

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE WENSLEYDALE SCHOOL**

Leyburn

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121679

Headteacher: Mr D Eaton

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 03 March 2005

Inspection number: 268990

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	546
School address:	Richmond Road Leyburn North Yorkshire
Postcode:	DL8 5HY
Telephone number:	01969 622244
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Parry
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Wensleydale School is located in Leyburn, North Yorkshire. It is a community, comprehensive school and provides education for 546 girls and boys aged 11 to 18 years, of whom 98 are post-16 students. Students come from a wide rural area, and very large numbers travel to school by bus. Some have journeys of up to one hour each way. The school is much smaller than the average for a secondary school but is popular and has increased in size by one fifth since 1999. There are also more post-16 students than at the time of the last inspection. Students' educational opportunities are extended by links with colleges in the area. Almost all students are from white-British backgrounds, and none has English as an additional language. Students come from a wide range of social backgrounds, but the percentage claiming a free school meal is below average. One in ten students has a family background of the armed services, and an increasing number since 1999 come from Richmond and Catterick Garrison. The mobility of students, overall, is average. Those who join during the term are sometimes those excluded from other schools. The number of students identified by the school as having special educational needs is below average. The percentage with statements of special need is average and these are mainly for learning, but also for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few have physical difficulties. Recruitment of staff to teach mathematics, design and technology and English has been difficult recently, but the school is now fully staffed. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The school participates in an Increased Flexibility Project to extend its curriculum in partnership with a local college. It works closely with partner primary schools as a participant in a range of joint activities. These initiatives involve the local community and other schools and colleges. The school holds the Sportsmark award, the Football Association Charter standard, and a Healthy Schools' award. It also participates in the British Council European Socrates Programme, which gives it links with seven other European schools.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Lead inspector	
9724	Mrs B E P Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector	
32115	Mr J S Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Work related learning
14691	Ms J Hall	Team inspector	Science Post-16 biology
31693	Mr P T Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design
11969	Mr J Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology
20619	Mrs J A Hazelwood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Post-16 health and social care
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics Post-16 mathematics
1994	Ms H A Olds	Team inspector	History
15971	Mr M J Pye	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
3731	Mr W G Robson	Team inspector	English Post-16 English
31701	Mr G M Rudland	Team inspector	Music
11300	Mr B R Smith	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
31838	Mr M S Williams	Team inspector	Religious education Post-16 religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The Wensleydale School is effective** in most respects. Overall, it meets students' needs well. Students with differing academic potential, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. However, many boys in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve the standards that they should in English, because their attitudes to learning in this subject are not positive enough. Standards are above average in Years 7, 8 and 9, and average in Years 10 and 11. The teaching is good and the large majority of students learn well. The school is well led and managed. An active partnership of the headteacher, his senior colleagues, all staff and governors ensures purposeful direction for the further development of the school. The management of the school is also effective, and ensures good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9, and regularly reach standards that are well above the national average in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests.
- Many boys in Years 10 and 11 lack motivation and are not achieving well enough in English.
- In general, students have good attitudes to their work, and behave well; however, some students, who are mainly boys in Years 9 to 11, lack commitment to their work and distract others if they can.
- Although students usually know the standard at which they are working, they are often not sure how to improve in each subject.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and very good post 16.
- The school is well led and managed, and gives students a good quality of education, including very good opportunities to enrich their learning beyond the well-provided curriculum.
- The accommodation has been greatly improved, but some requires further improvement, especially the indoor accommodation for physical education.
- The school's commitment and contribution to working in partnership with the local community are very good.

Since the last inspection in 1999, the school has continued to improve at a satisfactory rate. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have consistently gained strong results in National Curriculum tests, and results in GCSE examinations have been of, at least, the standard that might reasonably be expected of those involved. The teaching and learning continue to be good, but some students lack motivation to achieve well. Most of the issues from the 1999 inspection show improvement. Monitoring of the quality of education has been more extensive, but the quality of marking of students' work remains inconsistent. The quality of students' experience in music has been transformed for the better. Staff training is now sufficiently provided for, overall. Students with special educational needs have helpful individual education plans to direct the work of teachers on their behalf. Improvements to the accommodation have been impressive, although further improvement is needed. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is now satisfactory.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9; for Year 9, similar schools are those in which students attained similarly at the end of Year 6. 2004 results are not yet validated nationally.*

**Overall, students of differing academic potential and from different social backgrounds achieve well** throughout the school. When students enter the school, their academic standards are broadly typical of those found nationally at the start of Year 7. Both girls and boys make good progress and

achieve well by the end of Year 9. Their results in all three subjects in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were above average. Although not yet validated nationally, results in the tests in 2004 were well in line with the good results of recent years and well above the recent averages for similar schools. In GCSE examinations, average results were attained in 2004, and above average results in the two previous years. The lower result in 2004 was a consequence of there being more boys than girls in the relatively small year group, and some of these boys did not achieve well enough. Girls attained standards above those of all girls nationally, but boys' results were considerably below the national average for boys, especially in English, mathematics and science. Some boys lose motivation towards the end of Year 9, and this adversely affects their results, especially in English. Overall, boys' results in 2004 reduced the five-year trend in GCSE examination results to a level below that of the rising national trend. However, performance was fully in line with that of similar schools, as it was in 2003 and 2002. The challenging targets set by the school are usually reached. Students regularly achieve very well in most design and technology subjects and in religious studies, and their success in these subjects was apparent in the work seen during the inspection. Students were also achieving higher standards in mathematics and science in the work seen, compared with their performance in the 2004 GCSE examinations.

Post-16 students achieve well. They obtain at least the examination results from advanced courses that they should, when their prior attainment in GCSE examinations is taken into account. They gained well above average results from advanced courses in 2002 and 2003. The results of the less capable 2004 year group were still at the national average. Students usually do very well in the popular religious studies course.

**Students' personal development is good.** The large majority has positive attitudes to school and to work, but some students, usually boys in Years 9 to 11, lack commitment to achieve well in some lessons. The vast majority behaves well, and relationships are good. **Students' spiritual, moral and social education is well provided. Their cultural development is satisfactory.**

#### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good.** The **teaching and learning are good** in the main school and very good post 16. The curriculum gives students a good range of learning opportunities, and very good opportunities to enrich their learning outside lessons. Students are well cared for by the school. The guidance they receive to help them to improve their work makes clear to them their standards, but does not give enough advice on how they can improve in each subject. Links with parents and other schools and colleges are well developed; links with the local community are very good.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management are good.** The headteacher has clear vision for the further development of the school and works in close partnership with his senior colleagues, all staff and governors. All share and support the agreed priorities for development well. The statutory requirement to give every student the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day is not met. However, regular assemblies encourage thought and reflection very well. Overall, governance is good.

#### **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and students say that the school gives them a good quality of education. Some parents would like more information on their children's progress, but they get very informative reports. Some parents and students think that the behaviour of some students is not good enough. However, behaviour is generally good, but some students do not appreciate the value of the knowledge that some subjects provide, lose concentration too easily and distract others, in some classes.

#### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that boys in Years 10 and 11 achieve higher standards in English.
- Make sure that all students know what to do to improve their work in each subject.
- Improve the attitudes to learning of those students in Years 9 to 11 who currently lack commitment to their work.
- Improve the accommodation for indoor physical education, and for post-16 students' private study and common room facilities.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Give every student the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day.



## OVERALL EVALUATION

**Post-16 education is effective.** The school gives students a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are very good, and many lessons are very well taught. Consequently, girls and boys from all backgrounds and of different competence achieve well. Students attained well above average standards on advanced courses in 2003; a year group of lower potential gained average standards in 2004. The leadership and management are good, and provide all students with a good quality of education. Since the last inspection in 1999, post-16 provision has improved considerably. More students now opt for post-16 courses in the school, and regularly gain good results. The education provided is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well overall, and very well in religious studies. Results of advanced courses are usually well above the national average.
- Students learn successfully from the very good teaching that they receive.
- The students are very mature and responsible; they enjoy and appreciate their post-16 opportunities.
- The leadership and management of post-16 provision are good.
- Accommodation for private study and common room is unsatisfactory.
- Students have close links with the local community, and some contribute very well to wider links with the international community.

## QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected post-16 are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all post-16 subjects were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is <b>good</b> in <b>English</b> . Students learn and achieve well because of good teaching. A-level results are consistently well above average.
Mathematics	There is <b>good</b> provision in <b>mathematics</b> . Standards are close to typical national expectations for advanced courses. Students achieve well. The very good teaching is matched by students' mature attitudes and they learn very successfully.
Science	In <b>biology</b> , provision is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Standards are currently above average. Students have a mature approach to their studies.
Humanities	Students are <b>very well provided for</b> in <b>religious studies</b> . The teaching, learning and subject leadership are very good. Students achieve well on the compulsory course. Those who take the advanced examination courses achieve very well and standards are well above average.
Health and social care	Provision in <b>health and social care</b> is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well from their low prior attainment levels when they begin the course. The teaching is good and students learn well, partly from taking up the opportunities they are given to extend their learning in the local community.

*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 post-16 college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

**ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Students receive very good personal support and guidance from tutors and teachers on how to improve standards. They are well supported in choosing careers and courses in higher education.

**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT POST-16**

**Post-16 provision is well led and managed.** Teaching and learning are effectively monitored and enable students to achieve well.

**STUDENTS' VIEWS OF POST-16 EDUCATIONAL PROVISION**

Students enjoy being post-16 members of the school, and appreciate the opportunities that it gives them. Some think that the careers advice that they have received has not been helpful enough, but recent changes have made the quality of advice more acceptable.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

*References throughout the report to 'average', 'above average', 'below average' etc. refer to comparisons with national standards. The national comparative results of the 2004 Year 9 National Curriculum tests are not yet available. GCSE and post-16 examinations are not yet nationally validated, but reference to the school's performance is made below, and the unvalidated results are included in the tables.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9; for Year 9, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly in their primary schools at the end of Year 6.*

### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Overall, students of widely differing competence and from all social backgrounds achieve well throughout the main school. Standards are above average by Year 9. However, many boys in Years 10 and 11 are not reaching the standards that they should, especially in English, and standards by Year 11 are currently average, overall. Post-16 students achieve well, and currently reach average standards on advanced courses.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9, and reach well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests.
- Although boys achieve well in English in Years 7 to 9, many do not achieve as well as they should in this subject in Years 10 and 11. Some boys do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages or in music.
- Students achieve particularly well in most design and technology GCSE subjects, and their achievement and standards in religious education throughout the school are impressive.
- Post-16 students regularly achieve well, and reach, at least, the standards that they should in advanced courses.

### **Commentary**

1. When students enter the school, their attainment is broadly typical of that usually found nationally. Their abilities span the full range. Testing that has been recently introduced by the school shows that boys' verbal reasoning is a little less well developed than that of girls, for example, in Year 9. The numbers of students with statements of special need that affect learning are average. There is some evidence to indicate an increase in entry, part-way through the school year, of small numbers of individual students who have behavioural difficulties, and who have been excluded from other schools. Students who are talented are identified as such early on by subject departments.
2. In Years 7, 8 and 9, girls and boys from backgrounds of differing social and economic advantage and of all abilities, including the very few with minority-ethnic backgrounds, achieve well. Their good progress is marked by the above average standards that they reached in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 and previous recent years. Compared with results in similar schools, students reached well above average standards in the national tests. Their results in 2004 were well in line with the results of earlier years. Standards in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science, were of similar quality, and there is little difference in the relative performance of girls and boys in the tests. Boys' performance has improved in recent years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (34.6)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	n/a (37.2)	n/a (35.4)
Science	n/a (35.3)	n/a (33.6)

*There were 76 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003).*

- Students' work seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 was above average in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. Where students have either restricted, or no experience of a subject prior to joining the school - for example, in art, citizenship, modern foreign languages and physical education - their standards are at the generally expected National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 9.
- In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement, overall, is not higher than satisfactory, because in the key subject of English, many boys do not achieve well enough. This is shown by their well below average attainment of GCSE examination grades A\* to C, in marked contrast to their good achievement and above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Nevertheless, students achieve well in most subjects, and in music and religious education, they achieve very well. In geography and modern foreign languages, their achievement is satisfactory.
- Students' overall performance in the 2004 GCSE examinations was in line with the average nationally, both for all schools and for similar schools. Students regularly attain good GCSE examination results in, for example, design and technology and religious education. Overall, girls consistently attain standards above those of all girls nationally, as in 2004. However, boys' standards are well below those of all boys nationally, and far behind those gained by the girls in the school. Past results show this gap in performance between the sexes in several subjects, including in English, mathematics and science.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47 (56)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.3 (36.9)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 98 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003).*

- During the inspection, the standards of students' work seen by inspectors were, overall, at the levels generally expected for this stage in GCSE examination courses. Considerably better standards were observed in mathematics and science, than indicated by the GCSE examination results in these subjects of recent years, particularly in respect of boys' performance. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good, and earlier staffing difficulties have been overcome in this subject. Teaching and learning are also good in science where several very well taught lessons were seen. Students are progressing well in mathematics, and at least satisfactorily in science. In science, a change of syllabus to a modular structure better provides short-term

challenges for boys, and results already known from modular examinations indicate higher standards are being achieved on the GCSE course than in recent years.

