

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS ALLEYNE'S HIGH SCHOOL

Uttoxeter, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124430

Headteacher: Mr P. Mitchell

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th January 2005

Inspection number: 268992

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Year 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred from their middle schools **after** Year 8. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 9 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 13 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1351

School address: Dove Bank
Uttoxeter
Staffordshire

Postcode: ST14 8DU

Telephone number: 01889 561820

Fax number: 01889 561855

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of Mr J. Kenny
governors:

Date of previous 15th March 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Thomas Alleyne's High School is larger than the average comprehensive school, with a much larger than average sixth form. The great majority of students are white British, with only a very small number from any other backgrounds; all students are fluent in English.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are average overall, although above average in mathematics and science. A high proportion of students stays on to the sixth form, where standards on entry are average compared with sixth forms nationally. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, while the proportion with a statement is well above average. Most students are on the register because they have moderate or specific learning difficulties, or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. There are now many more students with special educational needs at the school than there were at the time of the previous inspection, and a much higher proportion with statements.

Students come from a very wide area; socio-economic circumstances are above average. The school is a specialist technology college and is part of the 'Leading Edge' initiative aimed at spreading best practice across schools. Unusually, the school has its own farm and is a registered breeder of Tamworth pigs. The school has received many awards for its

work, including achievement awards, Artsmark, Sportsmark, Investors in People, and work on basic skills, dyslexia and environmental awareness. In 2004 the school received a government Charter Mark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Design and technology
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
30973	M. Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography; Business education in the sixth form
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Business education; Health and social care in the sixth form
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Performing arts in the sixth form.
17278	B. Abrams	Team inspector	Physics in the sixth form
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
33158	G. Jagger	Team inspector	English in the sixth form
11913	M. Howard	Team inspector	Psychology in the sixth form
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship; Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school that provides a **very good** quality of education and **outstanding** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11, reflecting students' very good achievement as a result of very good teaching.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has led to staff, parents, students and members of the local community all working together to achieve success.
- The excellent provision for activities outside the normal curriculum helps to develop students' very good attitudes to work, the community and one another.
- The provision for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, together with the arts, is very good; in art and design it is excellent.

Progress since the last inspection has been **very good**. Standards are higher and achievement is better as a result of significantly improved teaching. Results at GCSE are improving faster than the national average. All of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully; the assessment of ICT has improved from unsatisfactory to outstanding.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - very high; 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.*

Achievement for all groups of students is **very good**. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Students achieve well in Year 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Overall, students do much better by Year 11 than would usually be expected given their standards on joining the school. Achievement in English, mathematics and science is very good; achievement is excellent in art and design. Achievement in the sixth form is good; standards are above average.

Students' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is well above average, and punctuality is good. Students in the sixth form exhibit excellent attitudes and behaviour; their attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **very good** overall; they are good in Year 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Teaching is at least good in all subjects and is excellent in art and design. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and examination requirements, and they control behaviour very well.

The curriculum is very good; it is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There is an excellent range of extra clubs and activities. Provision for special educational needs is very good. The quality of guidance and support for students is good; provision for their welfare is very good. The school has a very good partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is **excellent**, as is the school's governance. This is a school that is highly self-critical and always pushing to improve.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents are exceptionally happy with the education their children receive. Students are very happy indeed to be attending this school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

This is a school with no major weaknesses of any kind and little of its work falls below an above average standard. Nevertheless, to improve the quality of education even further the school should:

- Improve the accuracy of students' writing.
- Make better use of the very good practice evident in subjects to help improve the practice in others still further.

and in the sixth form:

