pastoral team. As a result, students enjoy coming to school, take advantage of, and enthusiastically engage with, the very good range of curricular and extra- curricular activities available. In response to the questionnaire, a number of students identified unacceptable behaviour and bullying as a concern. Inspection evidence does not support this view of the school. Students are able to work free from bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Child protection procedures are satisfactorily established with all staff undergoing appropriate training. Effective systems ensure students' safety.
38. The good pastoral support systems, linked with the close relationships that pervade the whole school, ensure students are valued and supported well. This enables them to achieve well. For students for whom the curriculum is inappropriate or unrealistic, very effective alternative arrangements are provided to ensure that they remain in education. This is exemplified by students in Year 11, who are engaged with an impressive range of vocational and outdoor education courses. The impact upon personal development is very positive.
39. The induction arrangements for students in Year 7 are very good. This is confirmed by inspection evidence and the very positive views of parents and students. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in 'taster sessions' in mathematics, science and design and technology which prepare them very well. These sessions promote a thirst for learning for when they transfer to the secondary school. In addition, induction evenings for parents and their children provide a detailed insight of 'things to come'.
40. The school council is well established and very effective. It has established a number of benefits directly affecting students through good, sensible lobbying of senior staff. However, it has yet to achieve its top priority, namely the refurbishment of all students' toilets. The council has a generous budget allowance and has representation on the governing body, through some sixth form students being associate governors, providing direct access to the most senior managers of the school. This provision is exemplary.

Sixth form

Support, advice and guidance are very good. Students' views are taken account of very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The health and safety of students was protected well during the unusual circumstances of the inspection week.
- Very good advice, guidance and support are given throughout students' time in the sixth form.
- Students' views are fully taken into account and they appreciate very much what is done for them.

Commentary

41. The good care taken for the welfare, health and safety of students was evident during the inspection week when the school suffered significant storm damage making parts of the school unsafe and out of bounds. The very good leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by all staff, enabled students to continue their education safely and with little disruption.
42. Induction arrangements and the subsequent tutorial programme are very good. As a result, students are able to make informed decisions about the type of courses they wish to undertake based upon their aspirations and personal strengths. Students' academic progress is formally reviewed every half term and they are involved in setting their own targets for improvement. Tutorial appointments are used very effectively to provide additional one-to-one sessions in which students' progress can be discussed; they are set achievable and realistic targets. Careers advice is very good. All students have access to impartial guidance offered through the Connexions service and the pastoral team in school. When completing UCAS forms in particular, students receive very good guidance and support to ensure they are completed accurately and on time.
43. Students value very highly the advice and support they receive from their tutors. They recognise and appreciate that all tutors give freely and willingly of their own time to support them. Support for individual students having regard to their particular medical and physical needs is very good. High quality support is given to students with other complex special needs, including advice on progression on leaving school. Trusting relationships between staff and students are very strong because of very good knowledge of students and frequent contact with parents and carers.
44. Students' views are canvassed through regular meetings of the sixth form council and acted upon wherever possible. Students' evaluations of university 'open day' visits and their interviews are analysed and results fed back to tutors and students so that the tutorial programme can be improved. Students enjoy the sixth form and are very positive about what the school provides for them. They like the challenging and demanding teaching and learning, helpful assessment of their work and the way they are encouraged to study and research independently. They are set worthwhile and regular homework, and appreciate tutors who are easily accessible and helpful. Students are mature, confident and self-assured by the time they leave school and are well prepared for adult life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. Partnerships with the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information to parents about their children's progress is good.
- The school's involvement with partner primary schools and colleges is very good.
- Partnerships with the community as a specialist technology college are very good.
- Partnerships with external agencies are very good. They provide very good support to students for careers advice and personal guidance.

Commentary

45. Information provided in reports is good. It enables parents and carers to have meaningful information about their children's work, the progress they are making and targets for improvement. Parents confirm they are pleased with the arrangements for their children's transfer into school. They indicate positively that they are confident to approach staff with any concerns they may have.
46. The school's very active partnership with partner schools provides very beneficial learning opportunities to encourage and engage all students, in particular those deemed most at risk of opting out of school. These links impact positively upon behaviour, personal and social development.
47. The school's technology college status provides many very beneficial opportunities for both the community and school. It is enabling students to undertake commissioned projects in design and technology as a result of the very high quality resources available to them. Students' access to complex equipment enables the design and construction of work of commercial quality, receiving justifiable acclaim. Schools, nurseries and businesses work collaboratively with students to achieve their ambitions and are able to purchase professionally produced items such as play equipment, business logos and signage. For students, these developments are providing a wealth of opportunities for their social and cultural development and significantly extending their knowledge and skills. The need for students to negotiate directly with senior management in these establishments promotes their personal development, self-esteem and business acumen very effectively.
48. Very good links with other schools, colleges and universities enable the curriculum to be extended and enhanced to meet the needs of individual students for whom the National Curriculum is inappropriate and studying for GCSE examinations, unrealistic. These links also provide students with opportunities to study subjects that the school is currently unable to offer. There is a particularly positive impact on the learning of students who might otherwise abandon their education, helping them achieve their potential and providing opportunities to contribute effectively to the community.
49. The provision and arrangements for work experience placements for Year 10 students are very good. The school's very good involvement with the in-school Connexions service and careers staff ensures students have access to a comprehensive and high quality range of employment and further education advice and guidance. Very good procedures ensure students are appropriately placed in a safe working environment. Thorough review and evaluation at the end of work experience provide invaluable feedback on students' experiences and the standards they achieved.

Sixth form

There are good links with parents and very good links with the community. Links with other schools, colleges and universities are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the local community make a very good contribution to students' learning and personal development.
- Links with colleges and universities support and extend students' education and career development very well.

- Regular reviews and reports ensure students and their parents or carers are well informed about the progress they are making.

Commentary

50. Parents are kept well informed of students' academic progress and personal development through termly reviews, annual reports and consultations. The quality of reports is good and information for students on how to improve their work in all subjects is effective and encouraging. Good quality information is provided to parents about university applications. Parents are pleased with the high quality information provided for them.
51. There are very good links with the local and wider community and with other schools that enhance the learning and personal development of students in the sixth form. Very good links support work experience placements for students. The very effective partnerships that exist between the school, Carlisle College, Kendal College and Kirkbie Kendal School in particular, enable individual students to follow particular interests and qualifications to their benefit.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The school is well managed. Governance is good. Financial management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good educational direction for the school's improvement.
- Leadership and management are good, and particularly effective in the sixth form. As a result, above average standards have been maintained (well above average in the sixth form).
- The chair of governors and his team provide strong support, professional expertise and constructive challenge to take the school forward.
- Good financial management enables the school to achieve its educational aims and secure its future plans.
- Although the quality of middle management is good overall, the monitoring of marking, homework and the use of assessment data at departmental level is not always rigorous enough.

Commentary

52. Governance of the school is good. Governors are aware of its key strengths which they identify as the staff's sense of purpose, its inclusive nature and the value it adds to students' development. They are knowledgeable about the school through their links with departments and participate fully in the governing body's efficient sub-committee structure. They understand the school's priorities, review progress of the strategic plan, and provide constructive challenge where necessary. They provide expertise, experience and support. They have clearly influenced the direction of the school in such matters as the headteacher's appointment, partnerships with other institutions, and construction of the sixth form centre.

53. Leadership is good. The headteacher provides very clear direction in a strategy for improvement based on accurate evaluation of the present situation and future trends. He believes in and operates a collegiate approach to school development. As a result, policy changes have been implemented with staff's involvement and consent. He has placed strong emphasis on quality in recruitment and rigorous performance management, so that the quality of teaching has improved. The headteacher is supported well by senior staff who are very hardworking and committed, share the school's vision and are active in implementing it. Other key staff lead their areas of responsibility well overall. As a result there is a strong sense of this being an improving school.
54. Management is good. This is particularly the case in the management of the sixth form where the team runs a 'tight ship' effectively. The school puts considerable effort into self-evaluation. The process provides an accurate view of the school's work that closely matches inspection findings, and has the potential to contribute well to school improvement. Although the quality of middle management is good overall, there is work to be done on improving monitoring of such things as marking, homework and the use of assessment data at departmental level for planning and to support achievement.
55. Financial management is good overall. The finance team keeps close control of finances to support educational priorities and secure the school's future plans. The financial cost of a recent fall in sixth form numbers is easily compensated for by the anticipated steady growth in school numbers as a whole.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5243000	Balance from previous year	188000
Total expenditure	5154000	Balance carried forward to the next year	277000
Expenditure per pupil	3774		

Sixth form

Leadership and management are very good. Governance is good. Financial management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is clearly focused on providing an environment that meets the needs and skills of individual students and as a result has consistently secured well above average results.
- Committed and efficient management ensures that students are monitored closely and cared for and guided very well so that they can fulfil their potential.
- Governors are supportive and keen to ensure the sixth form's development.
- The sixth form is cost-effective.