7. In English, boys' progress in Years 10 and 11 slows from that made across Years 7 to 9. All students regularly attain a grade in GCSE English examinations, but attainment of the A\* to C grades is well below the average gained by all boys nationally. The reason for boys' underachievement in English in Years 10 and 11 and in GCSE English examinations is that their attitudes to the subject are not positive enough. As yet, the English department has not adapted the curriculum and methods of teaching well enough to ensure that boys remain as committed to the subject as they are, in general, in their earlier years in the school. Nevertheless, teaching and learning are satisfactory in English, and the vast majority of girls benefit well.
8. Some boys do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages and in music, because their attitudes and behaviour are not positive enough. However, weak performance by boys in GCSE examinations in modern foreign languages is mitigated by French and Spanish now becoming optional in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, in music, the boys who are sometimes not committed enough to learning in Year 9 do not continue with the subject in Years 10 and 11. Boys have the good curricular opportunities in Year 10 and 11 to follow studies that they find more relevant to their futures, for example, work-related learning.
9. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been implemented effectively. Before students enter Year 7, they have the opportunity of attending special classes to raise their standards and to extend their worthwhile experience, and most take up this opportunity. In general, students' use of the English language and of literary skills is good throughout the school. Some are skilled users of language, for example in writing in religious education and in other subjects. Their mathematical skills are also good in the main school. Their skills in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory, and have improved since the last inspection. However, students' ICT skills require still further development in art, history, modern foreign languages and mathematics.
10. Students with special educational needs achieve well across the curriculum. In mathematics and ICT, in particular, achievement is aided by expert support from teaching assistants. Students are generally aware of how well they are doing, although targets for improvement are not subject specific enough. Achievement is carefully tracked by teachers, teaching assistants and the co-ordinator for special needs.
11. Arrangements ensure that the most capable and talented students' achievement matches that of others, and they equally achieve well. The school was involved at an early stage in providing for gifted and talented students, with review of practice and adoption of advice given by the local authority - for example, in making best use of summer schools. Students achieve well and the co-ordinator uses set criteria to identify students, together with perspectives given by subject departments. With students carefully identified, the school has put in place a programme of enrichment to help them improve their achievement. The programme is varied and includes students addressing the Secondary Headteachers' Conference, a residential week at Beverley Park, working with an artist in residence, and opportunities for talented students in English to produce a local newspaper.
12. Since the last inspection, students continue to achieve well, overall. Girls well outperform boys in Years 10 and 11 in GCSE examination courses. However, effective measures are improving boys' performance in mathematics and science, where standards are, respectively, above average and improving from current average performance. Nevertheless, boys' under-achievement in the key subject of English in Years 10 and 11 is an issue for development, and prevents standards, overall, from being higher by Year 11.

### **Post-16**

13. When students join Year 12, their attainment on entry to advanced courses is often below that typical of the standards found nationally. Students' previous GCSE examination results are low for

some advanced courses, for example, the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) course in health and social care. However, overall, in Years 12 and 13, students make good progress and achieve well. The results of advanced courses were well above the national average in 2002 and 2003. In 2004, results were average, because the year group involved was of lower academic potential. Small numbers of post-16 students in some courses create greater variation in results than is usual.

### **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	90.0 (92.2)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.4 (38.8)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	248.8 (314.2)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 26 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003).*

14. In the five advanced course subjects reported in full in Part C of this report, students were seen to achieve, at least, well. They achieved very well in the popular religious education courses in Years 12 and 13, both at the advanced standard in religious studies and in the compulsory elements undertaken by all students. Standards in religious education were well above average. In mathematics, standards were close to the national average overall; some of the students have not had the effective grounding in this subject currently enjoyed by students in the main school. In English, standards are in line with the national average, and students achieve well in both years. Standards seen in biology were above average. Standards were below average in health and social care, because students work from a low base of GCSE examination results on entry to Year 12, but they achieve well, especially in Year 13.
15. Since the last inspection in 1999, more students now follow advanced courses. In the last three years, results have been, at least in line, and often much better than those achieved nationally.

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' personal development is good, and well provided for. Attendance is satisfactory, and punctuality is good. Most students have good attitudes to school and behave well, but a minority, mainly boys in Years 9 to 11, does not.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students enjoy the range of activities that the school gives them and readily join in.
- Relationships in the school are good, and students like the friendly atmosphere.
- Some students, mainly boys in Years 9, 10 and 11, lack interest in their work and distract others in lessons if they can.
- There is less unauthorised absence than nationally.
- Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for.
- Post-16 students have a very mature approach to their studies.

### **Commentary**

16. The large majority of students is well motivated and wants to learn. Attitudes are good, and most students show interest in their studies and are attentive in lessons. This is especially true when lessons are lively, full of activity and require concentration and hard work. Relationships in the school are good. Students like the friendly atmosphere and the feeling that they all know each other. This helps them develop confidence, become mature and accept responsibility. These students are also very willing to take part in out-of-class activities, such as sport. The students interviewed praised the range of opportunities available. However, some students, mainly boys in Years 9, 10 and 11, lack interest in class work, and contribute little constructively to some lessons.

Some try to distract the teacher and each other, if they can. This lack of motivation is evident, for example, in English where many boys in Years 10 and 11 are not doing well enough.

17. Behaviour in lessons is also generally good. Most students behave well, but a small but significant minority, often boys, does not. This reflects the indifferent attitudes – and involves the same students – described above. Such behaviour is a problem when teachers cannot manage students effectively or cannot hold their interest. It is more evident in lower sets, although it exists at all levels. The students who do not behave well enough are mainly, but not always, boys. Outside lessons, standards of behaviour remain good, although somewhat lively. There were two permanent exclusions last year (an unusual occurrence in the school) for a serious offence. The level of fixed term exclusions was relatively low. Their number has risen significantly this year. Most exclusions are for behavioural reasons. Students interviewed agreed with the questionnaire’s responses that some bullying does happen. They consider most incidents to be relatively minor, but say that the school handles more serious instances well when they occur.

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	542	23	2
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	1	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

18. Students with special educational needs generally respond very positively to the support they receive in lessons. This was particularly notable in a music lesson, where a skilled teaching assistant helped a student with a number of special needs to persevere and achieve well. Students and teachers enjoy good relationships. For example, a Year 11 student with severe disabilities refers to her assistant as ‘my friend’. Students in groups withdrawn from mainstream lessons and support groups in registration time gain confidence as well as knowledge, and show lots of enthusiasm for the work.

**Attendance**

Attendance in the school is satisfactory, with levels close to the national median. The overall rate of attendance for the 2003-2004 year was 91.6 per cent. This improved to 93.5 per cent in the autumn term of 2004. There is less unauthorised absence than nationally, 0.2 as against 1.1 per cent for the last year. The school works hard to maintain these levels, and has improved procedures for recording and monitoring attendance, and these are effective. Most students arrive by bus, and often have long journeys to school, but punctuality is good, both at the start of the day and to lessons. The rate of attendance is sometimes adversely affected by closures due to weather conditions, as occurred immediately prior to the inspection.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003-2004**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.2	School data	0.2
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

19. Students' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral and social education is provided well. Their cultural development is satisfactory. Students reflect seriously on matters of faith and morality, especially in religious education where many issues are explored in depth. Opportunities are developed where they arise in other subjects, but are unplanned. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirement to give all students the opportunity to have a daily act of collective worship. However, students normally attend at least three assemblies each week. These are of good quality, contain acts of worship and provide a calm and reflective start to the day. Clear codes of behaviour, studies in citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) help students to respect fairness and to show concern for others. This is evident, for example, in their initiatives to raise funds for charities. Students recognise that they have a responsibility to their school and to the wider community.
20. Their cultural development is satisfactory. There are good opportunities in the arts and to experience European-centred culture. The school is conscious of the need to broaden students' cultural experience, because nearly all students in the school are from white-British backgrounds and the opportunities from their daily lives to encounter and experience a wide variety of cultures are limited. However, some valuable perspectives from a variety of cultural experience are gained from the PSHE course, which includes education in anti-racism. Work done as part of the course in citizenship helps students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world's many cultures. Links with Amala, in India, have already broadened students' horizons and links with schools in other countries are planned. In general, students' understanding and respect for the different cultures which make up modern society are typical for their age.
21. Since the last inspection, students' attitudes and behaviour have remained good, overall, but some students, mainly boys, do not have positive enough attitudes to work and to lessons. Students' attendance is more average now, and is regularly adversely affected by closures from bad weather. There is still less unauthorised absence than nationally. Students' spiritual awareness has improved, largely thanks to the positive impact of religious education. However, not all students behave well in all lessons, and some enter the school with particular personal difficulties. Consequently, the previously reported very good moral and social values are, currently, less evident. Students' cultural awareness remains the same.

### **Post-16**

22. Post-16 students' attitudes and behaviour are both very good. Almost without exception, they take a very mature approach to their studies. Students are confident and happy at the school. They are able to work very well together. Relationships are often excellent, and support confident, lively and stimulating discussion in lessons. The students interviewed commented that they felt valued and trusted by their teachers. This sense of trust and the very good relationships show through in the students' willingness to persevere. The vast majority who begin post-16 courses complete them. Students say that they enjoy the greater independence of post-16 work. They also play a part in the main school; for example, they organise the charity week. The school council is run by post-16 students, while others work with younger students on a voluntary basis. Students' attendance is satisfactory, and their punctuality is good.
23. Students show a strong sense of commitment to the school. Their personal development is good and they provide good role models for younger pupils by regularly helping them with their studies. An established link with a school for orphans in India has helped increase students' social and cultural awareness. This has prompted them to engage the whole school and the local community in charitable work.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Students receive a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are good in the main school, and very good in the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory, overall. The curriculum gives students a good range of learning opportunities and very worthwhile opportunities for the enrichment of their



learning. They are well cared for, and the support and guidance that they receive are satisfactory. Good links are maintained with parents and other schools and colleges, and the school works very closely and very well with its local community. The accommodation has greatly improved since the last inspection, but indoor space for physical education and accommodation for post-16 private study and common room are unsatisfactory.

### Teaching and learning

The teaching and learning are good in the main school, and very good for post-16 students.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching in the main school and the very good teaching post-16 enable students of all abilities, irrespective of their social or economic backgrounds, to learn well.
- Some teachers have difficulty in managing some classes effectively enough, when students' attitudes to learning are unsatisfactory.
- Although teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory and students generally know the standards that they are reaching, teachers do not always make clear to them how to improve their work.

### Commentary

24. The teaching in the main school is good and students learn well. A few lessons were of excellent quality. Very few lessons were not at least satisfactory. There was little difference in the quality of teaching between what Years 7, 8 and 9 received and that for Years 10 and 11. In general, the teaching meets the needs of all students well, irrespective of their social, economic or ethnic backgrounds, and they learn successfully from it. The quality of teaching has been very well maintained since the last inspection; there is now more teaching that is at least good, and the quality of post-16 teaching has risen.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (5%)	25 (19%)	68 (52%)	29 (22%)	2 (2%)	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.*

25. The teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well, and use their knowledge to interest the students to ensure good learning. In most lessons, students respond well and want to learn. However, in some lessons, they remain uninterested and uncommitted to the learning intended, however hard the teacher tries to engage them. For example, in a French lesson in Year 9, the uncooperative attitudes of some boys made the quality of their learning unsatisfactory. In some English lessons in Years 10 and 11, some students, particularly boys, lacked interest and commitment. In these situations, teachers' management of students is fully tested and, occasionally, does not prove effective enough to ensure that learning is at least satisfactory.
26. The large majority of lessons are planned well, and students are well challenged to gain knowledge and increase their understanding. The range of methods used by teachers is good, and, for example, ICT was used to good purpose in some subjects, especially in geography lessons. In general, teachers use the time in the one-hour lessons well, but occasionally, too much has to be done in the last few minutes, and some students do not have enough time to record their assigned home-learning fully. The school successfully helps students to learn independently and to use methods of research for themselves. Consequently, they become confident and successful learners. Teachers work well with classroom assistants. The latter are often very effective and some examples of excellent in-class support were seen.
27. Although some very well taught lessons were seen in most subjects, the most impressive teaching was seen in mathematics, music and religious education. The teaching and learning in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 was very good. Very skilful presentations and explanations enabled

students to gain a very clear understanding of the topics taught. The teaching was also very good in music and religious education in Years 10 and 11. In music, teacher and students share very good knowledge of the subject, and methods are very well adapted to the needs of individual learners. In religious education, the teaching rouses much interest among the students and they engage willingly in discussion at a level that deepens their understanding of the subject matter very well.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

#### **Year 11 students made excellent progress in a compulsory religious education lesson, through knowledgeable and very challenging teaching.**

The themes of religion, science and medical ethics were highly challenging for this class of students following the compulsory religious education course. The experience was brought alive to the students because they had to consider real events that directly affected people's lives. Both boys' and girls' interest was engaged by the trauma of an expectant mother and her husband, with a family history of Huntington's Chorea. Students soon found it hard not to identify with the individuals involved. The issue of abortion versus quality of life led to vigorous, but courteous, debate in groups expressing different views. Students responded very well to the teacher's skills in engaging all in consideration of the moral issues involved. They followed the teacher's example and gave good reasons for their viewpoints. All students were involved by the teacher's subtle interventions, which gave everyone the opportunity to share the range of views expressed. The students' maturity was enhanced by a climate of learning where all evidence was to be weighed without prejudice; consequently, some individuals were able to change their views with new conviction, based on reason. The teacher's probing questions took the lesson further, into the morality of research with embryos and of genetic engineering, and then to spiritual questions of the beginning of life and of faith. Students constructively evaluated each other's arguments. The lesson ended with students engaged in deeper personal reflection.

28. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good, and often very good. All lessons are carefully planned and good notes are kept of students' progress. Mainstream lessons benefit from good liaison between teachers and teaching assistants, and work is usually well adapted to meet students' needs. This was particularly noted, for example, in mathematics, art and design and technology. Post-16 student volunteers give good individual support to students with special educational needs in some lessons, for example in ICT. Teaching of the few separate small groups, including additional courses such as the Youth Award (ASDAN) course, is good; students receive constant challenge and expectations are high that they will achieve well.
29. The teaching and learning of talented, higher attaining students are in line with that for all students. The teaching is good, and some is very good. In art, physical education, science, and religious education, for example, work is well adapted for the needs of talented, higher-attaining students. In geography, students in Year 8 were seen to tackle demanding extension work with enthusiasm. In some other subjects, although students are identified as talented, there is, occasionally, not enough additional challenge in some lessons. There is not yet a consistent approach to the teaching of talented students across all subjects. Assessment and targets for improvement in subjects are not clear enough to help some higher attainers to raise their achievement.
30. Teachers use the Key Stage 3 National Strategy well. Lessons are consistently well planned, and work is tackled in a well-ordered sequence in all years. The teaching of numeracy in mathematics lessons is very effective in Years 7, 8 and 9, and students are also well taught to use mathematics in other subjects, for example, in science. Students learn to develop their literacy skills well, and apply these skills well across the curriculum. ICT is well taught, and learning in the lessons especially timetabled for this subject is good. Students apply their ICT skills very well in some other subjects, for example, in geography. Overall, ICT in other subjects is satisfactorily taught and used to enhance learning. However, teachers could extend students' learning with ICT more than they do at present, in, for example, art, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Students interviewed said that they made regular use of ICT in lessons, and often at home.

31. Teachers use assessment satisfactorily to guide their teaching and students' learning. Departments set targets and assess students' performance regularly, with use of National Curriculum levels or GCSE examination grades. Students are usually aware of how well they are doing in different subjects. Assessment is regular and information from testing is used well by teachers to monitor students' progress. Teachers assess students' performance in lessons well to provide appropriate support. Day-to-day marking of students' work is, generally, regular and accurate and provides teachers with understanding of how well students are learning. However, some marking does not give enough guidance to the individual student to make clear how the work might be improved. In some subjects, for example, in music, good use is made of students' self-assessment to increase their awareness of their progress. However, the school's system of mini-targets, stated on the front of students' exercise books, and introduced to inform them how to improve, is ineffective. Teachers do not contribute directly to ensuring that targets are specific enough to each student's performance in each subject. Consequently, students are often unsure of how they can improve their work.

### **Post-16**

32. The quality of teaching and learning post-16 is very good. Many lessons were of very good quality and a few were excellent. Relatively few lessons were not of, at least, good quality. No lesson was unsatisfactorily taught. Five subjects are reported in full in Part C of this report, and two of these were consistently very well taught. The other three were well taught and much very good teaching was seen. The subjects that were sampled were also, at least, well taught, and some outstanding teaching and learning were observed in some of these lessons, for example, in Spanish. Teachers have extensive subject knowledge and use it to enthuse the students in the best lessons. Very good relationships among teachers and students, and students' very mature attitudes to learning, contribute considerably to their good achievement.
33. Post-16 assessment procedures are good. Subject teachers assess students' work regularly and use examination criteria in their assessments. Students are aware of their targets and their current levels of attainment. Regular discussion and guidance from teachers ensure that students understand what they need to do to improve their work. The use of self-assessment, for example in biology, enhances students' independent learning skills, and extends their understanding of what they must do to improve in order to reach higher standards.
34. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning remain good in the main school, and have risen to very good for post-16 students. Students learn increasingly well from the skills that they are taught to enable them to research for themselves and to work independently.

### **The curriculum**

Curricular provision is good, both in the main school and post-16. Students' opportunities to enrich their learning beyond the timetabled curriculum are very good. The school provides a broad, inclusive curriculum in Years 7 to 11. A generous range of post-16 advanced courses is available.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Access to the curriculum is open to all, in all years.
- An extensive range of activities to enrich learning promotes participation in sport, the arts and other interests.
- A very successful alternative programme of work-related learning is available in Years 10 and 11, but there are no vocational courses in these years.
- A generous range of advanced courses is offered but, currently, there are no post-16 intermediate vocational courses.

### **Commentary**

35. There is open access to all areas of the curriculum, which is good for all years. . Statutory requirements are met. The full range of National Curriculum subjects is made available to students in Years 7 to 9. In addition, there is very good provision in religious education, which has a strong spiritual and moral dimension, and in personal, social and health education (PSHE). All students have the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages.
36. In Years 10 and 11, the wide-ranging curriculum gives students good choice of GCSE examination courses, including applied ICT at a local college. Students can choose from four courses in design and technology, and three science subjects can be taken by talented students. The very good provision in PSHE and religious education continues. Clear curricular routes for students aged 14 to 19 have been planned, in connection with local colleges, with which the school has strong links, but currently no vocational courses are provided in Years 10 and 11. A successful alternative programme of extended work experience and work-related learning is available to students who want it; all students in Year 10 benefit from two weeks' work experience. Students are well guided in their educational and career choices at each stage.
37. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been well adapted in some subjects to meet the particular needs of boys. This has proved very effective in science, where a modular GCSE examination course is providing boys with short-term curricular targets, and enhancing their levels of achievement. However, the curriculum in English and in modern foreign languages has not been adapted to the extent necessary to help retain the interest of the minority of boys whose attitudes to learning in these subjects are not good enough.
38. A team of specialists teach the comprehensive and very informative programme of PSHE in Years 7 to 11. All the required elements of sex education and education in drug and alcohol abuse are included, as well as citizenship and careers education and guidance. Citizenship is well provided in the PSHE programme in Years 10 and 11.
39. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good. The identification of students' needs starts in their primary schools, and liaison with the six main primary partner schools is strong. On entry to the school, students' needs are further assessed, and their literacy is supported well enough by the English department in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9, groups of students who would benefit from increased literacy support are withdrawn from mainstream modern foreign languages classes for additional help. Good additional support by withdrawal from mainstream classes is also given to students with emotional and behavioural needs. Teachers receive good information on all students with particular needs on the school's 'Watch Out' register.
40. The curriculum has been modified in some areas to challenge talented and higher attaining students. Some students are able to take GCSE examinations before Year 11. Three GCSE science courses are taken by students talented in these subjects. Similarly, provision for students to study two modern foreign languages is available. Special provision is made in sport for a talented student who represents England at golf. There is also extra provision in the arts to enable talented students to excel. Talented students are identified in all subjects and some opportunities are provided both in lessons and in enrichment activities, as, for example, in music.
41. Opportunities for enrichment of all students' learning beyond the normal timetable are very good. Most subjects offer good support for learning outside lessons. There are numerous educational visits, visiting speakers and residential opportunities. Large numbers of students participate keenly in sport. There are choirs and instrumental groups, theatre visits, concerts and dramatic productions. An unusually extensive, weekly programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum considerably.
42. Since the last inspection, the curriculum continues to give students good learning opportunities. Two key issues have been effectively resolved: provision for students with special educational needs is now good, and the ICT curriculum has considerably improved. However, the statutory requirement for all students to have the opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship is still not met.

43. Teachers' subject specialisms are well matched to the requirements of the curriculum. Staff are well qualified and few teachers teach outside their subject expertise, despite the school's much smaller-than-average size as a secondary school. Recent difficulties in recruitment to this rural school have been resolved. Subject expertise has been strengthened, for example in religious education. Teaching assistants and technicians provide good support, and students have the opportunity of extending their oral skills with the help of a foreign-language assistant. Administrative staff are fulfilling new responsibilities well, following a work-force review. For example, the appointment of a community education manager, an increased number of administrative staff, teaching assistants and technicians are changes that are very helpful to teachers. Support staff enthusiastically accept the new challenges.
44. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some accommodation is very good, for example in science and religious education, as a result of recent major improvements to the building. Design and technology has also benefited from substantial refurbishment in all areas. Students now also enjoy a new ICT facility. However, there remain parts of the accommodation that are unsatisfactory and have a detrimental effect on the quality of learning and achievement. The most unsatisfactory provision is for physical education, which lacks adequate indoor accommodation. Surprisingly enough for this school which is such a focus for its local community, there is no sports hall. The indoor areas used by students for physical education are too small, and prevent usual group activities from taking place. Consequently, some students have to sit out while others take part. The lack of storage space in the hall and gymnasium leaves equipment stored in otherwise usable areas.
45. Resources for learning are satisfactory in the main school. The good resources are used well to support learning in special educational needs, ICT, mathematics, science and music, but resources are unsatisfactory in art and in history where there are not enough text-books for Years 7 to 9. Resources are very good in religious education and in design technology, where a particular strength is the availability of computers. Some of the total stock of computers is ageing, and the number of serviceable machines is average and used well by an increasing number of subjects. Electronic teaching materials are available on the school's intranet for ICT, business studies, English and graphics students. This resource is used well to enable students to learn independently. The recently introduced interactive whiteboards in science and modern foreign languages are used well to support teaching and learning and more whiteboards are about to be installed. Students make good use of the school library where there is a good range of texts as well as newspapers and subject-specific magazines.

### **Post-16**

46. Access to post-16 courses is open to all. Curricular provision is good and requirements are met. Students are well satisfied with the range of advanced courses provided, which is generous for the size of the school, and includes a number of vocational courses at advanced level. However, no vocational courses at intermediate level are currently provided, and consequently a few students embark on courses for which they are not well enough qualified or prepared. Nevertheless, almost all students complete the courses that they start, and gain the qualifications for which they study. All students follow courses in general studies, ICT and PSHE, which has strong ethical and religious elements. There are opportunities to re-sit GCSE examinations. All students in Year 12 benefit from work experience, arranged from the school's extensive portfolio of placements, many of which are outside the immediate locality.
47. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. A range of visits, field trips, outside speakers and conferences enhances students' learning. However, there is no timetabled recreational sport. Opportunities to develop leadership skills are provided, for instance, through the community sports-leader award (CSLA). The school's link with a school in India provides a unique and impressive opportunity for personal development and community service for the students who spend time working there.
48. Staffing is good. Teachers are well qualified in the subjects that they teach and staffing meets all curricular requirements. The school has inadequate accommodation available for post-16 students'

private study. However, students have recently begun to use the Youth Hall and say that they find this satisfactory. Post-16 social areas require major renovation and refurbishment. Students adopt a very mature approach to the situation, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory for students' independent work. Resources for learning are satisfactory, but there are not enough books and other resources in the library to meet students' needs. Students do not currently have a specific ICT resource area where they can access computers for research and presentation of their work. However, this is planned for the near future; meanwhile, students make good use of the school's computer rooms when they are available.

## Care, guidance and support

Students receive good care, welfare, health and safety. The advice, support and guidance that they receive are satisfactory. There are good procedures to involve students in the work and further development of the school. Care, advice, support and guidance for post-16 students are very good; they are well involved in the work of the school.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction for students when they join the school is very effective and helps them settle quickly into secondary school life.
- Students do not always know how to improve in each subject.
- Post-16 students receive very good guidance and support with their studies.

## Commentary

49. The care, welfare, health and safety that students enjoy are good. Members of staff know students well in this relatively small school and close community. There are appropriate child protection procedures in place that are known to the staff. Healthy living is part of the curriculum. Although safety routines are clearly defined, several minor issues were drawn to the school's attention.
50. Overall, the quality of the advice, support and guidance that students receive is no more than satisfactory. Although there are many good features in the academic support given to them too many students are not sure exactly what they have to do to improve their subject work. Members of staff keep detailed records, which enable the personal and academic progress of students to be followed and monitored. All students have twice-yearly interviews with tutors. Students know their National Curriculum levels and predicted GCSE examination grades. Senior staff also interview a sample of students. Selected Year 11 students are supported by mentors, some of whom come from outside the school. However, given the underachievement of some boys in Years 10 and 11, as in English, these procedures could be strengthened. All students are given targets for improvement, which they negotiate with their tutors. The targets seen tend to concentrate on organisation and attitude. The current mini-target system is not helping students sufficiently to understand the precise steps that they must take to improve their work in subjects.
51. In contrast, the quality of personal support is good. The cycle of regular monitoring and review gives students the personal support that they need. There is good careers advice at all stages of their time in the school. Procedures to help new students start their secondary education are particularly good: there is a longer and more detailed programme of induction than is usual. This gives students a good experience of school routines before September, so that they settle in quickly, and are ready to start work with few worries. The activity-centre visit at the start of the autumn term also helps smooth the transition from primary school.
52. Statutory requirements for students with special educational needs, as outlined in statements of special need, are met. All policies are in place and reviews of statements are regular and effective. Support and guidance for students are good; they are given plenty of opportunity to assess their own work and progress, often helped by good use of ICT programs. There is still work to be done in setting suitable targets for students with special educational needs, for example, by widening the scope of assessment in Year 7, and extending the use of Individual Education Plans to those at the School Action stage of the special needs register. The co-ordinator and his team show the energy and expertise to ensure further effective development of the department.
53. Students are relatively well involved in the work and development of the school, especially through the series of questionnaires and surveys that the school conducts, and their individual contributions to records of achievement.
54. Standards of care were also considered to be good in the last inspection. Induction procedures are now better.