- Improve the quality and use of assessment in English.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Provide sufficient religious education in the sixth form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **very good** education and its cost-effectiveness is **excellent**. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well in individual subjects as a result of very good teaching, but A-level results overall are only above average as students study fewer subjects than is usual.
- The extra time provided by studying fewer A-levels leads to excellent enrichment and students' excellent attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good leadership and management are ensuring rapid improvement.
- Assessment in English is unsatisfactory.
- Students are not taught enough religious education.
- Provision in art and design is outstanding.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is satisfactory . Relationships are very good, but assessment is unsatisfactory. Provision in French is good . Teaching is good; assessment is very good.
Mathematics	Good . Good teaching motivates students to work hard.
Science	Provision in physics is very good . Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and a very good knowledge of the subject.
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Good teaching produces challenging lessons that move at pace and lead to students achieving well. Provision in psychology is very good . Teachers have high expectations and teach with enthusiasm.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is very good . Very good teaching is based on excellent assessment and resources.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in product design is good . Teaching is good; There are very good links with industry which enhance students' achievement.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is excellent . Outstanding teaching inspires students to aspire to, and reach, very high standards. Provision in drama is very good . Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is very good . Students achieve very well because of very good teaching and their own excellent attitudes to the subject.
Business	Provision in business studies is good . Students achieve well because teaching is good.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is good . Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subject which inspires the students and encourages them to do well.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **good** support and guidance. Arrangements to promote their welfare and health and safety are very good. Students get very good opportunities to express their views and influence the running of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **very good**. The sixth form has made very good progress in recent years. Very thorough systems are in place to monitor students' performance and development.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are very happy at the school and have no real complaints about their own education. They are particularly appreciative of the quality of academic support and guidance, the accessibility of teachers, and support from tutors and the head of the sixth form.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Students achieve well in Year 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Overall, students do much better by Year 11 than would usually be expected given their standards on joining the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in art and design is outstanding.
- Students achieved very well in their GCSE examinations in 2004, given their results when they were in Year 9.
- Examination results, although already well above average, are improving quickly.

Commentary

1. Students join the school with average standards in most subjects, although standards in mathematics and science are significantly higher. Writing is a relative weakness on entry, particularly for boys, but standards of reading, speaking and listening are considerably better.
2. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average and students have achieved well in their first year at the school. Results from the national tests in 2004 were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English; students achieve well in all three of these subjects. Results have been improving in recent years, at a similar rate to the national average.
3. As well as English, mathematics and science, achievement is also good in information and communication technology (ICT), foreign languages and religious education. However, in art and design and music, students achieve very well; in art and design standards are already well above average by the end of Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (34.2)	N/A (33.4)
Mathematics	38.7 (38.6)	N/A (35.4)
Science	36.6 (37.3)	N/A (33.6)

There were 345 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. National results had not been finalised at the time of writing.

4. In Years 10 and 11, students' standards improve quickly and they achieve very well. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above average in 2004, representing much better achievement than would usually be expected given students' standards when they were in Year 9. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in Year 11, especially in English, mathematics, science and business studies. However, there are other features of English, mathematics and science that

are particularly noteworthy, and which add to students' achievements in these subjects. In English, most students study for English literature alongside their English GCSE and results are among the best in the school. In mathematics, students also study for statistics GCSE and AS modules in mathematics. In science, a very high proportion study three separate sciences in the same amount of time usually allocated to two sciences, yet results are still significantly better than the national average for these subjects.