Commentary

56. Governors are supportive of the sixth form and have promoted its development, particularly in relation to the new sixth form centre presently under construction. Very good leadership has successfully maintained well above average results by its philosophy of supporting students' choice of the most appropriate post-16 destination that meets their skills and needs. Being conscious of the need to strike a balance between academic and vocational provision (and the difficulty of doing so), it is pursuing the possibility of partnership arrangements with other institutions to enhance the sixth form's range of provision. A strong feature of the very good management is that students are cared for, guided and supported very well. It operates effective systems for recording, reviewing and monitoring students' progress and for ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of the sixth form. It reflects carefully on performance through self-evaluation and thus has a clear grasp of where improvements can be made. As a result, overall provision is good and students achieve well. Financial management is good: the costs of staffing the sixth form are lower than might be expected.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of enrichment opportunities supports vocational learning.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of the world of work are developed well overall but departments do not consistently identify opportunities in their planning.

Commentary

57. The overall provision for work-related learning is good. The school provides a comprehensive range of curriculum enrichment experiences, with a variety of methods to assess students' achievement. For example, the school provides all Year 10 students with a minimum entitlement of a one-week work experience placement. Placements are thoughtfully matched to the students' needs and capabilities. Preparation and feedback for work experience are comprehensive and include the presentation of diaries, extended writing tasks, self-assessment exercises and assessment by visiting teachers and employers. All new teachers receive training prior

to their monitoring visits. Extended placements are planned for students who would benefit from a more vocationally orientated course of study. Students also have access to specialist one-day programmes including National Health Service and Tourism and Hospitality Days.

58. The high quality vocational curriculum also fosters knowledge and understanding about the world of work and particular skills, ranging from GCSE applied ICT to vocational courses. The college link courses include construction, motor vehicle engineering and hair and beauty. In catering, links have been extended and include regular in-house demonstrations from an experienced chef. Links with agencies from the world of work are well developed, for example in design and technology. These include, for example, visiting specialists to assist students in development of their coursework, health and safety audits and visits to observe batch production. The impact of these experiences is positive in motivating students and raising awareness of the world of work.
59. Many departments in the school have yet to fully integrate work-related learning into their curriculum. However, staff responsible for the co-ordination and evaluation of this area of the curriculum are highly effective and have a clear vision for further developments.
60. Work-related learning is enhanced by the high quality relationships within the school, which helps produce young adults with attitudes and skills that increase employability.

Sixth form

61. Provision for work-related learning is good. The school's curricular arrangements enable all students to go off site for work-related learning and benefit from the very good links established with local primary schools and volunteer business shop outlets. A good careers education and guidance programme underpins work-related learning. Opportunities for enterprise through school and community projects are strong features in design and technology. Here a significant number of students choose to research innovative community-based projects.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Students gained well above average GCSE results for 2004 in English literature.
- Good leadership and management have helped to raise standards of work since the previous inspection.
- Students behave well and work hard in lessons so that they make good progress.
- Lesson planning in Years 7 to 9 does not always emphasise clearly enough what students are expected to learn.

Commentary

62. In national tests in 2004, Year 9 students gained provisional results above the national average for all schools. The proportion of students gaining levels 6 or 7 was well above average. This represents good achievement. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve well. GCSE examination results for English in 2004 were above the national average. Results for English literature were well above average. These results match the standards of work seen during the inspection.
63. Students from all ethnic backgrounds and of all capabilities achieve equally well. By Year 9, standards are above average and by Year 11 they are well above. In Year 9, students talk confidently using a good range of vocabulary and phrasing. They work well together in small groups and contribute readily to class discussions. By Year 11, students are able to express complex ideas clearly, for example, when talking about poetry. However, more articulate students occasionally dominate talk in class to the detriment of others' development. Reading for meaning is very good by Year 9. Students are able to scan passages quickly, as seen in their analysis of how Nelson Mandela engages the reader in early paragraphs of *Long Walk to Freedom*. Standards of reading are above average. Lower attaining students in Years 7 to 9 get good support for their reading. Thirty such students in Year 7 are paired with Year 10 students to pursue their reading development through lunchtime sessions. As a result of this, and other initiatives, lower attaining students read well. Analytical reading is strong in Years 10 and 11. Students are able to infer meaning readily from challenging literary texts, which helps explain why GCSE literature results are so good. Written work in all years is well expressed and accurate. Students by Year 11 write perceptively about writers' techniques. Their own writing is well organised and makes effective use of stylistic devices. Students take pride in their written work and presentation is invariably good. They make satisfactory use of their skills in ICT to produce work in English.

64. Learning and teaching are good. Students work hard in lessons and enjoy English. Programmes of lessons for students in Years 7 to 9 have been thoroughly revised in recent months. They now provide a better and more consistent framework for the learning of all students. Revision to improve teaching still further by sharpening the focus on steps for learning in each lesson is continuing. Teachers very successfully involve all students actively in lessons so that they learn well. They have very good relationships with students and generate a positive atmosphere for good learning. Occasionally the objectives of a lesson are not shared fully with students so that they make progress less rapidly because they do not fully understand what is expected of them. Very good teaching was seen in planning for a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth* where the teacher ensured that tasks enabled the progress of all students to be carefully assessed as the lesson unfolded. Students with learning difficulties are able to make good progress in lessons because they receive good quality additional support from learning support staff. Class teachers are sensitive to their particular needs when devising materials for lessons. For example, in a good lesson, Year 7 students were offered extra support sheets to help them identify clues about characters in a narrative extract. Teachers mark work conscientiously and give students clear ideas for improving their writing. Students have good additional opportunities to extend their learning outside lessons
65. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers work well together as a team and are keen to raise standards further. Responsibilities are effectively delegated. Newly qualified teachers feel valued and well supported. They are encouraged to contribute to departmental planning that is innovative and dynamic. Procedures for assessment are well defined and students are well supported. Good improvement since the previous inspection, evident in better GCSE results and a stronger performance by boys in general, testifies to this good leadership.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of language and literacy are above average. Students write well for a variety of purposes showing above average accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Reading skills are well developed. The learning resource centre is particularly well used by students from all years as a base for study, information gathering and reading for pleasure. The English department has established strong links with the learning support centre to develop initiatives for raising skills and awareness in teaching literacy. However, the quality of support for improving literacy varies from subject to subject and is no better than satisfactory in most areas. Very good practice is evident in art and design where there is a strong focus on language for learning. Good work on technical vocabulary and on supporting the language development of students is found in modern foreign languages, geography and design and technology.

French and German

All students study French in Years 7 to 9. Higher attaining students study a second language from Year 8. Most students continue their study of languages to GCSE.

Provision in French and German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has resulted in a substantial rise in standards at GCSE.

- The broad curriculum provides opportunities for all students to achieve well.
- Resources and teaching methods are used well to deliver interesting lessons.
- Very good study support in Years 10 and 11 boosts students' achievement.
- Assessment information does not guide lesson planning well enough. Marking in Years 7 to 9 does not help students improve.

Commentary

67. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have consistently been well above the national average with boys doing almost as well as girls. These assessments are judged to be over-generous in comparison with work seen during the inspection. GCSE results in French have improved substantially in recent years and approached well above average in 2004. Results in German have been maintained at a high level. Students' attainment in both languages compares well with national figures.
68. In Year 9, standards are above average, representing good achievement in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. The curriculum is adapted well to provide challenge for lower and middle attaining students, while higher attaining students reach the above average standards in two languages, thereby providing a good base for success in both languages at GCSE. Teachers use a wide range of resources to engage students' interest and to enable them to gain a good mastery of basic vocabulary and structures. As a result, students can manipulate verb forms not only in statements but also in questions, which helps them take a more active part in lessons. Students can use the tenses accurately in exercises and simple contexts and can adapt models of connected writing for their own purposes to produce short accounts. They do not have enough opportunities to practise writing independently to consolidate their understanding fully and marking is not used well enough to extend their learning. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Students, especially girls, achieve very well. Girls' standards are higher as their independent learning skills are better than boys'. The coursework and spoken presentations of lower attaining students are carefully prepared and reflect accurate knowledge of the tenses and the simple conditional, while higher attaining students are able to write sophisticated, accurate accounts of considerable length and accuracy for a range of audiences. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities and attractive displays, including keywords, encourages students' personal development and achievement in all years.
69. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Enthusiastic teachers use their own well-designed worksheets with a high visual content to interest students in their learning and to introduce and practise new language. Methods and activities with a strong interactive content maintain interest through the lessons. Teachers have high expectations of classroom performance. For example, an excellent Year 7 lesson, conducted entirely in French, began with students singing a song perfectly from memory; in a Year 9 lesson, lower attaining students' confidence and participation were nurtured by a range of effective techniques which helped them learn steadily. Where there is a weakness in an otherwise positive picture is that marking does not give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11, teachers plan students' work very well over the entire course to enable them to consolidate, develop and test their knowledge in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Teaching of grammar is well integrated with coursework requirements. Students have the benefit of a range of additional support, including high quality study booklets and the school German website. They respond positively to teachers' strong expectations and commitment to their learning, to maximise their chances of examination success,

especially in speaking and writing. They acquire a strong awareness of examination requirements through good familiarity with grade criteria and personalised feedback. The department is trialling some new initiatives in assessment in Years 7 to 9 but assessment overall is underdeveloped in these years in lesson planning, in monitoring progress and in encouraging students to do their very best.