## **Post 16**

55. Post 16 students consider that they receive very good advice support and guidance. They feel well prepared before starting their courses and highly praised the Bewerley Park induction. The support and advice that they receive during their courses is regular, detailed and constructive. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Those interviewed praised the amount and the quality of the guidance provided. The very high rate of students completing courses - and doing so successfully - also demonstrates the very good quality of support. The school staff give very good advice on further studies, but until recently, that provided by the Connexions service was not so effective. Post-16 students' involvement in the work of the school is good and they run the school council.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a good partnership with parents who, overall, make a good contribution to the work of the school. Links with the community – especially the immediate community within the Dales – are very strong. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Records of achievement give parents very good information about the progress that their children make.
- Local community links are very good.
- Courses at a local college give students valuable ICT skills.

## **Commentary**

56. The school has good links with parents. They are generally supportive and make a positive impact in helping their children's learning at school and in home-learning activities. They support their children in taking up the extensive extra-curricular opportunities to enrich their learning offered by the school, and they consider that their children are receiving a good education. The general information that the school gives to parents about itself is extensive and of good quality. Information about progress, contained in the records of achievement, is very good. Parents receive a clear picture of how well their children are doing from these records. However, the school has not sufficiently involved the parents of those students, whose attitudes to learning and achievement in some subjects is unsatisfactory, to work in partnership to improve negative attitudes and behaviour.
57. Post-16 reports provide a detailed and sensible review of students' progress under eight headings. Reports of this high quality are rarely seen.
58. Close contact is maintained between staff with responsibility for special educational needs and parents. Ready access to the co-ordinator for special needs and his team is appreciated by parents. There are strong and productive links with a range of outside agencies, and teaching staff are an important part of the consultative process. Parents whose children are identified as gifted or talented are informed of this, and are involved as much as possible.
59. The school has forged a very strong partnership with the local community within the Dales. It sees itself, rightly, as a focal point for many aspects of community life, and it has the confidence of all communities. The school aims to provide opportunities for students, their parents and local residents; in this it is very successful. However, links outside the locality have been slower to develop. The school is keenly aware that such links will benefit students and can be achieved with modern technology, and without undue expense. Projects just starting – such as 'Small is Beautiful' - are intended to fill this gap.



60. Integral to the strong partnership with the community are links with the primary schools in the school's cluster. These links are good and involve much cooperation and sharing of facilities and equipment. More subject links and contribution of expertise by subject specialist teachers would be welcomed by the primary schools. The links with a local college of further education, for example, for GCSE examination course students, are a great asset. Students' opportunities for work-related learning are much enhanced by links with colleges and employers locally.
61. Partnership with parents and the community were judged excellent in the last inspection. Community links remain very strong, and links with parents are good. However, some parents are not involved enough in ensuring that their children's attitudes and behaviour are as positive as they should be.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher, with the leadership group and governors lead the school well. Management is good. Post-16 education is also well led and managed.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has very clear vision, and leads well with strong commitment, enthusiasm and energy to ensure the school's further successful development.
- Key staff make a good contribution to leading and managing the school.
- The governors are very well informed and contribute much support and expertise.
- Although in many respects both leadership and management are very good, the underachievement of some boys in Years 10 and 11, especially in English, is yet to be resolved.

### **Commentary**

62. The leadership, overall, is good. The headteacher is fully committed to the school. He has a clear vision for its further successful development. His enthusiasm and energy are infectious and his senior colleagues and subject leaders share his sense of purpose and commitment to the school. The headteacher has encouraged subject leaders to enhance their skills, and this has enabled them to extend their professional experience very well, and helped some of them to know how to advance the standards and the quality of education in their subject departments. Teamwork among senior staff is very good. They are encouraged to contribute freely to planning and decisions, and there is a positive commitment from all members of the leadership group. All elements of leadership share the strongest commitment to the school's place and importance to the life of local, national and international communities. Links are very strong, locally, and set to expand further.
63. Subject leadership is good, overall. Music and religious education are very well led, and improvement in both subjects since the last inspection has been very good. In music, in particular, the quality of education has been greatly enhanced from when it was made a key issue of the 1999 inspection.
64. Governance is good. The governors contribute well to the leadership of the school. They remain, as stated in the 1999 inspection report, just as highly committed, hard working and very supportive of the school as they were then. They have considerable expertise and now take up training opportunities to enhance their skills. They now show more informed expertise with regard to the curriculum. Since 1999, good practice has been established by governors in sharing decisions on establishing priorities in school development planning and in allocating resources. Management's initiatives are given much closer scrutiny than at the last inspection. However, the means to evaluate success in achieving the worthwhile objectives of the current, detailed school improvement plan are not all readily measurable. The only area where governors do not deploy specific expertise is post-16 provision. Governors' expertise enables them to question and challenge the headteacher and the school's professional leadership well. One statutory omission remains from the last inspection; the school does not give students the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day. More students now attend the school than in 1999, and the only space large enough to assemble the whole school each day has many uses and is not always

available for assemblies. However, the quality of the assemblies that regularly take place is very good.

65. Management is good, overall. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are carried out, but the many duties of members of the leadership group restrict the time that they have available. Nevertheless, the teaching and learning are good in the main school. Performance management is well established and contributes in a positive way to ensuring that students, overall, receive a good quality of education. The school evaluates its performance systematically. For example, managers analyse examination results closely and pass interpretation and evaluation of these to departments for them to use in target-setting and in teaching. Senior managers review performance with each department to discuss findings and the response that departments intend to bring about improvement, where necessary.
66. The collection of information from departments, for the reporting of each student's personal and academic progress, is well planned and effective. Departments have their own methods of tracking and recording students' progress but, as yet, there is no common system for entries to the ICT data-management process which is currently being developed. Information showing students' levels of attainment from entry to the school onwards encompasses a variety of sources to enable managers to set appropriate targets for students to attain. However, the current 'mini-target' system, introduced to inform students of what they need to do to improve, is not effective enough in many subjects. Consequently many students do not understand what they must do to improve their standards of attainment.
67. The process of staff training and development now adequately evaluates the performance of teachers, through regular review. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, but subject leaders of departments in which they are the only teacher have insufficient opportunities for development of their skills within the school. For example, as yet, there are no arrangements for mutual observations of lessons by these subject leaders. Recruitment is difficult, but jobs have been filled. The school is supportive of newly appointed and temporary teachers, who were seen to fulfil their responsibilities well during the inspection. Student teachers in professional training at universities regularly undertake initial training at the school, where they are well supported.
68. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator has not long been in post, but has a clear vision of how the department will develop. With a well trained team and the support of senior management, he is able to ensure correct levels of support. He is also supported by a very knowledgeable and committed governor, who provides extra ideas and augments links to governors and senior management. Records and documentation are well organised, and improvement in this respect – a key issue at the last inspection - has been good. Co-ordination of provision is much better and the register of special educational needs is up-to-date.
69. The management of provision for gifted and talented students is good. The co-ordinator is making good progress in ensuring effective provision for these students, and much is in place. A good development plan identifies ways of further improving provision and includes: a more accurate register of students, regular monitoring of provision and progress, and the enlargement of the enrichment opportunities currently available. Teachers have received training in how to support students, but the co-ordinator recognises that they are not yet supported as effectively as those with special educational needs. However, the vigorous new management and strong commitment from the school indicate further improvement is imminent.
70. The school's leadership and management has strengths. For example, good value is added by Year 11 to the standards that students achieve on entry to the school. However, there are also some unresolved weaknesses in performance. For example, many boys do not achieve well enough in English in Years 10 and 11. The weakness in boys' performance also applies to modern foreign languages, and to music in Year 9, but these subjects are now optional after Year 10, but English is a key qualification for all students.

71. The main reason for some boys' unsatisfactory performance is that their attitudes are not positive enough towards work in some subjects. There is full recognition of this situation by both leaders and managers at all levels and effective action has been taken to deal with the situation. In the last two years, some impetus has been given to subjects where boys have not achieved well enough in the past. For example, Year 11 results from the introduction of a modular GCSE examination course in science show significant improvement in boys' achievement in this subject. In mathematics, new subject leadership and a more stable staff, and good teaching are raising boys' achievement. Current projections of boys' performance in GCSE examinations are, correctly, positive. Although management is proving to be very effective in improving boys' performance in some subjects, in others boys continue to underachieve. In particular, in the key subject of English, boys' very good progress is not sustained in Years 10 and 11, and the school has not yet resolved this difficulty. Consequently, management, although good, is currently no better than this.
72. This relatively small secondary school is well funded to ensure that the curriculum provides a range of opportunities in line with those of larger schools. Management has been active in securing some additional grant to extend students' opportunities. The school uses its funding well. Substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation very recently, after three years of accumulating funds; learning resources have also improved and, for example, the school has recently been able to match the national ratio of students to new computers.
73. Since his appointment three years ago, the headteacher, with the active support of governors, has managed funds very well to make these improvements possible. Further improvement to the accommodation is required, and the school is prudently trying to accumulate funds to make this possible. Much thoughtful planning is also taking place to gain specialist status for the school to enhance funding further, both for the benefit of its own students, but also for its cluster of primary schools.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2 104 519	Balance from previous year	67 117
Total expenditure	2 076 929	Balance carried forward to the next	94 707
Expenditure per student	3 941		

74. In general, best-value principles are well applied. Standards *compare* very well with those in similar schools in Years 7 to 9, and are regularly in line with these in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum gives good *challenge* to students and enrichment opportunities are very good. The school goes to considerable lengths to *consult* with parents, and, for example, commissions its own questionnaires to give parents good opportunity to express their views on impending changes and the quality of education received by their children. *Competition* for the services that the school purchases is very well managed. Overall, students achieve well from the good quality of education that they receive. The school is well led and managed, and the ethos is positive. In most respects, the school is effective and gives good value for money.
75. As at the last inspection, leadership and management are good. Senior managers continue to carry a wide range of responsibilities, but monitoring is more extensive, both by management, and by governors, who, for example, observe lessons and discuss their observations with staff. Management now ensures that training opportunities for staff are satisfactory.

## Post-16

76. Post-16 leadership and management are good. The day-to-day management is very good. The monitoring of students' academic and personal development is effective, and is carried out regularly by tutors, well directed by the assistant headteacher who is the head of post-16 education. An efficient system to monitor teaching and learning is in place, and students' views are sought to extend the other evidence available. Preferred learning styles of students are evolving, and are now part of the monitoring process. Leadership has good vision and recognises, for example, the importance of the further extension of vocational opportunities. However, such expansion is currently restricted by costs.
77. Managers use assessment well. Average GCSE examination scores are used to give a general view of students' potential attainment in post-16 studies. Subject departments use these measures as a guide to set realistic targets for individual students. The use of regular reviews of performance, and the involvement of students reviewing their own progress in subjects are effective in enabling them to understand how well they are doing. In general, procedures equip students and subject staff with current information as part of an assessment system that is helpful in supporting students' progress.
78. The large majority of teachers is qualified in the subjects taught, although the extension of vocational courses has necessitated a small number of teachers teaching beyond their specialisms. For example, teachers of health and social care have yet to receive training in this subject. Teachers are encouraged to attend examination board meetings as part of staff training.
79. Overall, the management of post-16 education ensures that almost all students who begin courses complete them. More students choose to continue their post-16 education in the school than did so at the last inspection in 1999. Some courses involve relatively few students. However, results in most recent years have been well above average, and students achieve well, from the very good teaching and learning that take place. In this rural context, where no other schools giving post-16 opportunities are immediately accessible, management ensures that students get a good and cost-effective education.

## **WORK RELATED LEARNING in YEARS 10 and 11**

Provision in work related learning (WRL) is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Work experience promotes students' personal development very well.
- WRL is well led and managed; the school has strong links with employers and local colleges.
- No vocational courses are currently offered, but some students successfully follow a programme of WRL as an alternative to the regular curriculum.

### **Commentary**

80. All students benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education and guidance to enable them to learn about work. The expertly taught lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) help them to gain a very good understanding of employment and the world of work. This knowledge is complemented, for all students in Year 10, by a fortnight of work experience in their chosen area of interest. Work experience is very well prepared and reviewed, is highly rated by the students, and makes a significant contribution to their personal development, and enables them to learn directly through work. The school has very good links with local employers, and uses these connections well in the interests of its students. For example, an RAF enterprise day promotes key work skills, and a local company runs a day of training for Year 10 students to develop their teambuilding and decision-making skills.
81. There are currently no vocational courses on offer, but a very successful alternative programme of WRL is available in Years 10 and 11. This is the Bridge Project and the Increased Flexibility Project in Years 10 and 11 that run in conjunction with a local college. These initiatives are nationally recognised as good practice in WRL. Several subjects have a distinct practical element.