5. The highest standards in the school are found in art and design and music; achievement is very good in music and outstanding in art and design. These standards are reflected in the GCSE results. The results in art and design are particularly outstanding; large numbers study the subject each year and it is rare for a student to gain less than a grade C. In 2004, the proportion gaining an A* in art and design was over five times the national average.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	66 (68)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (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)	40.0 (41.0)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 319 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Achievement is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Year 9 because of the improvement in achievement in several subjects. In geography, history, physical education and design and technology, for example, achievement is satisfactory in Year 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. In all years, the level of achievement reflects the quality of teaching that students receive; where teaching is good, achievement is good.
7. In all years, there are few differences between the achievements of different groups of students. Girls gained better results than boys in their GCSE examinations in 2004, but they were further ahead when they were in Year 9, so the difference is not down to girls making progress more quickly than boys. However, the school takes the difference in standards between boys and girls seriously and made inroads into the deficit over recent years using several different approaches, such as holding talks for fathers on how they can help their sons. The school takes equally seriously the performance of students according to their ethnic background, despite there being very few students who are not of white-British origin. The school's analysis shows that these individuals do at least as well as their peers.
8. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. Students improve rapidly in reading and spelling because of the well-planned support, and they achieve very well in meeting the targets of their individual education plans. Students reach high standards in work leading to the certificates in agriculture, horticulture and building. They also do very well in the GCSE examinations.
9. Standards in the basic skills of language, literacy, mathematics and ICT are above average. Nevertheless, standards of writing could be better across the school, especially for boys. Many students, boys in particular, make mistakes in their written work in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, the same errors are costing students marks in

their coursework in those subjects where their spelling, punctuation and grammar are not corrected.

- Standards and achievement have improved significantly since the previous inspection; in particular, GCSE results are improving rapidly as a result of the school's emphasis on continually trying to improve, as stated in its long-term plan 'a grade above'. The targets set by the school are very demanding, yet year on year the school is able to rightfully celebrate its success.

Sixth form

Standards are above average and students are achieving well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in many of the subjects they study.
- Results overall are only above average, as students study fewer subjects than is usually the case.

Commentary

- Results in the 2004 A-level examinations were above average overall. This represents a good level of achievement given students' standards on joining the sixth form. However, the school's approach to the sixth form curriculum is different from most other schools. Almost all students study for only three A-levels, rather than the more usual four including general studies. This means that, although students tend to do very well in individual subjects, their total points score is lower than might be expected in other schools. This policy of restricting the number of subjects studied has no detrimental effect on the students; they still gain places at the universities of their choice, including Oxford and Cambridge, as their grades in their three subjects are often well above average. It does mean, however, that students' experiences can be widened by taking part in other activities, such as community service.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.7 (97.1)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.4 (43.2)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	281.2 (272.9)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 149 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results for males were better than those for females in 2004. However, this is not part of any long-term pattern; the situation was reversed in 2002 for example, and standards were above average for both males and females in 2003. Each year's results show that students do well in the sixth form and achieve better standards, overall, than would be expected given their GCSE results. Standards are now much higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection.
- Thirteen subjects were inspected in detail. Standards are above average in most of these subjects, reflecting students' good achievement. However, in physics, psychology, ICT, performance studies and physical education achievement is very good; achievement is outstanding in art and design. In all subjects, the level of achievement is a direct result of the quality of teaching that students receive.

14. There are many more students with special educational needs in the sixth form than is usually seen; they do very well in the A-level examinations. Last year, two students gained places at Oxford and Cambridge. Sixth form students say that the individual help they received from specialist staff led to a significant improvement in their reading and spelling.

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

Students' attitudes to learning, and their attendance, are very good. Their behaviour and personal development are also very good. Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school successfully fosters values and personal qualities that contribute very significantly towards the success of its students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attendance enables them to benefit from the opportunities provided by the school.
- Students come to school expecting to learn and to work hard.
- Students enjoy, and willingly participate in, clubs, extra classes, matches and school productions.
- Students relations with one another, and with adults in the school, are very good.
- Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