70. Leadership is very good and developing a vibrant, forward-looking department with a strong team ethos and vision. The department has clear capacity to make further improvement. Management is good as monitoring has not been prioritised and best practice in assessment is not yet established. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, most especially so in GCSE French which was formerly a major area of weakness. The well-planned curriculum provides opportunities for all students to achieve well.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average and in GCSE examinations well above average.
- Teaching is good so that students achieve well.
- Good leadership provides a clear vision for further improvement.
- Homework is not used well enough to support students' learning.
- Assessment and marking do not inform students well enough about what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

71. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were above average and provisional results for 2004 were similar. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above average. Students performed better in mathematics than they did in most other subjects studied. In both tests and examinations, the proportion of students gaining the highest levels was well above average. Work seen during the inspection matches closely these results.
72. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average. Achievement is good in relation to students' earlier learning and capabilities. Students recall their tables and handle percentages confidently, algebraic and problem-solving skills are being developed well and data handling skills are good. The highest attaining students understand well the different methods for solving equations and transforming shapes and the lowest attaining students draw a range of graphs effectively. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Teachers build well on earlier work so that students achieve well. In both Year 9 and Year 11, the highest attaining students achieve very well.
73. The quality of teaching is good and promotes good learning. Teachers use their command of the subject well to ensure that new skills and concepts are clearly explained. Questioning involves students well and provides opportunities for students to share ideas and strategies with each other. As a result, students make good

progress with their understanding of new skills. Teachers plan well for the needs of students; tasks are suitably varied and challenging. Consequently, all students, including those who have special educational needs or who are gifted and talented, make good progress and achieve well. Teachers are using the new technology well to develop students' learning and provide interesting lessons. The use of starter activities as part of the mathematics strand of the government's national initiative in Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3 Strategy) is being implemented well. However, the use of objectives as a focus for learning during and at the end of lessons is not as effective in supporting students' learning. Students' attainment is assessed regularly and teachers intervene in students' learning in lessons to check their progress well. Assessment, and in particular marking, however, does not always provide sufficient information for students about what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, homework is not used consistently well by all teachers; the quality and frequency vary from teacher to teacher. Teachers manage and organise students well. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are good; they behave well, work productively on their tasks and co-operate well with each other when asked to work together. This is encouraged by the good relationships with the teachers and with each other.

74. Leadership is good. Self-evaluation of the work of the department provides a clear vision and direction for improvement; appropriate priorities have been identified to move the subject forward. The day-to-day management of the department is good; the available teachers are well deployed and supported and students are organised effectively. However, assessment information and homework are not used consistently well across the subject to support students' progress. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good; GCSE results have improved significantly and teaching is better.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Students' competence in mathematics is above average and numeracy skills are developed well in mathematics lessons. Good contributions are being made in science, art and design, geography and design and technology in developing students' use of numeracy in the work which they do. However, opportunities are not always clearly identified in teachers' planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge adds interest to lessons and aids students' concentration.
- Lessons are well planned to provide a variety of activities, which help students to learn.
- The good relationships between teachers and students make lessons productive.
- Homework is not used well enough to reinforce sufficiently what students have learned in class.
- Standards of presentation are poor and graph drawing skills underdeveloped.
- Teachers' marking is perfunctory. As a result, errors and missing work hinder progress.

Commentary

76. The results of national tests for Year 9 students in 2003 were above the national average, but below the average for schools with similar prior attainment. Provisional results for 2004 are similar to those for 2003. In 2003, standards were below those for English but above those for mathematics. Standards have improved since the previous inspection at a rate slower than the rate of improvement in the national average. Overall there is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results in the GCSE double award science examinations were above average in 2004 but slightly lower than the results in 2003. In 2004 the school entered students for the single award examination for the first time. Their results were well below average. Boys' results in double award science in 2004 were below their results in any other subject.
77. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average. Achievement is good since students enter school with average standards. Higher attaining students write balanced chemical equations in symbols and use simple scientific equations. They understand photosynthesis and some functions of the human body. Lower attaining students use a narrower range of equations. Standards are also above average in Year 11 and, although achievement is satisfactory, girls' standards are higher than those for boys. Higher attaining students use a wide range of equations successfully and show a good understanding of scientific principles. Lower attaining students show a satisfactory knowledge of scientific facts but, over the whole age and attainment range, teachers accept poor standards of presentation and graph drawing skills are underdeveloped.
78. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and learning is good as a result. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory and learning is satisfactory but opportunities to improve standards are missed. Teachers use their very good knowledge to add interest to lessons, which maintains students' interest and helps concentration. The good relationships between students and teachers means lessons are free of tension and productive. Good planning provides a sequence of activities to introduce and extend new knowledge and practical work makes theory understandable. Less effective lessons are less demanding so students' achievement slows but no lessons seen were unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons, at all levels, teachers allow insufficient time at the end to check and ensure that students' learning has been successful. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because teachers give extra help and learning support assistants appreciate where their attention is needed. For many students homework is not set regularly, missing an opportunity to reinforce and extend classroom learning. Teachers' marking is variable; much is cursory and does not tell students how to improve their standards. Students do not correct errors or complete missing work so that gaps and inaccuracies persist in their knowledge. Although the department's records of students' past performance are satisfactory, teachers' setting of targets for students' improvement is inadequate.
79. Leadership is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection standards have risen slowly and only in the last year has there been a widening of the curriculum for older students. There is evidence that the recently appointed head of department is having a positive effect and there is a rigorous new development plan. Management is satisfactory. The department runs smoothly and teachers and technicians deployed to make best use of their specialist knowledge. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained, though improvement is

only broadly in line with the national trend. There has been an increase in the use of ICT, though standards of written work and of teachers' marking have dropped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have led to very good improvement.
- Very good assessment practices are used to help students to understand how to do better.
- Teachers do not consistently use homework well to extend learning.

Commentary

80. Teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 as average. In 2004 teachers' assessments were broadly in line with those of 2003. Results in 2004 were below average for students following the new applied GCSE double award course when related to all ICT courses. Students who do not follow a formal course in ICT learn enough to meet statutory requirements through a business and communication course, through additional ICT lessons and through use in other subjects of the curriculum.
81. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average. Achievement is good when students' prior attainment is considered. Students' ability to solve problems and manage an ICT project independently using a recognised sequence of events called the 'system life cycle' is developing well. ICT solutions to problems call on their previous work well in using ICT to model, communicate and handle information. Students' skills of annotation and evaluation through extended writing are not as good as they should be. By Year 11, standards are average but when these students' prior attainment is considered achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Good business contexts are used for project work with the needs of the user considered well. High quality work, combining a range of software including website, desktop publishing, presentation and data-handling software, supports the completion of projects through solving problems. Students have less success in annotation and evaluation of work.
82. Teaching is good and promotes good learning. Very good teaching resources support teachers' command of the subject very well and are used effectively to engage students and promote learning. Students are appropriately challenged because teachers use high quality information available in the department on their students' performance. This information indicates how well they are doing in relation to how they should. Students have a positive attitude to their work and talk well about how well they are learning and what they need to do better. Homework, when set, is of a good quality but it is not used consistently well to extend learning. Students with special educational needs are well known and teaching resources are modified to suit their needs and a good level of increased support is given in lessons.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding and inspirational ICT teaching to develop Year 11 students' expertise in software and in study skills.