For example, there is a strong commercial and industrial dimension in the art course. Design technology programmes make frequent reference to industrial practice and carry out simulations of factory production. All students follow a course in ICT, either key skills or applied GCSE; these courses promote independent learning skills and have many practical applications to the world of work. The science course has a well-developed unit on thinking skills. Religious education deals with business ethics and employment law. Mathematics teachers relate the subject to real-life situations: in one lesson, cubic equations were taught by reference to the work of a local box manufacturer. Year 10 students have the opportunity to gain the Junior Sports Leader award, which helps them to develop leadership and organisational skills.

82. Overall, WRL is well led and managed, but some subject departments have not yet begun to plan their contribution to it, and so the cross-curricular aspects of WRL are not yet well enough co-ordinated.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many boys have negative attitudes and do not achieve as well as they should, in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 enables students to gain good results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests.
- Teachers do not set students in Years 10 and 11 clear enough targets for them to know what they should do to improve their work.

#### Commentary

83. Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards in English broadly in line with those usually found on entry to secondary school. In some recent year groups, the school's testing shows that boys' verbal reasoning is a little less well developed than that of girls at this stage. Boys and girls from all social backgrounds achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9. Those with special educational needs make good progress with basic literacy skills. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 were above average, in line with those in mathematics and science, and better than results in similar schools. Results improved further in 2004, and were higher than in 2003. Current standards by Year 9 are above nationally expected levels. Students' reading and writing are better than their speaking and listening skills. Some high-attaining pupils express their ideas articulately in discussion, but most students rarely speak at length. When reading aloud, students lack confidence, especially when reading extracts from Shakespeare, for example, *Macbeth*. However, they have a good knowledge of the plot and make good reference to the text to back up their views about characters. They write effectively in a range of styles and most take care with their handwriting and presentation.
84. In Years 10 and 11, girls' achievement is satisfactory, but many boys develop negative attitudes to the subject. Teachers are unable to interest them in much of the work, with the result that they do not achieve as well as they should. GCSE examination results in English language were below the national average in 2004, and well below results in similar schools. In English literature, results were close to the national average. However, in both subjects, girls did significantly better than boys, less than a third of whom gained grades A\* to C in English language. Current standards are in line with those expected nationally, and girls are again reaching much higher standards. They are much more willing than boys to contribute to discussions. They read *Romeo and Juliet* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* with very good understanding of plot, the relationships between characters and the social and historical context. By comparison, many boys show little interest in the texts, and do not read them closely enough to develop their own views. High-attaining students, including some boys, produce very imaginative, original writing. Girls structure their essays well and write at greater length than boys, many of whom do not write enough to provide a full response to coursework questions. Students with special educational needs generally all make good progress and achieve GCSE examination grades, especially when they receive in-class support.
85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers plan lessons carefully and often use resources well to support students' learning. For example, video extracts and carefully designed computer exercises enable students to develop their understanding of set texts. Teachers manage classes well and work effectively with teaching assistants to support students with special educational needs of social or behavioural type. Teaching is better in Years 7, 8 and 9, because teachers explain objectives more precisely and

identify ways that students can improve from the marking of written work. In Years 10 and 11, teachers do not refer enough to GCSE examination grade criteria in lessons or in marking, and students are not sure what they are trying to achieve. Towards the end of lessons, teachers rarely help students to evaluate what they have done. As a result, less motivated students in these years, the majority of whom are boys, are not challenged to do as well as they should.

86. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Teachers work well together, for example when sharing the teaching of classes or in overcoming recent staffing difficulties. The problem of boys' comparative lack of progress has been identified as a high priority for improvement. In an attempt to motivate boys more, a new GCSE examination course and increased use of computers have been introduced. However, these initiatives, although worthy, do not show the improvement in boys' performance that is intended. Further strategies to improve boys' achievement have not yet been implemented or evaluated.
87. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests have improved; current standards in Year 11 are similar to those previously reported. Teaching remains satisfactory, but targets for students to improve their work are still not clear enough.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

88. Overall, students' standards of literacy are good. Students enter the school with standards that are typical of those found nationally, but improve as they progress through the school. Students cope well with the reading and writing they are asked to do in other subjects. For example, in ICT and art, they read information from the Internet with good understanding and are able to present their findings accurately. In history, they read aloud confidently, but in English some students struggle to read Shakespeare's texts fluently. Most students can write effectively in a range of styles and present their work accurately when teachers insist on this. They use specialist vocabulary accurately, for example, in art, science, ICT and design and technology. Students' speaking and listening skills are satisfactory, but many are reluctant to speak at length.
89. Teachers help students to develop their language and literacy skills well in most subjects. However, apart from in geography, religious education and physical education, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills. In art, students are not asked to talk enough about their work and in science they rarely make oral presentations. All teachers emphasise the importance of key words and specialist vocabulary very well. They encourage students to learn, spell and use them accurately. Support for the development of writing skills is generally good, especially in history and religious education, where teachers help students to structure their writing well. Students are encouraged to read more widely, through regular English lessons in the library and reading time during form registrations.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Girls succeed very well in the GCSE French examination, but some boys do not reach the standards that they should in French and Spanish.
- Teachers are expert linguists, but do not develop students' speaking skills well enough.
- Too many students, especially boys, lose interest in their studies in lessons where some do not behave well enough, and this adversely affects their own and others' learning.

## Commentary

90. Students enter the school with little or no experience of modern foreign languages. All take French in Year 7. By Year 9, they attain standards close to those usually found nationally. However, their speaking skills are not developed well enough, partly because the curriculum does not provide enough lessons for them to progress well. The majority of students, of differing capability, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, but a significant minority of students by Year 9, mainly boys, loses interest in the subject and does not achieve well enough. Almost all students begin to study Spanish in Year 8. Most continue Spanish in Year 9 and achieve satisfactorily.
91. In Years 10 and 11, the study of foreign languages has become optional. Most students choose not to continue their studies of either French or Spanish, and most of those who do pursue a foreign language are girls. Most students' achievement is satisfactory in both languages in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, while girls generally achieve well, some boys lack enthusiasm for their studies and underachieve. Students write more competently than they speak, in both languages. Since the last inspection, there has been a very wide gap between boys' and girls' attainment in GCSE French examinations, greater than the national difference in attainment between the sexes. This indicates underachievement by some boys. In 2004, girls' results were well above average in French and close to average in Spanish. Boys' attainment was well below average in both languages. Currently, in Year 11, standards in Spanish, where students are predominantly girls, are above average. In French, where boys are in the majority, standards are below average.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Teachers explain new material thoroughly, but some lessons lack variety and do not inspire the students. Teachers are expert linguists and help students to understand how languages work. However, they do not use the foreign language enough and too often rely on translation as a teaching strategy. Students do not practise speaking enough and so lack confidence. Teachers do not use ICT systematically to enhance students' learning. However, some Spanish lessons are enlivened well by the skilful use of the interactive whiteboard and teaching materials which are of high quality. A Spanish language assistant provides effective support. At times, teaching has difficulty in managing the poor behaviour of a substantial minority of pupils, and this adversely affects their own and others' learning.
93. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. Assessment is regular and well recorded, but students need clearer guidelines on how to progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been barely satisfactory; standards are similar to those of 1999, but some boys underachieve.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2004, Year 9 National Curriculum test results were above average.
- Teaching is good, overall, and gives students challenging learning opportunities.
- Boys' and girls' very good attitudes to the subject enhance their learning in lessons.
- Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were below those in similar schools.

## Commentary

94. When students enter the school, their attainment is typical of standards nationally, at the start of Year 7. By the end of Year 9, students' standards are above those expected nationally and achievement in lessons is good. Students' work is very well presented and is mathematically rigorous, reflecting their very good attitudes towards the subject. Results were above average in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003, and of a similar standard in 2004. Results were in



line with those in English and science, and well above those for similar schools. These results represented very good achievement. .

95. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average, and this represents good achievement during Years 10 and 11. Students work at a high pace and work is presented with accuracy and mathematical rigour. Their improving maturity and interest in the subject enhance their understanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on calculating lengths of arc and areas of sectors, students' excellent application to their work resulted in excellent learning and understanding of the topic. Boys and girls from different social backgrounds and of differing competence, including those with challenging special educational needs, are achieving equally well.
96. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE examination results were in line with the national average, and an improvement on 2003 results. However, they were well below what had been expected from students' levels of attainment in Year 9. The result was a consequence of severe staffing difficulties, which adversely affected students' progress and the results they gained. Girls' results were much better than those of boys in the 2004 GCSE examination.
97. Teaching and learning are good, and much is very good or excellent, especially in Years 7 to 9. All lessons are challenging and focus on developing students' understanding. Very good lessons support students' differing learning needs extremely well. Teaching of talented students is challenging and stimulating. Support given by teaching assistants is very good and ensures that students from all social backgrounds and of differing potential for the subject are included in learning activities. Very good use is made of computer presentations by teachers to stimulate students' interest. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use computers to enrich their own learning. Where teaching was excellent, the clarity of development of mathematical concepts and the challenging pace of learning were exactly matched to the needs of the class.
98. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has formed a good team of well qualified and experienced teachers. There is a good ethos of care for students and a determination to improve standards. The head of department acts as a positive role model for both teachers and students in improving standards. All these aspects are bringing about improvement in standards, especially in Year 11. Assessment of students' work is good and they understand the levels at which they are working and their target grades. However, the current system of mini-targets does not give students enough information about how they can improve. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the staffing difficulties of recent years have been overcome.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

99. Students' mathematical competence is above average and supports their learning in other subjects well enough. ICT, science and geography departments make good use of students' skills and develop them well. Mathematics is taught well in science lessons and students use graphs and many forms of compound units in their work. In geography, students use angle, scale and present data in a variety of forms. In ICT, students are taught to use a good range of mathematical applications in, for example, graphs, spreadsheets and producing logos. Other subject areas use students' skills satisfactorily. Whole-school training has usefully raised teachers' awareness of the importance of developing students' mathematical skills, and the co-ordinator has recently distributed lists of mathematical terms to all departments.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well, but they are more confident when writing about science than when talking about it.

- The quality of teaching is good overall, but the ends of some lessons are rushed, and some marking does not give students enough help on how to improve.
- The introduction of new courses is motivating boys well in Years 10 and 11.

### **Commentary**

100. When students enter the school in Year 7, their standards in science are a little below those expected at this age. Boys and girls of differing competence and from all social backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 7 to 9, and their standards rise to above average by the end of Year 9. In the 2003 Year 9 National Curriculum tests, results were above the average of all schools, and similar schools, and in line with those gained in English and mathematics. Results in 2004 were of a similar standard (but await national validation). Results in the last three years show an upward trend, and boys' performance has steadily improved, although it is still a little behind that of girls.
101. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, and reach average national standards in GCSE double award science examinations. Students conduct scientific enquiries and write well about these, and their scientific vocabulary is well developed. They use mathematics well to analyse results and solve scientific equations. Standards are improving following a three-year decline. In 2004, students' GCSE examination results at grades A\* to C were below average, because boys' standards were well below those of girls. However, boys are now reaching much higher standards than past results show, and their achievement is good, and in line with that of girls. This is because boys are motivated by the recently introduced GCSE modular double and triple science examination courses, which give short-term targets for them to reach. Their results from assessment of completed modules of work indicate that they are in line to gain better results in the GCSE examination. An increasing number of boys as well as girls in Years 10 and 11 are committed enough to the subject to give up some lunch times to study three GCSE science examination subjects. Year 11 boys respond very well to the very good teaching of this course. Students talented in the subject achieve very well from this course.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Some teaching is very good; no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In Year 11, higher achieving students learn very well how to explain reactivity of elements, because the teacher's infectious enthusiasm motivates them well; they are challenged by the brisk pace of learning and the interesting methods used. In an innovative Year 8 lesson on 'Thinking Skills', students were challenged to discuss proportional change in the forces required to lift different loads in a wheelbarrow. "That was a good lesson", commented one boy voluntarily, as a result of this rewarding experience. Students learn well from the good teaching and because their attitudes and behaviour are good in all years. The ends of many lessons, however, are too rushed to be effective. Teachers assess students' achievements well, but they rarely provide written guidance or subject targets in students' workbooks to help each individual learner achieve better standards. In general, teachers do not call for enough extended spoken responses from students in lessons. Teachers accept too readily that students prefer to write, rather than speak about their work.
103. The department is well led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Boys in Years 10 and 11 are now achieving much better. Very good new laboratories and courses have been provided. Staff are very well supported by the technician. However, the department lacks resources for students to use data-logging equipment enough.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students of all levels of competence learn and achieve well from the good teaching that they receive.
- Target setting with use of National Curriculum levels is not used with students in Years 8 and 9.
- The increase in numbers of computers is having a positive impact on teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum.