15. Students like school life. They are glad to be at Thomas Alleyne's and appreciate the education that it provides. They are very well motivated learners who want to do well and expect to work hard. In lessons almost all students, including those with special educational needs, concentrate hard and try their best. They respond very readily to good teaching. Their attitudes are at their best when their teachers provide pace and challenge. This was the case in an art lesson that was observed during the inspection. The teacher's lively, charismatic approach encouraged students to be attentive, and to ask and answer questions very thoughtfully and seriously. Overall, attitudes to learning are very good and have a very beneficial impact on achievement. Students' willingness to learn extends well beyond responding positively in lessons. The majority of them are conscientious about completing homework and coursework. They are also very keen to take part in extra-curricular activities, and the level of participation is high. Many students are happy to stay after the school day to take part in additional opportunities for learning. Their positive attitudes significantly enhance their achievement. This is consistent across the school. Students of all ages and levels of attainment, including those who have special educational needs, show a desire to learn and are interested in their work. There are small numbers of potentially disaffected individuals. The school is very successful in providing them with a work-related curriculum that meets their needs and improves their motivation.
16. The school is a friendly place where relationships are very good. Students trust and respect their teachers. They support one another and work well together in lessons. They socialise very amicably out of class. Bullying and abrasive relationships are rare. Students feel very secure and free from harassment in school.
17. Behaviour is very good. Students are polite and helpful and behave very well in lessons. They show respect for property and are orderly when moving around the school and when gathering together at lunchtime. Their conduct reflects the school's very effective system of discipline and very good provision for moral development. Members of staff set high standards and are skilful in managing behaviour. They rarely encounter trouble in lessons because they set challenging and interesting tasks. A relatively high proportion of students have statements of special educational needs relating to emotional and behavioural problems. The school has very good procedures for identifying them and helping them to control their behaviour. It is

also extremely successful in tackling the issue of bullying. Students agree that members of staff deal promptly and effectively with any incidents.

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	1316	145	2

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

18. Provision for the spiritual development of students is good. Provision for their moral, social and cultural development is very good. In many areas of school life, students are encouraged to reflect on what they learn and to consider the feelings and emotions of writers, composers and artists. In religious education in particular, they are encouraged not only to consider and respect the beliefs of others, but also to reflect on their own developing beliefs and values. The weekly assembly is thoughtful and provides a good opportunity for reflection. The ‘thought for the week’, that teachers are encouraged to develop in class, is well designed to be relevant and topical; however, the quality of this opportunity varies and for some students this classroom reflection is cursory at best. The ‘house’ system within the main school provides students with very good opportunities to work together and to contribute to the success of the larger group. Students from different year groups work together on a wide variety of projects and competitions, from drama to sport, cookery to debating. This enables them to demonstrate their strengths, and to feel part of their house and develop their confidence and leadership qualities.
19. About the school, students are treated with respect and trusted to behave in a responsible manner. As a result they demonstrate maturity and openness towards visitors. Opportunities for them to appreciate the arts are very good and the links with professional groups expose them to high quality performances. The high level of student participation in the extra-curricular performing arts clubs demonstrates their appreciation of the arts and enables them to develop their skills and confidence. Respect for the efforts of their peers was clearly demonstrated in an assembly when they sat in thoughtful silence to listen to a Year 9 violinist perform as part of their Holocaust remembrance. The Spanish tour by the school band was not only a social and cultural event, but they also had a wonderful opportunity for spiritual development whilst performing in Barcelona Cathedral. There is a good range of foreign visits and exchanges. Opportunities to appreciate the multi-cultural nature of Britain are developing, although celebration of the different cultures is not widespread.

Example of outstanding practice

The school farm (part 1)

The school has a small farm on part of its site. The farm consists of two hectares of pasture, a similarly sized conservation area, numerous vegetable plots, a pool, glasshouses, polytunnels and a range of animal houses. Students, with excellent support from teachers and the technician, care for sheep, pigs, calves, hens, ducks and rabbits.

Most importantly, the farm provides excellent opportunities for students’ personal development. For example, students learn the importance of routine and the need for commitment when caring for animals; they learn to work in a team. Many regularly appear at lunchtime and after school to deal with feeding and mucking out. Students also develop confidence and self-esteem as they see their plants growing successfully and their animals flourishing. Nor are the benefits merely one-way. These animals are extremely well cared for and therefore very sociable. Rocky, the Tamworth boar – a magnificent specimen of this rare breed – grunts with obvious appreciation when another admiring visitor comes into view.