The previous learning of students about 'how they learn' was referred to well in the opening interaction with students. The teacher reinforced these concepts in a well-prepared starter activity which engaged the students very well. The teacher used technology very well to project a presentation of a card trick. The card trick gave the impression that the teacher could read the students' minds. This linked very well with the main body of work, which was to introduce students to some new software that is designed to help students organise their thoughts and to reveal what they know through 'mind maps'. The teacher reminded students very well about the importance of being able to unlock the brain and in particular at examination time, which

is very soon for these students. The teacher gave an expert introduction of the main features of the software with enthusiasm and humour. Students selected their own topics on which to create mind maps. At the start of the work, students could not remember basic or key detail about their topic. However, by going through the software processes their brains were 'unlocked' and they successfully revealed a screen full of information about their topic. Students were engrossed for the whole lesson and were very well supported by the teacher and a post-graduate student. Students were amazed at the end of the lesson to see that their mind map could be turned into a word processed document or a website at the click of a mouse button. Having effectively reviewed the work of the lesson and related it very well to study in all subjects across the school, the teacher revealed how the card trick was done.

83. Leadership and management are very good. Leadership provides clear vision and uses high quality evaluation skills to identify the department's strengths and areas for improvement with accuracy. This has driven improvement since the previous inspection to be very good because resources, teaching, assessment and achievement have all improved. Technology college status has supported this development well. The department is contributing well to ICT development in the wider school community, through resources, time and equipment. Reporting procedures are also now in place. The technical support is of a high quality, supporting development and dealing with problems well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. ICT use across the curriculum has improved significantly from poor at the time of the previous inspection to satisfactory overall. Very good use is made in design and technology for computer-aided design and manufacturing work. Use of this technology has had a significant impact on raising the standards of work produced, much of it being of a professional quality. Students make good use of ICT in geography for map work, rainfall studies and coursework using interactive software, CDs and the Internet. Good use is also made in religious education, the special educational needs department and the English department for coursework. Teachers in the modern foreign languages department make good regular use of a shared ICT suite with resources being selected and made available on the school intranet. In physical education, students evaluate performance using heart monitors, stopwatches and digital video cameras. The school intranet is developing well with subject information and access to web-based resources. All staff now have their own laptop and their use of these in teaching is expanding as departments gain access to digital projectors.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved across all years as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are very good and have a positive effect on learning.
- Higher attaining students have too few opportunities for choice and independence within some teaching groups.

Commentary

85. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2004. GCSE results were above the national average in 2004. Results have improved since the previous inspection and show an upward trend.
86. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average. Achievement is good in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. This is a result of effective teaching that focuses on building up knowledge and understanding and improving geographical skills. Students have very good map reading skills and are able to recognise landforms using contour lines and cross sections. Their written work shows a good understanding of how physical and human processes shape the landscape and their sense of place is well developed through the many opportunities to learn from different cultures. All students achieve well, including those with special educational needs, because good teaching demands much of them. High attaining students make good progress overall but there are few opportunities for choice or independence within lessons. As a result, opportunities for extended learning are missed.
87. Students continue to make good progress throughout Years 10 and 11. Standards in Year 11 are above average. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 lays a solid foundation for GCSE work and many topics are revisited. This allows students to build on prior knowledge and extend their literacy and numeracy skills so that achievement is good in relation to standards at the start of the course. Students are able to write well and link cause and effect in some detail. Most students apply a range of skills to their GCSE coursework and their knowledge and understanding of both physical and human geography are good. All students achieve well due to the strong focus on study skills and revision and from assessing their own work in the light of examination requirements.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students benefit from specialist teachers who are well prepared and have very good subject knowledge. This is evident in their whole-class teaching and in their explanations to individual students. Revised schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 clearly focus on the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and produce lessons that are stimulating and relevant. All GCSE students are given a great deal of support and encouragement by their teachers. This gives them confidence and motivation. Students are well behaved in most lessons. Within some

teaching groups, however, higher attainers do not always share their teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Lack of challenge sometimes results in low level disruption and some students become passive because they are not fully engaged in the work.

89. The head of department provides very good leadership. She has clear vision and is committed to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers work well together refining schemes of work and sharing good practice. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good as a result.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good because of effective specialist teaching.
- Learning is good because of the variety of methods used by teachers.
- Students' motivation is good because of the good relationships within the department.
- Routine assessment procedures do not consistently inform planning and provide individuals with information on how to improve.
- Potential and identified weaknesses in GCSE examination technique are not routinely tackled within a planned strategy.
- Homework is not used well enough to support learning.

Commentary

90. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were above average.
91. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They develop good skills in analysing sources and in writing in a variety of styles. Project work shows good research skills including use of ICT. Students do not make enough use of their history skills in project work, for example in commenting critically on the usefulness of historical sources. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average representing good achievement. Coursework is a strength. All students, including lower attainers, understand clearly the contrasting views within the American civil rights movement. In other work, students link cause and effect well in writing about boom and depression in the America of the 1920s. Examination technique is a weaker area. Students' writing about sources is concentrated too much on content and this limits the marks that can be earned. Higher mark questions are not consistently treated as such, with insufficient depth and detail in some written responses.
92. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge ensures that students achieve an understanding of each topic within its wider context so that they do not lose sight of the 'big picture'. The wide range of methods used by teachers, supported by stimulating resources, consolidates learning well. Methods are well matched to the needs of both higher and lower attainers. Active learning, including Internet research, model-making and source investigation, is typical. The learning environment is a positive one with a good rapport that sustains interest, encourages and motivates. Time is mostly well used to keep a focus on challenging and productive learning, although this is a weakness in some of the teaching. Assessment does not

always give students regular and consistent feedback on how to improve. Homework is not always effective in extending learning opportunities for all students.

93. Leadership is good. There is a clear sense of direction in the department with a well-motivated and effective team. Key areas for improvement are identified together with strategies to address weaknesses. Assessment methods, for example, are currently being revised. Management is satisfactory. There is a thorough approach to self-evaluation, including the scrutiny of GCSE performance data. There is insufficient emphasis on putting into practice routines and procedures that address and monitor identified weaknesses. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Staff changes, especially the tragic death of a colleague, have had a profound impact on the department. However, through the determined efforts of many, a positive momentum has been sustained with good provision achieved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good and there is a clear vision for departmental improvement.
- The low amount of teaching time in Years 7 to 9 slows achievement of lower and average attaining students.
- Standards in Year 11 are above average and have improved since the previous inspection; overall achievement is good.
- The department makes a very good contribution to the development of students's social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness.
- The behaviour of a minority of students is not consistently well managed.
- Irregular monitoring has led to inconsistencies across the department.

Commentary

94. Teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 as average. GCSE results in 2004 were above average. Work seen during the inspection closely matches these assessments and results.
95. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average in Year 9, representing satisfactory achievement overall in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. Although the school meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, the time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is low and this results in the need for a rapid pace of delivery during lessons. Consequently, lower and average attaining students sometimes find it difficult to keep up with the pace and achievement is slowed. By Year 11 standards are above average. Teachers build effectively on earlier work so that students achieve well.
96. Teaching is good and promotes good learning. A key strength is the way teachers use command of their subject to plan interesting and engaging lessons. Students are given interesting things to do which involve them productively in learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on symbolism in Christianity, students were involved in making individual 'Christingles'. Candles were lit and passed between students as a symbol of

love and sharing the light of God. In Year 8, students are given the opportunity to make videos and models of cathedrals and this specifically challenges more able students and engages boys very productively. Most students are positively engaged throughout lessons, but a minority behave badly in some lessons and this is not always effectively managed. Lesson objectives are shared with students and reflected upon at the end of lessons to reinforce learning well. Marking is constructive but does not give students a clear enough view of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. There is a departmental approach to homework through the use of on-line information and the work is set to build on the learning in class. This also helps to facilitate full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. However, teachers do not consistently allow sufficient time to fully explain what is required and to check that students have a clear understanding.

97. Leadership is good. Planning is imaginative and well structured to allow teaching of the syllabus in the time available. There is a clear vision for improvement and a focus on raising standards through the use of ICT and the development of literacy. This is starting to impact positively on boys' achievement and that of lower attaining students. Management is satisfactory and effective use is made of the relatively low amount of available curriculum time and resources such as ICT. Although some monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning take place, this is not sufficiently systematic with the result that there are inconsistencies in behaviour management, implementation of the homework policy, marking and the use of assessment for learning.
98. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The department makes a significant contribution to the development of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness, which has improved since the previous inspection. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved and the participation of boys has increased, but some behaviour management issues remain.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department makes a major contribution to the specialist school status through a rich and varied curriculum.
- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Leadership and management are very good; aspects of leadership are excellent and promote high standards across the department.
- There is a need to further develop sketching as an aspect of designing.
- The impact of ICT is having a significant impact on standards of work; further development is hindered because of the excessive demand on existing resources.

Commentary

99. Teachers' assessments of standards in Year 9 are above average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were well above average. Girls did much better than boys, but the gap is relatively similar to that seen nationally. Results have remained well above

average, notably since the school gained specialist school status. Since the previous inspection results in food technology have improved and are now above national averages. Standards in work seen during the inspection closely match these assessments and results.