## **Commentary**

104. Students enter the school attaining the standards usually expected nationally at the start of Year 7. After one term in Year 7, standards are already well above those usually expected at this age, because assignments introduced by the new head of department have been specifically and successfully designed to enable students to reach the higher National Curriculum levels of attainment levels for ICT. Standards of both boys and girls are above those typical nationally in Years 8 and 9. Open-ended assignments of work and effective support from teachers are used well to raise standards.
105. Standards are above average for boys and girls in Years 10 and 11. All students follow a course of Key Skills in ICT, and most now reach the first level of the course in Year 10, and the second level (equivalent to a higher GCSE examination grade) in Year 11. A small minority of the most capable students work towards level 3 (advanced standard) in Year 11. The 2004 results in the double award GCSE examination course that is taught at a local college were well below average in 2004. However, observation of provision at the college shows that current students are benefiting well from improvements in the way the course is provided, and students are achieving well in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
106. Boys and girls from all backgrounds and of different subject competence are achieving well in all years. Year 7 students make very good progress in building on the skills with which they enter the school. They make presentations of high quality and compose newsletters well. In Years 8 and 9, students broaden their knowledge and skills by using a wide range of software, and by the end of Year 9, they competently prepare a case for and against genetically modified foods from their research on the world-wide web. Students with special educational needs make better progress than might be expected, because of the very good support by teaching assistants, and also by post-16 students who give voluntary in-class support. Most students in Years 10 and 11 are well motivated and work purposefully on assignments that develop and test their capacity to use a wide range of software in realistic contexts.
107. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. They are very good in Year 7, where assignments and targets are used very well to enable all students to improve. However, the target-setting process is not fully developed in Years 8 and 9, and students do not understand well enough how to raise their standards. In all lessons, teachers monitor progress well and provide valuable oral advice and encouragement to help all students to improve their subject skills. In Year 11, teaching encourages students to improve their ICT capability by working independently, applying the skills and knowledge they have gained to coursework and to examination assignments. Most students make good progress when they work independently, because they enjoy the subject. They have positive attitudes and, very largely, behave well. However, in Years 9 and 11, a small minority of girls chatter when working in groups, and this sometimes distracts others.
108. Leadership and management are good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now met. The new and enthusiastic head of department is zealous and energetic, and maintains a strong drive for yet more improvement. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been successfully introduced in Years 7 to 9, and the new Key Skills examination courses are enhancing standards and encouraging learning. Resources for learning are good, and provide good individual access to computers in lessons.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

109. ICT is satisfactorily provided across the curriculum. The subject benefits from the innovative support of the technical team, who install and maintain equipment very cost-effectively both for the school and its cluster of partner-primary schools. Students move to the secondary school with minimum disruption to their ICT skills, and transfer their skills easily, using common software at both their primary and secondary schools. This also transfers easily to their home computers.

110. The school has made a significant investment in computing equipment. However, there are still some ageing and unreliable computers in departments. The number of serviceable computers is average. New cabling is in place in science, religious education and the post-16 vocational room, which are ready for more new computers to be installed.
111. The head of ICT willingly gives valuable support to teachers of other subjects who lack confidence in the use of ICT. However, the use of ICT across the curriculum is not audited or closely co-ordinated. ICT is used well as a source for learning in, for example, English, design and technology and very well in geography, but some subjects do not yet make enough use of it. In ICT, business studies and graphics lessons, all resource items used in lessons are stored on the school intranet and are available on CD-ROM, so that students can continue their work outside lessons, in school or at home. Three recently acquired interactive whiteboards are being used effectively to support teaching and learning in English, modern foreign languages and science.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good.
- ICT is used well in all lessons and in all year groups.
- Students have generally positive attitudes to the subject and get on well with teachers.
- Some teaching is not fully effective in making aims of lessons clear, or in managing students whose attitudes are not always positive enough.

#### **Commentary**

112. Students enter the school attaining the standards generally expected at the start of Year 7. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the national expectation, and represent good achievement by students, of all abilities and social backgrounds.
113. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students use number increasingly well in work that widens their knowledge of geography, and in mapping skills in particular. They make good progress with written work. This is fostered by investigative projects, such as Year 9 students' work on 'Saving Venice'. Hand-written work, however, is often too casually presented. Very good use is made of ICT in all years, and students have good keyboard and research skills.
114. By the end of Year 11, achievement is satisfactory. Geography is a popular subject and take-up for the GCSE examination course is good, but it does not regularly attract the highest attainers from Year 9. Standards in work seen during the inspection are in line with those usually found at this stage in the GCSE examination course, and better than the below average examination results of 2004.
115. In Years 10 and 11 students have the confidence to respond well verbally. In coursework, for example on the urban development of Darlington, students develop the techniques to identify key geographical questions, to gather and analyse evidence, and to reach reasoned conclusions. Boys and girls work equally well in lessons. However, in GCSE examinations, while girls do better than boys overall, more boys than girls reach the highest grades. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils with special educational needs benefit from work that is well adapted to their needs and from good support from teaching assistants. The most competent students are given extension work that most attempt in the lesson.

116. Teaching overall is good, but there is more satisfactory than good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are generally well planned and delivered, although some objectives are not defined carefully enough. Teachers use good subject knowledge, humour and anecdote to convey information. Learning is constantly reinforced through well directed questions and a good range of other techniques - for example, audio-visual aids and computer-aided presentations, which help to raise interest and to keep students focused on their work. Students are well challenged to learn in lessons, and as a result, they participate well. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good but, very occasionally, teaching lacks effective techniques to manage well the behaviour of some individuals, particularly girls.
117. Leadership and management are good. A united and expert team has embarked on an ambitious plan to teach the subject through the use of ICT, and this is having a beneficial impact on boys' achievement and the popularity of geography. However, measurable subject-specific targets for each individual student are not set. All students' benefit from the inclusion of citizenship within the geography curriculum. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieved exceptionally well in the 2004 GCSE examinations.
- Teaching is good and engages students well in their learning.
- Teachers do not make enough reference to lesson objectives.
- Leadership and management are good, although departmental documentation is not fully developed.
- The use of ICT is inconsistent.

### Commentary

118. Students from all social backgrounds and with differing academic potential achieve well throughout the school. They enter Year 7 with standards broadly typical of those found nationally. By the end of Year 9, they regularly reach standards that are above those expected at this age nationally.
119. From Year 7 onwards, students achieve well. The talented and higher attaining boys and girls listen with respect to students with special educational needs who volunteer to read aloud, before contributing well themselves. By Year 9, talented students gain a very good knowledge and understanding of the Amritsar incident. They maturely discuss the reliability of video evidence and challenge the authenticity of historical writers. They concisely record their views in writing. Lower achieving students and those with special educational needs show sympathetic awareness of the situation of those who experienced the horrors of trench warfare in 1916. In general, students have too few opportunities to use ICT in their work.
120. Students continue to achieve well by Year 11, and gain above average GCSE examination results. In 2004, almost half of the girls attained A\* grades in the GCSE examination, and one talented student gained an impressive, maximum, mark for her coursework. Boys' results were in line with the national average. Fewer candidates took the GCSE examination in 2003, but most students attained higher than expected grades and results of both boys and girls were above average. Currently, in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average. Students analyse cartoons and use their knowledge of the period of study effectively to explain clearly social changes in Britain during the First World War. They later go on to judge the effectiveness of the British government's war propaganda very well.
121. The teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11, and sometimes very good. One lesson observed was excellent. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and motivate students well. They plan lessons to make good use of support assistants. Methods are usually well chosen, and probing question-and-answer sessions help students to achieve well. Students behave well and have very positive attitudes in Years 10 and 11. They enjoy working together in small groups.

Relationships among students and teachers are very good. However, one lesson was not taught well enough for students to learn satisfactorily. There is, occasionally, not enough opportunity for discussion. Tasks set for learning at home are not always focused purposefully enough. Teachers regularly mark students' work, but little comment is provided, particularly for lower achievers, on how they can improve.

122. Leadership and management of this small department are good. Since the recent appointment of the head of department, documentation has been reviewed. Much innovation is intended, but new ideas are not yet sufficiently included in departmental planning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE examination target grades for 2005 are realistic and above average for the small group involved, made up largely of boys. More competent students are now challenged to achieve well. Visits to sites of historical interest have been introduced to extend students' worthwhile experience of the subject.

### **Religious education\***

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well by Year 11, both in GCSE examinations, and in statutory religious education.
- Increasing numbers of students opt to take a full GCSE examination course.
- Very good subject leadership ensures very good teaching and learning.

#### **Commentary**

123. Students start Year 7 with standards broadly in line with the expectations of the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. By Year 9, students from all backgrounds and of differing competence achieve well, and reach standards above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Students evaluate evidence very well, rather than merely responding to different views on questions of the meaning and purpose of life. Many students give informed and well argued accounts.
124. By Year 11, standards are well above average, and students achieve very well. In Year 10 and Year 11, all students take at least a short GCSE examination course to fulfil the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Students' success in Years 7 to 9 draws over half of each year group to opt for the full GCSE examination course. In the current Year 10, approaching half the candidates are boys, a much higher proportion than the national average. In 2003 and 2004, all GCSE examination candidates gained grades A\* to C, a very high percentage compared nationally. Current work in both the full and the short GCSE examination courses is well above average and well above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Students are particularly competent in making reasoned judgements about the significance of religious and ethical standpoints as they relate to contemporary issues.
125. Teaching and learning, overall, are very good. At the last inspection some teaching was undertaken by non-specialists, so some students, particularly those with special educational needs, did not do as well as others. There is still some non-specialist teaching, where some lessons are less successful, but on balance, the teaching enables all groups of students, irrespective of sex or competence, to learn very well. Students talented in the subject excel in the many challenging learning activities that require individual thought and reflection. In the vast majority of lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers' high levels of subject knowledge

enable them to match tasks very well to students' needs. Probing questions make students think

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\*Religious education is known as religious studies in this school

hard, apply their learning and justify their conclusions. Discussion and debate also make very good contribution's to the development of students' own values and beliefs.

126. Very good leadership and management ensure a high level of consistency in students' experience of the subject. Assessment is closely matched to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and the GCSE examination syllabus. Outcomes are carefully analysed and clear feedback helps students know how well they are doing and how to do better. Departmental planning is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, because higher standards, and more consistent teaching, learning and assessment have been achieved.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students reach high standards in textiles technology and food technology.
- Achievement is good in all year groups; most students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they share well with students, but marking does not provide enough comment to help students to know how to improve in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The accommodation is very good, but the rules set for students to apply in practical areas are not applied rigorously enough.

#### **Commentary**

127. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the standards usually found nationally. All students – irrespective of their background or competence - make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9. Their standards at this stage are above those expected nationally. Girls attain higher standards than boys, but boys achieve higher standards than other boys nationally. All students develop well their knowledge and understanding of the design process. They appreciate the need for accurate measurement and confidently use both hand and machine-tools with considerable accuracy to make well finished products.
128. Standards are above national expectations in Years 10 and 11, and students continue to achieve well. GCSE examination results are regularly above average overall, and they are high in food technology and textiles technology. Girls gain a greater proportion of grades A\* and A than boys, but boys' performance remains better than that of boys nationally. During Years 10 and 11 students specialise in one of four areas and make products of good quality. Textiles students have very good design-skills, and make items to a very high standard. Students with special educational needs achieve equally with others and, in some instances, perform above expectations because of the very good guidance that they receive.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and some very good teaching was observed. Teachers have very purposeful relationships with students who, on the whole, are highly motivated and respond well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and show an infectious enthusiasm for the subject that communicates well to the students. Classes are well managed. Students receive good oral assessment of their work in lessons. Occasionally, teachers talk too much and students are not involved enough in the learning, and lose attention. The range of methods is, sometimes, too restricted, and questioning is not always directed well enough. In practical lessons, rules of hygiene are not always applied rigorously enough to mirror industrial standards. Assessment of students' work is very good, but marking is not consistent in the quality of developmental comment supplied to ensure that students know what they must do to progress

to a higher level of work; this applies particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. The targets that students set



for themselves are often general and lack a specific subject focus for improvement that has been agreed with the teacher.

130. The quality of management in the two distinct areas of the subject is very good. Leadership is good, but restricted by the clear division of responsibility between compliant (food and textiles) and resistant materials (including graphics) areas. There is a shared vision, but pupils do not fully appreciate design and technology as a single subject area, across which their skills can be transferred and applied. The contribution of the very good technical assistance is often interrupted by first-aid responsibilities outside the department. Very good accommodation and good resources enhance the productive learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The impressive quality of students' subject experience in aspects of the subject has been maintained, despite a number of staffing changes. Standards have improved, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. There have been considerable improvements to the accommodation, and advanced courses have been introduced.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Both boys and girls achieve well, because they follow a well-planned course that ensures that they experience all required elements.
- By Year 11, standards are above national expectations.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- The subject is well led and well managed; there is a clear focus on improving students' quality of education.
- Students do not use ICT well enough to develop and modify their work.