20. Attendance is very good, thanks to the school's very effective procedures, and to parents' efforts to ensure that their children attend. The school's attendance rate was above the national average in the year 2003/04. This is a very good performance, bearing in mind that, unlike the majority of secondary schools, Thomas Alleyne's has no Year 7 or Year 8; normally these year groups have the highest attendance. The school is very successful in encouraging students to attend. The rate of attendance has risen in the current academic year and the incidence of unauthorised absence has fallen.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	1.5
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.

Sixth form

Students have excellent attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is also excellent. Their attendance and punctuality are good and their personal development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are mature young adults who have excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Provision for their moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school encourages students to become community minded and to take responsibility for the well-being of the younger students.

Commentary

21. Students have high aspirations and show extremely positive attitudes to their work. They enjoy the subjects that they are studying. Students are keen to do well and are prepared to take responsibility for their learning. They develop and explain their ideas well. They have the confidence to tackle challenging tasks and show the necessary determination to succeed in them. Their excellent attitudes make a major contribution to their good achievement.
22. Students' behaviour is excellent. They respect the school's requirement that they dress in a smart and businesslike manner, and are polite and self-disciplined. They have excellent relationships with one another, with teachers and with students in the lower school. Students generally attend lessons very regularly and punctually. However, in recent months two long-term student absentees, through illness, have had an adverse impact on attendance in Year 13.
23. Provision for the spiritual development of the sixth form is good. Provision for their moral, social and cultural development is very good. In addition to the range of opportunities in the main school, students are encouraged to become community minded and to take responsibility for the well-being of the younger students. As trained counsellors, they lead the work of the ABC group that provides a listening ear, and they offer support as mentors, in lessons such as modern foreign languages, and in the paired reading scheme. Students involve themselves in all aspects of school life and support extra-curricular clubs in coaching and leadership roles as well as being part of the team. This enables them to provide positive role models for the younger students and to grow in confidence and maturity. In many subjects they are encouraged to reflect on their success and to celebrate within the group. They demonstrate a sense of achievement that encourages their motivation and self-belief. The lack of core religious education in the sixth form reduces the opportunity for students to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to exchange views on ultimate questions. A growing number of students, however, are following the psychology course and this is enabling them to develop an understanding of society today.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. Teaching, learning, the curriculum and links with parents are all very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall; they are good in Year 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of assessment of students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject and examination requirements.
- There is consistently very good control of behaviour.
- The teaching of art and design is outstanding.
- Teachers do not pay enough attention to basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 218 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
13 (6%)	66 (30%)	94 (43%)	41 (19%)	4 (2%)	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.

Commentary

24. In Year 9, teaching is satisfactory in geography, history, design and technology and physical education; it is at least good in all other subjects and is very good in art and design and music. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is at least good in all subjects and is very good in art and design, ICT, music and business studies. However, when taken as a whole, because of the consistency in the quality of teaching, the provision that the school makes for the teaching of English, mathematics and science is very good, and is outstanding in art and design.
25. The proportion of lessons that are taught to a good or better standard is much higher than the national average. This reflects the high degree of consistency that the school has accomplished in the quality of teaching it provides; a merely satisfactory lesson is very much in the minority in this school. There are no really significant areas of weakness in the teaching, but there are some very strong aspects indeed.
26. The real strengths in the teaching are best illustrated by the differences in quality between the good teaching in Year 9 and the very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Teachers in Years 10 and 11 have an excellent knowledge, both of their subject and the examination criteria for GCSE. They also know their students very well because of the very good academic monitoring that is carried out. This allows them to plan lessons which they know will really test the students, at whatever level of attainment they might be. It also means that teachers can plan activities in lessons that improve students' examination techniques and guide them in their coursework to make sure they gain the most marks. As a result, students learn far more than is usually the case and achieve very well.
27. In contrast, teachers in Year 9 do not know their students as well as they do those in Years 10 and 11. This is partly because the students have only just arrived at the school, but also because teachers' understanding of the level at which students are

performing, in terms of National Curriculum levels, is much less secure. This means that teachers are unable to plan to meet individuals' needs quite as well as they do further up the school, so expectations are not quite as high. Nevertheless, these aspects of teaching are still good and better than are usually seen; they are just not the same as the very good quality in Years 10 and 11. The result is that students make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