100. From Years 7 to 9 students build their basic making skills and learn to design through a broad range of interesting projects and achievement is good. Very professional use of computer-aided design and manufacture helps students to produce a range of high quality products. They use ICT well for research and modelling; access to computers is variable and more difficult in some work areas. Designing is imaginative but sketching as an element in the development of a design is less well developed and this slows design fluency. Very effective use of learning support assistants, when available, raises students' confidence and ensures all students, including those with special educational needs, match their predicted levels of achievement. By Year 11, standards are well above average overall. Teachers build well on the secure foundations of earlier work so that students achieve very well. Detailed analysis of design situations results in the choice of a broad range of products linked to students' interests; motivation and commitment are high. The department makes a major contribution to students' personal development through visits, links with other educational institutions, industry and the community and the many extra-curricular activities that are organised.
101. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have a very good command of the subject, which inspires confidence and promotes interest. Students respond with very good attitudes and behaviour is usually of a high standard. The provision of varied resources enables students to achieve well-made thoughtfully designed products. They complete tasks with pride. The close rapport between teachers helps them to develop and share ideas to match the needs of all students. This co-operation has made a cohesive team and, although design and technology rooms are not together in a suite, consistent high expectations and the demand for accurate, good quality work have effectively helped to raise standards. Schemes of work are innovative and reflect the continual development in new technologies. Assessment and tracking of students' progress are comprehensive and detailed data is readily available via the network for all teachers to inform their planning.
102. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Leadership is inspirational and high standards are promoted across the department. Team spirit amongst staff is excellent. A broad range of courses is offered in all years, including resistant materials, graphics, food technology, textiles and electronics. Management of the courses, accommodation and resources is very good. The monitoring of teaching and learning and students' progress is meticulous. Department self-evaluation plans are good and there is a clear vision of how the department can progress. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. High standards have been maintained and have improved at GCSE. The department has made a key contribution to the school's specialist status.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and music. Two lessons in drama were sampled.

Drama

103. In the two lessons seen, good teaching was consistently involving and stimulating so that students enjoyed learning and made good progress. Drama is taught to all students in Years 7 to 9. Students reach above average standards of work by Year 9. Drama is a popular choice for GCSE study in Years 10 and 11. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well above average. Leadership and management of the department are good. Programmes of lessons are imaginatively planned and the progress of students is well assessed. A wide range of drama activities outside lessons, including regular school productions, further extends students' learning.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides a clear vision, sets high expectations for excellence and the inclusion of all students. The curriculum is well designed and enables students to develop high level skills in a wide range of media.
- Teaching is very good overall because teachers use expert knowledge and plan lessons very well to meet the needs of particular groups and individuals.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work: they work very well collaboratively and independently.
- Students' observational drawing skills are not sufficiently developed in Years 8 and 9.

Commentary

104. Teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 as above average and girls' as well above average. In 2004, GCSE results were well above average. Girls performed better than boys; however, boys did very well at the highest grades. Work seen during the inspection matches closely these assessments and results.
105. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average. Students enter the school with standards which are average and overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. In Year 7, students develop good skills and understanding of line, tone, colour, texture and pattern. These are reinforced in Year 8 when students learn well how to work collaboratively. By Year 9, they are able to express themselves in a variety of media and confidently relate their work to that of other artists and the art of other cultures. Observational drawing skills in Year 7 are at the standard expected nationally, but in Year 8 and 9 are not sufficiently developed.
106. Students in Year 10 learn a higher level of skills in printing, painting, textiles and three-dimensional work. Building on the good foundations of earlier learning, they achieve very well. In Year 11, standards are well above average. Students develop their independent working skills and produce works of high quality in mixed media. They are confident in making strong personal statements about social, moral and cultural issues particularly through large-scale paintings.

107. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers use their specialist expertise to enthuse and inspire students, often through skilled demonstration and individual support in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Teaching plans provide a broad yet flexible framework for learning. Teachers modify teaching methods to meet the needs of groups and individuals and those with special educational needs are given specific help to overcome difficulties. Assessment is very good; students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The tracking system enables progress to be monitored and changes made to teaching when appropriate. Lessons begin briskly and students work purposefully. Relationships are very good and teachers set high expectations of effort from students, who respond with very good attitudes to their work. There are extensive displays of students' high quality work on display in public spaces throughout the school that promote achievement and enhance the environment.
108. Leadership is very good and provides clear vision and sets high expectations and direction for improvement. Management is very good with a focus on improvement. Effective systems for planning, assessment, management of resources and self-review are now established. Although opportunities to use ICT have increased, these are not yet well enough developed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Attainment at the end of Year 9 has improved and at GCSE high standards have been sustained. Teaching in art and design makes a significant contribution students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has developed a department in which students of all capabilities learn very well. The breadth of the curriculum is very good, containing a large amount of practical activities that help students to develop their skills.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very well planned and matched to students' needs to enable all to develop their musical skills fully. Teachers are highly skilled and enthusiastic which results in highly motivated students and high quality work.
- There are excellent links with the community and excellent extra-curricular opportunities are offered to all students.
- Assessment is not used consistently to plan for improvement.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning in Years 7 to 9.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students in Years 7 to 9 to develop their literacy skills.

Commentary

109. Teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 as above average. GCSE results were well above average. Work seen during the inspection matches these assessments and results.
110. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average. Students can read notation and perform confidently. They can rehearse independently and perform complex music such as *Fur Elise*, to which students add bass parts and alter

the rhythmic accompaniment. Achievement is good in relation to students' standards when they entered the school. Teachers' concentration on introducing students to a wide variety of teaching processes and musical styles, and the teaching styles adopted, lead to rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. The vocabulary of the subject is taught well and used routinely so that students are able to discuss their work and ideas with confidence. By Year 11, standards are well above average. Teachers build well on the solid foundation of earlier work and extra-curricular activities so that students achieve very well.

111. Teaching and learning are good overall; teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. The key strength is in the teachers' command of their subject that they use to plan interesting and engaging lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers provide expert demonstrations and worksheets matched to students' needs and capabilities. Activities enable students to understand what is expected of them and see what they might achieve. Lessons have a purposeful atmosphere in which little time is wasted because students are given interesting activities in which they are challenged fully to do their best. Students respond to the excellent relationships that teachers establish, and their expectations of effort, by bringing very good attitudes to their work. Assessment procedures are good. The work of Year 10 and 11 students is marked thoroughly with supporting feedback and this contributes to their very good achievement. In Years 7 to 9, teachers do not make enough use of ICT to develop students' appraisal skills and to record compositions. Homework is used to develop learning in the classroom but students in Years 7 to 9 are not given enough opportunities to develop literacy skills.
112. Very good leadership has developed a very successful department with a clear vision for improvement. The curriculum is well planned with a firm base in the sort of practical activities that appeal to students and help them to learn well. Management is very good with positive approaches to securing improvement. Although data is used to monitor students' performance, it is not used consistently well enough to set targets for improvement. There are limited opportunities for students to make audio recordings of their work so they rely on the comments of other students.
113. The department makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through teaching and extra-curricular activities. There are excellent links with the community and very good relationships with visiting instrumental teachers. In the previous report, accommodation was a negative feature; the new building and resources will rectify this as identified in a well-structured, realistic department development plan. Overall the high quality outlined in the previous report has been maintained and improvement has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly introduced Junior Sports Leadership Award course gives students very good opportunities to lead others.
- Extra-curricular activities give good opportunities for students to extend their learning.
- Inconsistency in assessment and marking affects what is achieved.

- The core curriculum course in Years 10 and 11, mentioned in the previous report, is not enough of a priority on the timetable.