#### **Commentary**

131. Students join the school with standards below those expected, as seen in their earliest Year 7 work. All achieve well, irrespective of backgrounds of relative social advantage or disadvantage, because they follow a well-planned course which enables them to gain basic subject skills. They then develop and apply these well in their art work. Boys achieve as well as girls because work is planned that interests and motivates them. In 2004, teacher-assessments for Year 9 students judged standards to be at the level expected nationally. This was confirmed as accurate by students' work seen during the inspection. By Year 9 students are able to draw well and for differing purposes. Their work reflects their studies of artists' and designers' work. Higher attaining students can use ICT for research and present their results well. However, no students yet use ICT well enough to develop and modify their work.
132. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve well and reach above average standards. There are opportunities for them to pursue their own ideas and interests through their work. Students produce final pieces in both two and three-dimensions. Most students use ICT for research and some make simple modifications of images, but none use ICT extensively enough. They compose strong, materials-based studies – as in the creative use of waste materials - but they are less able to explore ideas, issues and concepts. Numbers of students entering for GCSE examinations have been small, making national comparisons unreliable, but standards have been above average for the last three years; many candidates have gained the top two grades.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Work is very well planned to engage students' interest, including that of boys. Students benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge; their work is regularly marked and constructive advice is given. Teachers use demonstration well, and show examples of their own work to set high expectations. However,

students are not given enough opportunities to talk about their work and that of artists. In all years, students with special educational needs and the most talented students both achieve well, because teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses, and plan and adapt work to be well matched to students' needs.

134. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear vision for its further development. Much has been done to improve the learning environment. However, the level of funding is low and restricts the range and quality of materials available. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with good progress on most issues and good standards maintained.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership has ensured very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall, because of very good teaching.
- Some boys in Year 9 underachieve, because they have unsatisfactory attitudes to the subject.
- Opportunities to make music outside the classroom are of very good quality.

### **Commentary**

135. Students join the school in Year 7 attaining standards generally typical of those found nationally. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement, overall, by students from backgrounds of differing social advantage. However, girls reach significantly higher standards than boys. Students learn about musical techniques and styles which they apply when composing. Their performing skills are less well developed.
136. Few candidates for GCSE examinations make national comparisons unreliable. Overall, students achieve very well. The current small and talented Year 11 group of students is attaining very high standards. Their achievement is excellent. They critically analyse the music they hear, and understand complex features of it. Most compose stylishly, and perform at a very high level. In Year 10, students are attaining below average standards for the GCSE examination course, but their achievement is good, given their standards at the start of the year.
137. The overall quality of teaching is good, and there is very good and, occasionally, excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11. All teaching is securely based on strong subject knowledge. New teaching methods have been successfully introduced. Good learning takes place when short, interesting activities support the musical understanding of all students. However, learning overall in Years 7 to 9 is only satisfactory, because some boys have negative attitudes to the subject. They lose interest when tasks require sustained concentration. Restricted availability of resources makes for difficulties in planning activities that will motivate them. Tasks for learning at home are not set regularly in Years 7, 8 and 9 and, therefore, opportunities to extend and consolidate learning in school are missed. Students with special educational needs are given focused help and achieve as well as others. In Years 10 and 11, where small groups are given structured support and feedback on their work, learning is very good.
138. Very good leadership is committed and competent and, as a result, standards are now higher than at the last inspection. Good management has ensured that new strategies have been developed carefully. Very good processes are in place for assessing students' work and gathering information about their achievements. The good accommodation is used well by students to practise instruments at breaks and lunchtimes. The department lacks pitched percussion instruments and computers, and this adversely affects motivation and learning.

139. Average numbers of students take instrumental tuition, and many learn outside school. There is equal opportunity for students to learn an instrument, but access is not fully inclusive, because instrumental tuition in more popular styles is restricted. Extra-curricular groups perform to high standards because they are taught very well. There are regular opportunities to perform in school and in the community.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement results from consistently good teaching.
- Indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory and adversely affects the work in lessons.
- Students respond very well to the good extra-curricular provision.
- The students' knowledge of their standards of work, and how to improve require further development.
- Good leadership and management help to maintain good standards.

### **Commentary**

140. Students enter the school in Year 7 with attainment in the subject below the level expected nationally. Year 9 students reach standards in line with national expectations. Consequently, regardless of gender and background, and including those with special educational needs, all students achieve well by the end of Year 9. Although their skills develop well, students' evaluative skills and awareness of space are less secure.
141. By Year 11, standards of students following the compulsory, non-examination course in physical education match national expectations, and they achieve well. By the end of Year 11, boys and girls from all social backgrounds achieve well and generally perform better in physical education than in most of their other subjects. Students use their skills well in football, and they are able to apply theoretical knowledge to the development of good practical personal-fitness plans. Students taking the GCSE examination course consistently gain above average results and achieve well. However, some find difficulty in recalling some details of theory.
142. Teaching and learning are good overall, and one outstanding lesson was seen. Teachers plan lessons well and give students challenging drills to follow, but opportunities are missed to promote students' self-evaluation of their performances. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to adapt methods, for example, their styles of questioning, to meet the range of students' needs. However, in theoretical work, some students are passive learners. Non-participants are not always involved and challenged enough in lessons. The best teaching seen involved an active, innovative approach to the application of theory to practice, and led to students' outstanding learning and achievement. Teachers mark work regularly, but feedback to GCSE examination course students is inconsistent. Students enjoy physical education, and participate well in clubs and competitive sporting fixtures.
143. Good leadership and management ensure that students of different competences achieve well. Talented students receive planned opportunities to enable them to reach their potential in a wide range of games and sports and, consequently, some gain county and national recognition. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Central assessment records are now in place, extra-curricular activities have developed well, and advanced course examinations have been introduced post-16. Medium-term planning has been reviewed, although guidance for staff about expected levels of work is not fully in place. New assessment procedures benefit from students' self-evaluation, but their knowledge of what expected levels of work are, and how they can improve to reach these levels, require further development.

144. Indoor accommodation remains unsatisfactory and adversely affects the delivery of what, otherwise, is a good curriculum. In lessons, there is not enough room in both the hall and the gymnasium for all students to participate fully in indoor games. Storage arrangements for large equipment are unsatisfactory and hinder the use of some indoor space.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

145. One Year 11 **business studies** lesson was sampled. Students were completing coursework on the analysis of questionnaires for the GCSE examination, with the help of a temporary teacher. They learned successfully, although some boys lost concentration in the latter stages of the lesson. There have been staffing difficulties in this subject. In the 2004 GCSE examination, all candidates gained a grade, but a below average percentage gained grades A\* to C.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

146. The focus was on citizenship. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), Year 10 work-related learning, and the Youth Award Scheme were sampled.
147. Apart from the **PSHE** lessons seen in which the subject matter was citizenship, three lessons were observed, two in Year 11 and one in Year 9; all lessons were taught by members of the specialist PSHE team of teachers. The Year 9 lesson was well taught, and the students responded very well to interactive work on option choices and careers. The teaching and learning in the two Year 11 lessons were very good. One on financial planning enabled the students to gain understanding of practical, personal management of money. The teaching in the other, on the topic of emotional intelligence, enabled students to achieve a very good understanding of the differences between people, including emotional and personality differences between the sexes.
148. One well taught Year 10 lesson in **work-related learning** was seen, in which students were purposefully prepared for an imminent visit to extend their experience of work, prior to extended work experience in occupations of their own choosing.
149. A Year 10 lesson was seen, involving six students following elements of the Youth Award (ASDAN) bronze programme. The teaching and learning were good and the students responded well. The potentially disruptive behaviour of a few boys was very well managed.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE examination students attain well above average standards.
- Monitoring of citizenship as part of the whole-school curriculum requires further development.
- Targets set for students to improve their work are not specific enough to the subject to be useful.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to students' inter-cultural experience.

### **Commentary**

150. Boys and girls, including all with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily by Year 9, and well by the end of Year 11. Students' standards of work meet national expectations in Years 7, 8 and 9, but their standards are above those typical nationally by Year 11. Results in the GCSE examination course in 2004 were well above average, and all are now following either a full or short examination course in the subject.
151. Year 9 students satisfactorily develop their knowledge of political terminology, and by Year 11 they gain a mature understanding of how laws are made. Students consider the role of the monarchy, and their oral contributions reflect the valuable, frequent opportunities for discussion in lessons. In written work, younger students are not required to do enough extended writing on challenging

topics, with emphasis on justifying their views. In some cases, the opportunities taken for formal debate through which to exchange views are not fully exploited and students do not fully develop the oral skills intended.

152. Students participate in elections for the school council and take part willingly in charity fund-raising. As part of the "Small is Beautiful" project, Year 10 students are extending their participation in the school community, by designing newsletters. These will be circulated to other schools across the world, which are also members of the project.
153. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are carefully planned and follow well defined learning objectives. Some good lessons enable students to consolidate their learning well. Relationships in lessons are positive, and students are confident and willing to answer questions and give their views. Teachers give very good feedback on how to improve their work to students in Years 10 and 11, but this is less consistently the case in the lower years. New self-evaluation methods for students have been introduced, but students do not understand well enough how to improve their work; the targets for improvement for students in Years 7 to 9 are not subject-specific enough to achieve their purpose.
154. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. Medium-term planning has been reviewed, but further development is required to ensure progression, and the consistent use of ICT. The occasional 'Focus Days' are effective in advancing some curricular aspects, such as global awareness. The curriculum has been analysed to identify where citizenship is supported by other subjects. In geography and religious education, the support is good. However, as yet there is not enough monitoring of the quality of cross-curricular contributions, or of the extent of the development of pupils' active participation in citizenship, both in and out of school. Nevertheless, the subject gives students valuable opportunities to enlarge their awareness and understanding of the many cultures in the world in which they live.

## SIXTH FORM SUBJECTS AND COURSES

In the inspection, five 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. (Results are published, but not yet validated nationally.)

### ***Level 3 GCE AS level courses (for Year 13 students who completed A-level courses in 2004, and who did not claim their point-score results in the AS-level subjects listed below at the end of Year 12 courses, in 2003)***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	2	100	78	0	22	25.0	28.5
Biology	2	100	63	0	10	25.0	19.8
Business Studies	2	50	75	0	15	15.0	25.7
Chemistry	2	100	70	0	13	23.0	20.0
English/English Language	1	100	85	0	16	30.0	29.0
General Studies	3	33	74	0	17	6.7	25.5
Geography	1	0	75	0	20	0.0	27.0
Mathematics	1	100	60	0	14	20.0	20.5
Other Social Studies	4	25	68	0	15	5.0	23.2
Religious Studies	1	100	82	0	26	20.0	31.2
Spanish	1	100	77	0	17	30.0	26.5

### ***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	2	100	98	100	50	120.0	87.1
Biology	3	100	97	0	40	66.7	79.3
Business Studies	2	50	99	0	39	40.0	81.8
Chemistry	4	100	98	50	50	75.0	85.7
English/English Language	10	100	99	60	36	92.0	81.1
French	1	100	99	0	53	80.0	88.9
General Studies	22	86	95	9	30	54.5	72.9
Geography	6	100	99	0	46	50.0	85.2
History	6	83	99	0	46	46.7	85.1
Mathematics	4	100	97	50	57	95.0	89.5
Other Social Studies	4	75	97	0	42	35.0	81.6
Physics	3	100	97	33	45	93.3	82.6
Religious studies	7	100	99	86	50	108.6	87.4
Spanish	2	100	98	100	53	110.0	88.7
Sports/PE Studies	7	100	98	43	31	88.6	75.4

Health & Social Care	2	100	93	0	25	80.0	70.0
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## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English. **French** and **Spanish** were sampled. One Year 12 Spanish lesson was seen, in which the students learned outstandingly well and reached very high standards from excellent teaching and impressive in-class support. The high level of challenge given by authentic video recordings and ensuing discussion led to very high achievement in all skills. In a Year 12 French lesson, teaching and learning were satisfactory; the students' standards were above those expected nationally, although they were not always encouraged enough to express their ideas in spoken French in this lesson.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to learn and achieve well.
- Results in A-level examinations are consistently well above average.
- Students have positive attitudes, but do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning.

### Commentary

155. A-level examination results in the joint English language and literature course in 2004 were well above average. They have been consistently at this level in recent years.
156. Current standards in Year 13 are not as high. However, they are in line with those expected nationally; boys and girls from all backgrounds are achieving well, given the standards they reached in GCSE examinations before they started advanced courses. Students are developing good research skills that help them to transform texts effectively into different styles, for different purposes and audiences. They have a good understanding of specialist terminology and of frameworks for the analysis of texts and discourse. High-attaining students use these well to analyse their own writing, but others lack confidence when commenting on writers' use of language.
157. Year 12 students are also building well on their previous GCSE examination work, and current standards are typical of those found nationally. Students contribute willingly and confidently to discussion, in both whole-class and small-group contexts. They are developing a good understanding of the structure and key features of language in monologues such as Alan Bennett's *A Cream Cracker under the Settee* and Liz Lochhead's *Sharon: Incest*. Students' files show that they take pride in their work, are keen to extend their knowledge, and are developing very good note-taking skills.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' secure knowledge of their subject enables them to ask pointed, challenging questions to develop students' analytical skills well. The teachers plan lessons well, and make good reference to assessment objectives so that students are aware of what they need to achieve. The marking is helpful and supportive, and gives students good advice about how to improve. Teachers make good use of individual tutorials to give more specific advice about students' individual projects. However, some students do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning, and attend these tutorials without having previously submitted their work for the teacher's evaluation. This restricts the quality of the advice that teachers can provide.
159. Leadership and management of the course are good. Teachers work closely together so that students experience a good, coherent course. The change of course, from English literature to a joint language-and-literature course, has been introduced successfully, and attracts more boys than at the time of the last inspection. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Teaching remains good, and A-level examination results have improved considerably in recent years.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

160. Students' standards of language and literacy are good, and enable them to make good progress in the post-16 subjects of their choice. Most discuss and debate very well, although a few students on vocational courses lack the confidence to speak fluently in class. Students' reading skills are more than adequate for them to understand texts in different subjects. Their written work is of a good standard and their well organised files show good note-taking skills. When necessary, teachers provide good support and guidance to ensure that students structure essays well.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Every candidate has passed the A-level examination in recent years, and those who start the course almost invariably complete it.
- Imaginative teaching maintains the interest and participation of students.
- Students have very mature attitudes which support their independent learning well.
- In Year 12, standards are below the usual national expectations for the AS-level course.