28. Irrespective of the year group, there are two features of teaching which are consistently very good: the pace of lessons and the management of behaviour. Lessons move along at a brisk pace, so students cover a lot of work in a single lesson; they are kept busy by having a range of activities that mean they do not become bored by spending too long on a single task. Whilst this approach helps to keep students concentrating hard, it is backed up by teachers' very good control and insistence on high standards of behaviour. It is very rare for a student to misbehave in lessons, because they are aware of the consequences and know that any actions threatened will be carried out. In consequence, students develop very good habits of hard work, both independently and with others.
29. The teaching of students with special educational needs is very good by the specialist staff, so students with special educational needs learn very well. Teachers and support assistants know students very well and relationships are excellent so that students want to learn, and have very good attitudes to their work. Teachers plan a wide variety of activities and use an appropriate selection of resources to sustain students' interest. They have high expectations of how well students can learn and this boosts students' confidence in their own abilities.

Example of outstanding practice

Planning and using resources in art and design and ICT

One of the main reasons for the outstanding teaching in art and design is down to the excellent planning. All teachers use a common approach to lesson plans that are highly detailed and based on an eleven-point process for development. This means that students are given exceptionally good, detailed, written guidance on how to structure their work and how to write their notes and essays. This quality of guidance ensures that all students know exactly what they should be doing, how to improve, and what to move onto next, at all points in their work. A similar approach is used in ICT where the students are supported by a superb series of work booklets that tell the students exactly what is to be learnt, and how they are to learn it. Students' independent learning skills are improved significantly by being able to access these booklets on-line from their own homes, so they can carry on their classwork in the comfort of their own homes.

Assessment

30. Assessment is good, overall. The school ensures that it has as much information as it can on students when they enter the school and supplements this with its own tests. This information is then used to ensure that every student is given the appropriate support and placed in the correct set.
31. Extensive information is held centrally and the school uses this effectively, through both subject teachers and form tutors, to track progress and intervene if a student is falling behind or in need of extra help. All teachers know which students have special educational needs and provide well for them, but gifted and talented students are not centrally and clearly identified and so teachers' provision for the latter, in lessons, is less individually tailored.
32. Marking and feedback to students in subjects are generally good, apart from in art and design and ICT where they are outstanding so that students are exceptionally clear

about what they need to do to improve their work. In citizenship, design and technology, geography and history marking and feedback are satisfactory, but tend to be too congratulatory rather than identify areas for improvement. The correction of basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar is one of the weaker areas of marking, with teachers often paying insufficient attention to ensuring written work is of the same standard as the subject content.

33. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good. In individual support sessions, teachers give instant feedback on how well students are doing and this helps them to learn more quickly. Appropriate use is made of information from the middle schools to plan for students starting at the high school, and regular testing after their arrival enables staff to pinpoint weaknesses that can then be corrected. Teachers work hard to produce subject individual education plans, though occasionally targets are too general to be easily measurable. The co-ordinator has made a good start in involving students in assessing their own achievement, and this helps them to realise what they should do to improve.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is very good and brings about very good learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' excellent knowledge of their subjects ensures students achieve very well in lessons.
- The assessment of students in English is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