Commentary

114. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. In 2004 the department changed examination boards and results were below average. More boys than girls are entered on the course and boys do better than girls and achieve better in physical education than they do in most of their other subjects. Students did less well than expected in 2004.
115. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average. Achievement is good in relation to students' standards on entry to the school and their capabilities. In Year 11, standards for those following the core curriculum course and the GCSE course are average and achievement is satisfactory. Girls achieve better on the theory aspects of the course and boys do better on the practical aspects. Students on the Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA) course are achieving very well because they are developing work-related skills and techniques which prepare them very well for employment. Talented team players achieve well and are encouraged to join clubs and some students perform at local and regional levels. Non-participants achieve as well as others because they are included in the learning well and the department has developed worksheets so students follow the National Curriculum.
116. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 because teachers have more time to establish students' understanding and skills. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory. The time allocation, mentioned as a weakness in the previous report, has not been increased. Consequently, teachers struggle to teach the curriculum in the time available and this affects what can be achieved. Teachers' questioning is effective in extending students' learning. In some groups, not enough is expected of lower attaining students, even though personal development is fostered well. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to observe one another's work and there are good demonstrations to assist all students understand requirements but in some lessons these are not clear enough to guide and support achievement. ICT programs and digital cameras are available for use to allow students to observe and analyse movement and performance to refine their work and good use is made of a *PowerPoint* presentation which encourages participation to a high level but also features good messages for personal development. Assessment in the GCSE course is not used effectively enough to help students to check their progress and measure performance against targets; marking does not consistently tell students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
117. Satisfactory leadership and management have led to a wider curriculum including the introduction of the JSLA. Choice is limited in Years 10 and 11 on the curriculum course because time is restricted to one lesson a week and a half year group is timetabled together stretching facilities, including changing areas. Accommodation is not used effectively; sometimes indoor facilities lie idle while at other times facilities are fully stretched. This constrains activities.
118. Overall improvement since the previous report has been satisfactory. A new sports hall has been erected that has given the school significant improvements in accommodation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) were sampled. The programme is good and meets all statutory requirements, including sex and relationships education and also alcohol and drug education. There are very good links with local police and other organisations including the Drug and Alcohol Advisory Service. Older students are given the opportunity to participate in peer mentoring programmes which they then deliver to younger students and cover issues relating to drugs and alcohol and sex and relationships. The PSHE programme also incorporates citizenship education and work experience provision.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good and this results in good provision across the department and developing provision across school.
- Students bring very good attitudes to their work and these contribute to good achievement.
- Good teaching offers students opportunities for active participation in learning, self-assessment and community involvement.

Commentary

119. Teachers' assessments of students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average. Assessments at the end of Year 11 showed that standards were above average. There is no external assessment at the end of Year 11. Girls performed better than boys and this is particularly evident amongst most able students. Work seen during the inspection matches these assessments.
120. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average. Overall, girls' work shows more detailed understanding and greater care and effort in communicating evidence and information. Achievement is good as a result of good teaching. In Year 11, standards are above average. Teachers build well on the solid foundation of earlier work so that students achieve well. Students are well motivated and able to communicate ideas in a coherent and mature way. Most students have very positive attitudes and they are able to work well together and demonstrate skills of citizenship very well. Students show understanding of the cause and effect of actions and can take responsibility and be accountable for their actions and beliefs. Coursework of lower attaining students involved in the Prince's Trust XL Award scheme shows that they are actively involved in activities to enhance their interpersonal skills. Self-assessments show that students are able to reflect well on their own development.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and include opportunities for students' participation and reflection. Teaching is purposeful and interesting so that students are engaged in activities and work productively. Well-structured planning leads to progression and the development of students' knowledge and understanding about citizenship and the enhancement of the skills needed to become effective citizens. In some lessons, a minority of students are not fully engaged in learning and a low level of disruption is allowed to continue throughout the lesson. Plenary sessions involve students in assessment of their learning and students are able to explain the significance of what they have learned. Recent improvements in ICT hardware have been utilised well to improve teaching and learning.

122. Leadership is good. The department is well organised and there is a clear commitment to raising standards through the development of personal and social skills. There is cohesive planning for departmental improvement which includes innovative ideas for cross-curricular assessment and the second stage of a whole-school review of the provision of citizenship within subjects. Management is good; there is thorough self-evaluation and coherent plans for improvement. There are good links that provide contributions to citizenship in art and design, design and technology and ICT. Some subjects, such as physical education, do not have detailed plans to contribute to citizenship. There are good links with external agencies and organisations, which are used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. The department makes a good contribution to the development of students' personal development and to the school's wider aims.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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	12	91.7	78.3	33.3	21.6	35.0	28.5
Biology	7	100	63.5	71.4	10.4	47.1	19.8
Chemistry	5	100	70.3	20.0	13.2	34.0	23.0
Drama	4	100	86.6	25.0	19.8	32.5	30.9
English/English Language	10	100	85.3	30.0	16.1	37.0	29.0
English Literature	4	100	86.2	75.0	17.4	50.0	29.7
French	8	87.5	79.8	37.5	19.4	36.3	28.2
Design and Technology	1	100	72.6	100	13.9	50.0	24.3
General Studies	35	100	73.6	48.6	16.9	43.4	25.5
German	1	100	81.6	100	18.8	60.0	28.8
History	8	87.5	82.2	50.0	20.8	38.8	29.2
Information Technology	14	92.9	66.6	14.3	8.8	30.7	20.6
Mathematics	13	100	59.9	38.5	14.1	44.6	20.5
Music	2	100	79.8	0.0	16.9	35.0	27.5
Other Social Studies	24	100	67.8	54.2	15.1	47.1	23.2
Physics	3	100	66.4	33.3	14.8	33.3	22.4
Religious Studies	3	100	82.2	66.7	26.1	50.0	31.2
Sociology	6	100	72.2	0.0	19.6	35.0	25.9
Sports/PE Studies	4	100	72.2	25.0	11.8	32.5	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	21	100	98.3	52.4	50.2	89.5	87.1
Biology	34	100	96.6	50.0	40.0	88.2	79.3
Chemistry	25	100	97.7	76.0	50.0	102.4	85.7
Drama	11	100	99.6	63.6	42.8	96.4	85.1
Economics	14	100	98.8	64.3	54.3	97.1	89.8
English/English Language	38	100	99.2	23.7	36.4	80.5	81.1
English Literature	8	100	99.4	100	44.9	115.0	85.5
French	5	100	99.0	80.0	53.1	108.0	88.9
Design and Technology	25	100	97.8	60.0	35.0	90.4	77.9
General Studies	37	100	94.9	51.4	30.5	89.2	72.9
Geography	15	100	98.8	60.0	46.4	89.3	85.2
German	6	100	98.6	50.0	49.6	83.3	86.3
History	22	100	99.0	54.5	45.6	95.5	85.1
Mathematics	30	100	96.8	76.7	56.6	104.0	89.5
Music	9	100	98.2	55.6	37.1	91.1	79.5
Other Social Studies	2	100	97.4	50.0	42.5	90.0	81.6
Physics	17	100	96.7	41.2	45.3	84.7	82.6
Religious Studies	5	100	99.1	40.0	49.5	88.0	87.4
Sociology	33	100	98.5	78.8	45.3	103.6	84.6
Business	13	100	91.6	92.3	24.1	103.1	67.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus in this inspection was on English literature and German.

A lesson for Year 13 students taking the English language course was sampled. Students were achieving satisfactorily as they had opportunities to review, revise and consolidate their learning and practise skills relating to identifying the main features of editorial writing. A lesson for Year 13 students taking French was also sampled. Teaching and learning were good, and students were achieving well as a result of good support and guidance.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching ensures that students learn and achieve well.
- Significant factors in students' achievement are the level of individual attention and the quality of marking they receive. As a result their learning is enhanced well and they know what they need to do to improve further.
- Good leadership and management ensure that consistency in standards is maintained; the subject is attracting more students as a result.

Commentary

123. Results were well above average in 2003 and very high in 2004. All eight students in 2004 obtained the highest (A or B) grades.
124. Standards for the small group of Year 13 students are well above average overall, and broadly in line with previous results. Their spoken confidence varies, but for the most confident includes lively, intelligent critical comment and thoughtful, perceptive responses. Less confident students nevertheless have clear personal views of texts that they are studying and provide well-justified commentary on them. Students' writing is organised well, fluent and to the point. These students are achieving well in relation to their above average prior attainment because of teachers' expectations that answers will be supported by evidence, their involvement in group activities, the provision of good support material, and constructive marking that focuses very well on assessment objectives and ensures that students know what to do to improve. The course has attracted a much larger group of Year 12 students, who are showing a lively interest in their new module on Chaucer and are working at above average standards overall. They are achieving well given their wide range of prior attainment and the relatively early stage they have reached on the course.
125. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers develop well a critical approach to texts through focused questioning that leads to perceptive commentary. They make explicit use of critical vocabulary and students learn and use it well as a result. Teachers vary activities well, provide good modelling to illustrate a point, and maintain a lively approach. As a result, students have good relationships with their teachers and are interested and involved in lessons. Teachers are particularly helpful in providing additional support and guidance, well exemplified in a coursework tutorial for one student and by students' appreciative comments when interviewed, and these are significant factors in students' good achievement.
126. Leadership and management are good. Leadership ensures consistency of approach and a strong focus on meeting assessment objectives, as exemplified in and reinforced by teachers' module guides. Teachers are deployed well to their strengths and interests, and their enthusiasm is reflected in students' good attitudes. Improvement since the previous inspection

has been good because standards remain high, achievement continues to be good, and teaching quality is consistently good.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have resulted in good achievement.
- Very good relationships foster positive attitudes towards German.
- Good teaching enables students to acquire a systematic grounding in language skills.
- Teachers' questioning does not push students to develop their thinking and oral skills sufficiently.