### **Commentary**

161. Results at A-level have varied in quality since 2002, but all students have passed the examination. However, the numbers recruited to study the post-16 subject have been low, and the few candidates taking examinations make national comparisons of the quality of performance insecure. However, in 2004, the four candidates gained A-level results in line with the national average. Almost all students who study the subject in Year 12 gain results in the AS-level examination sufficient to enable them to continue to A-level in Year 13; students generally achieve well.
162. Currently, the standards that Year 12 students are attaining are below those expected nationally. However, students achieve well because they enter the course with GCSE examination results below those usually found nationally at the beginning of advanced courses. Some students are hindered by a legacy of weak numerical skills arising from staffing difficulties encountered in their pre-16 years in the school. Year 13 standards are in line with national expectations for A-level courses, and students are making very good progress and achieving well in lessons. Both boys and girls from all social backgrounds are confident, independent learners with mature attitudes to their work and achieve equally well, overall. Students' very positive attitudes sustain their focus on learning. Their work reflects this, and it is mathematically rigorous and confidently presented.
163. Year 12 students who repeat the GCSE examination course make good progress in improving their understanding of mathematics and mostly gain higher grades in the examination. They respond well to imaginative teaching which sustains their interest and participation in lessons.
164. Overall, the teaching and learning are very good. Well structured lessons provide clear development of new ideas and methods. Imaginative methods of teaching engage students very well and develop their interest in mathematics so that they learn very successfully. In the few lessons where teaching is no more than satisfactory, it still provides solid foundations for further progress. All lessons have pace and challenge, and develop students' thinking and analytical skills well. Teachers know their students very well and very positive relationships among students and teachers enhance learning very well.
165. The new leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has formed a strong team of teachers and is a very good role model for both students and teachers. After a period of difficulty for the subject, better practice is enabling students to achieve well. The teachers are well qualified to deliver the requirements of the course. Assessment is regular, detailed and



accurate, and there is every opportunity for students to seek support whenever they need it. The good standards and teaching reported six years ago are once again evident. Consequently, improvement since 1999 has been satisfactory overall.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

166. Overall, students' mathematical skills are at the standard expected for post-16 work, and they are sufficient to support learning in most subjects. In physics lessons, students use formulae well when studying frequency and, in chemistry, they are able to plot accurate graphs of temperatures during chemical reactions. However, in product design lessons, students were seen to struggle with calculations of 'cost-per-unit output', when studying methods of production. There are opportunities for re-taking the GCSE mathematics examination to improve grades and mathematical competence. The learning seen on this course was good and students of below-average competence in mathematics made good progress with numerical work.

### **SCIENCE**

167. The focus was on biology. Lessons were sampled in chemistry and physics. Two **physics** lessons were seen in which the teaching was enthusiastic and well informed, and motivated the students well. The use of computer-software models with which to demonstrate scientific principles were very effective. As a result, Year 12 students achieved a good understanding of phasors and waves, and Year 13 students well understood the movement of particles in a magnetic field. In both lessons, standards were in line with those generally found nationally.
168. Two **chemistry** lessons were seen in which teaching showed good subject competence, very good preparation of resources, and very good assessment procedures, and enabled students to improve their skills of enquiry, analysis and evaluation. For example, Year 12 students investigated unknown acids, and Year 13 students explored the decomposition of sodium hydrogen carbonate successfully. The standards of work in both lessons were above those usually found nationally.

### **BIOLOGY**

Provision in biology is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students approach their work with maturity, and both year groups achieve well.
- The quality of marking and guidance on how to improve is very good.
- Once students have resolved to follow the course in the first few weeks of the school year, very few discontinue their studies.

#### **Commentary**

169. Achievement in both Years 12 and 13 courses is good. The standards in both AS and A-level courses have improved and are, currently, above average. In 2003, A-level results were below average. In 2004, three candidates entered for the A-level examination; all passed, but none at grades A or B. However, students achieved well, given their GCSE examination results at the start of their post-16 studies.
170. Currently, boys and girls from all backgrounds are achieving equally well, several having started the Year 12 AS-level course with only modest GCSE examination results in science. Most students complete their courses successfully, although some did discontinue their course this year after a month. The remaining students have adopted a very mature approach to their studies.

171. The quality of the specialist biology teaching is consistently good. Year 13 students, for example, learn especially well how to improve the quality of their essays, on cellular respiration and adaptation, because the guidance that they receive is very good. However, the small size of classes restricts the opportunity for students to learn more through discussion.
172. Leadership and management are good, the result of an effective working partnership between the head of science and the co-ordinator of post-16 biology. However, there are no plans in place, either to counter the fall-out rate this year in the first month of the Year 12 course, or to structure students' private-study time so as to compensate for the relatively limited allocation of teaching time for this subject, especially for its practical requirements. No judgement on improvement since the last inspection is possible, because biology was not reported at that time.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

173. Students enter the sixth form with sufficient competence in the use of ICT to enable them to use it effectively in subject work when required. However, in general, post-16 students do not have enough access to ICT for research or presentation of their work – a view endorsed by students, themselves, during the inspection. For example, health and social care students are allowed to borrow laptop-computers, but as this equipment is often not available, students feel some frustration. Some students have the skills and confidence in ICT to volunteer to support younger students during ICT lessons. This very worthwhile activity enables the post-16 students to reinforce their own skills, and helps younger pupils to achieve better in ICT. The school recognises the need to extend access to ICT for post-16 students. There is a designated post-16 room which is now networked and ready for computers, but these have not yet been installed.

## HUMANITIES

174. The focus was on religious studies. Geography and history were sampled. In two **geography** lessons seen, the teaching was good and very good. Standards were below expectations for the A-level course in Year 13, and close to national expectations in the Year 12 AS-level course. Students achieved well in Year 13 lesson, and very well in the Year 12 lesson.
175. In **history**, two lessons were sampled. Year 12 AS-level students compared the views of historical writers to explain why Parliament was successful in England's first Civil War, and reached the standards generally expected for the course. The teaching and learning were very good in a Year 13 higher attaining A-level class, where the students used ICT well to evaluate changes in Civil Rights affecting African Americans.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education\* is **very good**.

*\*Religious education is known as religious studies in this school.*

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students reach above typical national standards in the compulsory, statutory course taken by all students. Those who take advanced examination courses reach standards well above the national average.
- Very good teaching, learning and subject leadership have made religious studies the most popular examination subject.

### Commentary

176. The school gives students their statutory entitlement to religious education through a combination of modules in general studies, the enrichment of accredited subjects, and a series of day conferences covering such themes as medical and business ethics. Students' performance is properly assessed. Their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject are above those

typically seen in post-16 compulsory courses in religious education. Students reflect deeply on ethical standpoints, and apply these carefully to real-life case studies. They express themselves well in appropriate language. Students achieve well, from their typical levels of attainment on entry to post-16 education.

177. In the A-level examination courses in religious studies in 2004, results were well above the national average, and a large majority of the candidates attained grades A or B. This represents very good achievement for all these students, because many students began post-16 studies with modest GCSE examination results. Current standards of both boys and girls match these results. Students have a comprehensive knowledge of the topics studied, and demonstrate independent thought as they make pertinent connections. Almost all Year 12 students who take the AS-level course choose to continue their studies of the subject to A-level. There is little difference in the maturity of approach to learning of Year 13 and Year 12 students; the latter increasingly make full and purposeful use of a wide range of evidence to support their arguments.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In regular discussions and debates, the brisk interaction between students and teachers and among the students themselves brings a sharp and practical focus to deep questions of morality and ethics. Different perspectives are aired, questioned, refuted and defended with courtesy and clarity. Examples of very well constructed written work also testify to the emphasis given to the important skills of independent research, analysis and accurate expression. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject, and all complete their courses. The proportion of male students is rising. The popularity of the course owes much to the stimulation of challenging, specialist teaching.
179. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, because the quality of education that students receive matches their needs very well. The blend of historical and contemporary issues that are studied is very well-balanced, appeals strongly to the students, and enables them to achieve very well. Since the last inspection, the rise in standards and achievement from the broadly average to the present much higher levels makes the rate of improvement very good. The subject now has the largest take-up of all the post-16 advanced courses in the school.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

180. **Design and technology** was sampled. A Year 12 lesson in product design was observed, in which the students' standards were in line with national expectations for the AS-level course. Good teaching enabled the students to achieve well and develop their understanding of production processes.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

181. Art and music were sampled. In **art**, a Year 12 and a Year 13 lesson were seen. The standard of work in Year 12 was at the expected level and in Year 13 it was above. Students achieved well and the teaching and learning were good. Students particularly value the quality of support from teachers and the regular tutorials where their progress is closely monitored. In **music**, Year 12 students were seen to be attaining standards on the AS-level course in line with expectations nationally. They benefit from very good teaching and are achieving very well as a result.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

182. Leisure and recreation and physical education were sampled. One Year 13 lesson in **leisure and recreation** about officiating in sport was seen. Very good teaching and learning put students' studies into a topical and relevant context. This helped bring issues of discipline, health, and safety into sharp relief, and led to very good achievement and above average standards.
183. In **physical education**, two lessons were observed. Students in both Years 12 and 13 achieved well and the standards seen were above those expected for the advanced courses. A-level results are often above the national average. The mature attitudes of students is well demonstrated when they help to coach younger students as part of their community sports leaders' award (CSLA)

course. However, there is no recreational physical education available for post-16 students, partly because of the demand from the main school for use of the available indoor accommodation for physical education.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve better than might reasonably be expected from their GCSE examination results, because of very good support for their learning.
- Students have very good opportunities to practise their skills in the community.
- Teachers lack enough opportunity to extend their own vocational knowledge through training and professional development in the subject.
- Students do not have enough access to ICT.

### **Commentary**

184. Students start the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) course with well below average results in GCSE examinations. The standards seen in both years were below those usually expected for the course. Students find some parts of the course very challenging, and they lack confidence in answering theoretical questions. Results of examinations are not as high as those from the coursework units, where there is a more practical focus to the work. Students can use different research methods to survey young peoples' knowledge of health-related issues. They then analyse their findings well, but most students have difficulty in producing the reasoned explanations needed to reach higher grades.
185. Given their prior attainment before starting the course, students achieve well. They make good progress in their work in portfolios, because they are well motivated and benefit from the very good individual support and guidance that they receive from teachers through regular one-to-one tutorials.
186. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods that actively involve students in their learning, and use real-life contexts which help to build students' self-confidence and knowledge. Teachers are non-specialists and use their knowledge and personal experience well in teaching communication skills and some aspects of physical health. However, they have not had the opportunity to develop their own wider vocational knowledge, as required by some units. Students' learning benefits from very good opportunities to practise and to improve their understanding through visits to different settings of health and of care. They receive helpful talks from experienced professional health and social care workers, and the well planned programme of work experience in Years 12 and 13 enables them to learn well in relevant work situations. Most students want to follow careers in different contexts of care; they are interested and enjoy most aspects of the course and, as a result, they work hard to improve their standards.
187. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is committed to improvement, and has conducted a thorough review and analysis of work in progress. Leadership responds to, and acts upon, students' views. There are good opportunities for students to complement their learning through courses in first aid, food hygiene and health and safety at work. However, students do not have enough regular access to computers during the school day for research and presentation of their work. There is no intermediate-level course to meet the needs of low attainers, for whom the advanced course is unsuitable. The absence of a health and social care course in Years 10 and 11 is unhelpful to students' progression in the subject. This subject was not reported in 1999; consequently, no judgement on improvement is possible.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

188. Students follow a general studies course in Year 12, and some continue to do so in Year 13. A programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is also taught in both years. A Year 12 **general studies** lesson was observed, in which students engaged in very lively debate. Excellent teaching enabled them to achieve extremely well by reflecting deeply on different forms of knowledge. In a Year 13 **PSHCE** lesson seen, very good teaching was based on excellent relationships between teacher and students. A variety of motivating activities enabled students to develop their awareness of interview techniques, and to apply them to their own situation.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Post- 16 grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	3	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
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	3	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3

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