Commentary

127. Nine students took the A-level examination in 2003. Results were above average, with six students gaining A or B grades and none below grade D. Results for the six students in 2004 were, unexpectedly, average with students achieving below their target because of under-performance in written coursework. Nonetheless only one gained below grade C.
128. Standards of the seven current students in Year 13 class are above average as all are on target to obtain grades between A and C. They are making steady gains in all the skills and achieving well. They follow lessons without difficulty in the target language and can work out the meaning of most unfamiliar words from roots or analogies provided by the teachers. They understand core vocabulary and structures well and can apply them over a range of topics, such as transport, health and atomic power. Writing is fluent and idiomatic although higher attaining students tend to avoid using the most complex forms of the language and middle attaining students take some time to eliminate errors in case usage and gender. Independent learning skills are above average and promoted through ICT which gives students good opportunities to adapt model answers to develop a more personal response. Magazines, booklets and other forms of support are well used to assist their learning. Oral skills are less fully developed – students' general knowledge is average, much of the practice they have is restricted to examination requirements and they do not have access to a native speaker. Standards in the small Year 12 group who are learning German on a reduced timetable are likewise above average due in no small measure to the good management of the shared provision.
129. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and effective command of German to plan lessons with care, and design and use high quality materials and starter activities with appropriate levels of challenge to encourage all students to participate. They vary activities to maintain a good pace to the lesson and to reinforce new learning. Methods are well chosen to develop students' skills progressively. Difficult texts are broken down into manageable chunks to make them accessible to all students to maintain their confidence and assist their learning. Teachers support students very well both in school and via the well-used e-mail link which provides them with guidance and quick feedback. Nearly all students participated in the newly established school German exchange with Rinteln which built on the very good relationships with staff and provided a further boost to their strong

motivation and good attitudes towards the language. Marking is accurate and provides students with adequate feedback on their performance and how they can improve. Although students have opportunities to contribute ideas, teachers' use of discussion and questioning does not force them to explain these fully or justify opinions in depth. As a result, oral skills are not as well developed as they could be.

130. Leadership and management are good. Clear direction is set for the subject and there are effective strategies in place both to guide students in mapping out their work on a weekly basis and in the managing of the present shared provision in Year 12. Improvement since the previous inspection is good; high standards have been maintained and the curriculum enriched.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

131. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average so that students are able to cope successfully with the demands of their courses. Students are generally well supported in the development of their language and literacy skills, particularly so in physical education, in business studies and in the enrichment programme.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching and support they receive.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that teachers' expertise is used well and students' progress is checked and supported very well.

Commentary

132. In 2004, examination results were well above average. Students performed significantly better in mathematics than they did in their other subjects studied. This represents very good achievement in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course.
133. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average. Students make very good progress from the start of their courses. This very good progress is the result of teachers' concentration on ensuring that students' basic skills, in particularly algebraic skills, are constantly reinforced during each stage of their work. Students understand well different calculus methods when dealing with a variety of problems and confidently use algorithms to solve problems.
134. Teaching is very good, promoting very good learning and leading to very good achievement in relation to students' standards at the start of their courses and their capabilities. Teachers' excellent command of their subject enables them to explain new skills and difficult concepts clearly so that students know how to apply them to a range of questions. Lessons are well planned to provide a variety of suitably challenging tasks which develop students' learning very well and result in students achieving very well. Good day-to-day assessment of students' work supports their learning well ensuring that students know how well they are doing in relation to

examination criteria. Relationships are very good and, as a result, students show very positive attitudes to their work; they make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing and teachers provide good support and guidance so that students overcome their difficulties and achieve very well.

135. Leadership is very good. Very clear direction is provided for the department's work and its development. There is a strong commitment by all teachers to get the very best from all students. Management is very good; teachers are deployed well to ensure that their specialist knowledge is used to best advantage and good assessment procedures and planning ensure that students' progress is checked and supported well.
136. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards are higher, the high quality of teaching has been maintained and students' achievement is better.

Mathematics across the curriculum

137. Students' use of mathematics and their level of numeracy skills are above average overall so that they are able to tackle the demands of their different subjects and courses successfully. For example, in physics students cope well with numerical and other data, in design and technology students apply their mathematical skills well when measuring and drawing and in business studies they use graphical skills very well when dealing with business-related information.

SCIENCE

The focus in this inspection was on physics. Lessons were sampled in chemistry and biology. In a good Year 13 lesson sampled in chemistry, students were learning how the properties of different soils were linked to minerals present and about the molecular structure of the minerals. In a very good Year 13 lesson sampled in biology students discussed closed loop molecules based on carbon and went on to study the carbon cycle. In both lessons, new facts were introduced and linked to theory. Clear explanations and good reinforcement of the new knowledge meant students achieved well.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge, well-planned lessons and effective assessment assist students' learning.
- Very good relationships and attitudes make lessons productive.
- Students' opportunities to broaden their experience of physics in the outside world are limited.

Commentary

138. In 2004, results were above average. Results for 2003 were well above average and in 2002 were close to average, though with below average higher grades.

139. The standard of Year 13 students' work seen during the inspection is above average. The subject makes a significant contribution to students' skills in numeracy. In Year 13 they use a wide range of scientific formulae competently, manipulate equations, substitute numerical values and calculate correctly. They understand a wide range of physical principles and draw graphs to a good standard. ICT is used well to present researched projects including computer-plotted graphs of practical results. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is average. Students understand the theory of vector addition and calculate resolved and resultant forces competently. Students' attainment is in line with their previous performance so achievement is satisfactory.
140. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and promotes satisfactory learning. Lessons are well planned so students extend their knowledge in a logical sequence, with new facts being built upon prior learning and practical work aiding the understanding of theory. Teachers' expertise and good knowledge of examination board requirements help students reach their potential. They answer students' questions well and use the answers as stimuli to further extend students' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students' very good attitudes and relationships with their teachers play a significant part in making lessons effective. Assessment of students' effectively shows where mistakes have been made and how they can be avoided. However, students' learning and achievement are restricted because they have few opportunities to meet other adults with a scientific background or visit places of scientific interest.
141. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a competent development plan but opportunities to improve students' achievement need greater emphasis. The work of teachers and technicians is managed effectively. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained but achievement has not improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT was not a focus for this inspection. A lesson in ICT was sampled in which good teaching and learning took place as students worked on a coursework project as part of their two-year AS course. Though standards were below average, students were achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

142. Since specialist college status was obtained, there has been significant improvement in students' use of and capability in ICT. This is seen in science subjects and design and technology in particular, and more generally in the wider access to ICT across the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

The focus in this inspection was on geography. A lesson in **history** was also sampled. Teaching and learning were good in a Year 13 history lesson. Students had read an extract from *The Downing Street Years* as an introduction to 'Thatcherism'. Achievement was good because the combination of good quality resources, challenging discussion and summary matched the needs of all students well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and expertise help students learn quickly.
- Enrichment opportunities extend and support learning very well.
- In the classroom, students have too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

143. A-level examination results were above the national average in 2003 and 2004.

144. The standard of work of the current students is above average. The majority of students show a good understanding of physical and human geography and their skills of analysis are well developed. In Year 13 the special attention given to writing skills helps students progress to higher levels of attainment. Students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. They are doing well as a result of good teaching which provides high quality support materials and focuses on examination requirements. The lesson structure and activities clearly focus their learning and pay appropriate attention to study skills and vocabulary.

145. Teaching is consistently good with some very good features. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. This enables them to explain difficult skills and processes and as a result students learn quickly. Teachers provide a wide variety and range of tasks that capture the interest and involvement of students. There are many opportunities for students to review their own and others' work and, as a consequence, students know how to improve and refine their answers. Fieldwork opportunities abroad and charity challenges encourage students to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and create new learning opportunities away from the classroom. In the classroom, however, teachers tend to do too much for students. Students' over-reliance on the teacher to provide information means that their organisational skills and independence of learning are less well developed.

146. The head of department provides good leadership. She is committed to raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning and through the effective use of student assessment. Standards are higher than they were at the previous inspection so improvement has been good. It now remains for the department to provide greater opportunities for students to take control of their own learning and to use their skills of communication more often in the classroom.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus in this inspection was on design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good so that students achieve very well.
- The impact of ICT has a major influence on standards of work.
- Very good leadership has established a very strong team spirit among all teachers involved in the delivery of the courses.
- Space and resources in the sixth form base are limited because of the significant increase in student numbers.

Commentary

147. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 and 2004 were well above average.
148. Students' achievement is very good in relation to their prior attainment and they reach well above average standards. Most students have a very good range of basic skills in design methodology but materials technology and skills associated with construction are less well developed. They achieve very well because their courses in Years 10 and 11 provide very useful preparation for A-level and because they learn principally through a mixture of practical project work and taught theory sessions. The very effective use of ICT in project work supports its development extremely well. In addition, they are enthusiastic about the course and speak highly of the teaching and level of individual support received from teachers. Students in Year 12 are making very good progress developing their skills of product analysis as a result of clear guidance from teachers and their own ability to organise themselves and work independently.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are confident in their work and understand the subject content well. Stimulating teaching promotes a creative approach to work. Teachers' excellent support and guidance, for example about the requirements for coursework and deadlines for the completion of work, are significant factors in ensuring students' very good achievement. As a result, students generally have very good attitudes towards their work and are keen to do well, spending much time beyond the classroom completing project work, design folders or general research.
150. Leadership and management are very good. Very clear direction is set for the department's work and its innovative development. The school's policy of equality is exemplified with the deployment of a female teacher in resistant materials. The department has very good links with other educational institutions, industry, and the community. Department self-evaluation is reliable and there is a clear and shared vision of how the department can progress further. Management is very good: schemes of work have been and continue to be reviewed and there is a clear focus on high standards. A very effective team has been established whose individual technical experiences and backgrounds are deployed to best advantage to provide a broader technological platform.
151. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained; teaching remains a strength and the number of students has increased significantly. However, as a result of this increase the sixth form design base is far too small and ICT facilities have had to be borrowed from other departments.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus in this inspection was on art and design. **Music** provision was also sampled. Standards are well above average. Students are doing very well and making very good progress in music as a result of very good teaching.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership sets high standards of expectation.
- Teaching is very good: teachers use their expert knowledge to inspire and motivate students, who achieve very well.
- Teachers provide high quality guidance and support that contribute significantly to students' learning and development.
- Students develop a very good understanding of their own work, and how it relates to their immediate environment and the wider world.

Commentary

152. Results in 2004 for A-level examinations were average and at AS-level above average and well above average for female students. Results in A-level history of art, for a very small cohort, were much improved from the previous year and at AS-level showed very good achievement.
153. Standards are well above average standard in work seen. Students make very good personal responses to social, moral and cultural issues and their interpretations are very creative. They produce work confidently in a wide variety of media and in a large scale. Students have a very good attitude to their work. They become fully committed to the subject and spend a significant amount of additional time developing their skills. Overall students achieve very well in relation to their broadly average attainment on entry. Through the very good guidance from teachers they develop very well as independent learners and this contributes to their achievement. Opportunities are provided for students to enrich their learning by working with artists in galleries locally and visiting galleries regionally and abroad.
154. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their expertise to develop quickly students' skills and understanding of a wide range of media and techniques, to a level where they can express themselves confidently. Assessment is thorough with good opportunities for peer and self-assessment closely linked to standards of the examination course. All work is closely related to that of other artists and students gain a good understanding of the role of the artist in society. Through detailed planning, teachers provide opportunities to challenge students and as a result students develop a very good understanding of their own work and how it relates to their immediate environment and the wider world. Teachers give very good one-to-one guidance and support and this makes a major contribution to students' achievement.
155. Leadership is very good. Very clear direction is set for the department's work and its innovative development. Management is very good; organisation of teaching staff, other resources and courses is very well managed. An effective team has been

formed where individual strengths are deployed to best advantage. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because standards have been consistently sustained and overall provision is better.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus in this inspection was on physical education.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students learn and achieve well.
- Teachers manage students very well and provide much encouragement so that students are fully occupied and involved in their learning.
- A good range of resources supports learning well.
- Inconsistency in marking prevents some students knowing what they need to do to improve.
- The limitations of classroom accommodation restrict the range of strategies teachers can employ to enhance learning.

Commentary

156. Because few students took the A-level examination in 2003 and none in 2004, comparisons with national averages should be treated with caution. With this reservation, A2 results in 2003 and AS results in 2004 were well above average. These results represent good achievement.
157. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average overall for a considerably larger number of students with varying prior attainment. Achievement is good. From the start of their course students make good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding of the history of physical education, the theory of exercise and training and the analysis of skills. Students use ICT well for research, word processing, tables, graphs and skill analysis. The department's contributions to the development of students' numeracy and literacy are very good. Students make presentations and share research. Students make competent calculations of the impact of changed forces as in a tennis serve and use scientific and specialist terminology with confidence. Students achieve well because of teachers' specialist knowledge and their ability to engage the students in the subject matter.
158. Teaching is consistently good, promoting good learning and leading to good achievement in relation to students' standards at the beginning of the course and their capabilities. Teachers have very good command of their subject which enables them to explain difficult concepts clearly with many real practical examples so that students know what is expected of them and how to achieve it. Teachers use a good range of resources to plan interesting and challenging projects, use examples from a wide range of sports, and manage students very well; as a result, students are fully involved in their learning. A significant strength of teaching is the encouragement provided to students throughout lessons. However, the quality of teachers' marking of written work

is inconsistent, and as a result students do not always know what they need to do to improve.

159. Leadership is good. The head of department is very knowledgeable and has set a clear direction. Management is good; an effective team has been formed whose individual strengths are deployed well. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall because A-level and Community Sports Leader courses have been introduced. The latter is now well established and makes a major contribution to the enrichment programme and to the main school. Although the provision of one period per week reflects that some attempt has been made to provide access to physical education activities for other students, the department still has no dedicated classroom base for the teaching of theory. Teaching in different rooms reduces the range of strategies that can be used by teachers to enhance learning.

BUSINESS

The focus in this inspection was on the vocational course in business studies. A lesson in economics was sampled. Teaching and learning were excellent in a Year 13 economics lesson. Achievement was excellent because of the impact of methods used on the development of examination skills. Students responded very well to learning from each other and asked each other searching questions.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' learning is very effectively checked and extended because of excellent subject knowledge.
- Students learn difficult concepts well because of very effective teaching methods.
- Students know how to improve because of excellent assessment procedures.
- Students are highly motivated because of the very good relationships within the department.

Commentary

160. Examination results are very high and have been sustained at this level throughout the three-year period that the course has been offered. The great majority of students who choose this course reached broadly average standards at GCSE and their achievement has therefore been at least very good.
161. By the end of Year 13 standards are very high. Achievement is very good overall; the achievement of some individuals is excellent given their standards at the start of their course. The quality of coursework is outstanding. Year 12 students achieve a professional style in writing about their investigations into the real world of business. By the end of Year 13 the most striking feature of coursework achievement is that all students, to varying degrees, address grade A syllabus criteria in their work, for example when evaluating the usefulness of theoretical models. Students' own research is very thorough with detailed conclusions, and presented through excellent use of ICT. They apply their theoretical knowledge to the real world of business very

well. The blending of theory and practice is a striking feature of coursework. They demonstrate their wider understanding by incorporating national and international economic and political factors into their studies of businesses and products. Students confidently interpret case study material. They use data very well to draw conclusions, for example on the profitability, solvency and performance of a particular company.

162. Teaching and learning are very good. Excellent subject knowledge and excellent assessment procedures very effectively consolidate learning at each stage of the course. Students are constantly challenged in discussion to take their learning further. Very good relationships support learning and students are very well motivated to succeed. Meticulous assessment procedures keep students constantly in touch with their progress towards meeting grade criteria for coursework, including any remaining gaps. Writing is constantly criticised to move students beyond simple description so that analytical and evaluative skills are developed. Difficult concepts are taught in a very methodical step-by-step approach so that students gain confidence in using and applying theory. They quickly become confident, independent learners. Students' learning is very clearly focused on coursework and examination requirements from the start of Year 12, resulting in very good achievement.
163. Leadership and management are both very good. Students consistently achieve very high standards from average starting points. This trend has been sustained since the introduction of the advanced vocational course three years ago. Clear vision and effective implementation of strategies are typical. Business links have been very well developed to link specifically with particular aspects of the course. Relative weaknesses in examined modules have been addressed resulting in improved achievement. There was no separate post-16 report at the previous inspection, but improvement in business studies provision has clearly been very good.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

164. In citizenship, students' achievement is good and they build on prior knowledge, skills and understanding effectively. Good opportunities for active citizenship include community action through 'enhancement' lessons, peer mentoring accreditation and involvement in the senior school council which is proactive and influences whole-school decision making. Students' attitudes and values are positive and they are able to coherently demonstrate independent thinking, maturity and collective responsibility. In religious education, students' achievement is good and they build on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding of religious beliefs well. The contribution to general studies is good and students are taught study and examination skills effectively. They are well informed about contemporary moral issues and develop skills and understanding through lively discussion and debate.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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