34. The same strengths in the teaching found in the main school are also apparent in the sixth form. Teachers possess an excellent knowledge of their subjects and of the examination requirements that enables them to target lessons at specific elements of the syllabus, so maximising their students' potential. Teachers regularly praise students throughout lessons, while at the same time pushing them to greater efforts. The students' mature attitudes to work ensure there is no silliness in lessons and that studies are taken seriously; this allows teachers sufficient time in lessons to get around each of the students and provide them with individual feedback on their work.
35. In general, the lack of any reason for teachers to spend time getting students down to work means that lessons go along at a very good pace and students learn a lot in a short time. However, sometimes the teacher talks for too long and the students start to let their concentration wander; on other occasions they simply carry on working on their own.
36. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are good overall, but they are excellent in art and design. Teachers generally have good information on their students and use this well to point them in the direction of improvement. In English, however, marking of work, assessment in lessons, and feedback to students are all unsatisfactory, because the assessment is not based sufficiently on the examination criteria. Students are not aware of how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve and what will be expected of them in an examination.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. The curriculum is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The match of teachers to the curriculum is excellent. There is sufficient accommodation and very good resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide range of subjects available in Years 9 to 11 and excellent provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for gifted and talented students is very good.
- Form time is not used consistently, resulting in the school not providing a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

37. The curriculum has good breadth in Year 9; all students are taught drama which is the main vehicle for delivering the personal, health, citizenship and social education (PHSE) programme. Students all study two modern languages. In design and technology, students start their specialisms from the beginning of Year 9.
38. There is a very good range of subjects in Years 10 and 11. About 70 students study the three separate sciences with the rest of the year groups following the combined science GCSE. Students can also choose to study rural and environmental science to GCSE level. All students study for the short-course in religious education and the top 70 students take the full GCSE in the same time. There is very good provision for students to take their GCSEs early; for example 70 students take GCSE mathematics in November of Year 11 with the vast majority gaining the highest grades. They then study statistics and AS-level mathematics for the remainder of Year 11. A very good option programme offers a wide range of subjects, including vocational accreditation in manufacturing and tractor driving. The school has used its specialist status very well to enhance the curriculum, such as new technology courses in Years 10 and 11, and this enables the different learning needs of students to be more adequately addressed. Other subjects have also improved their curriculum by making links with other schools and sharing good practice.
39. The school has an innovative approach to ensuring that the needs of individuals are met. In ICT, for example, students in Years 10 and 11 who are not studying for a GCSE have their needs individually assessed and then are sent to a local college for intensive training in these aspects; this is on top of their National Curriculum entitlement. Careers education is now taught in the evenings, with parents accompanying their children so that together they can work out the best strategy for each student's future. Parents and students both find this approach very effective.
40. Form time each day is used inconsistently; some teachers use the time productively to discuss topical or moral issues, while others do little other than record attendance; it results in some students not participating in a daily act of collective worship. There is a satisfactory programme for teaching PHSE.
41. The programme of work in literacy and numeracy for lower attaining students when they enter the school is effective in enabling students to improve their basic skills. Additionally, students are generally provided with a good range of other opportunities to develop their skills, although there is inconsistency across the departments on how to improve students' writing. Students with special educational needs have access to the same very good curriculum as other students and to all areas of the school's activities.
42. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. The school places a strong emphasis on helping students to improve their English and mathematical skills. Year 9 students who need extra support attend literacy and numeracy classes during some registration times and special educational needs tutors offer very good support in one-to-one and small group lessons. Students requiring extra attention are taught in small groups in the main school and this enables them to do very well in the GCSE and certificate examinations. Teaching assistants give very good support in lessons and this helps students learn rapidly. An excellent provision for students with learning and behavioural difficulties is the vocational

rural science course. This prepares them for life after school and teaches them valuable practical skills. The course is exceptionally well organised and the teaching is outstanding.

43. There is an extensive programme for gifted and talented students, which has a significant impact on their achievement, particularly for those identified as being talented. Those who are particularly gifted can study for extra GCSEs, or start their AS-level studies early in some subjects. The opportunities for students to participate in clubs and other activities during and beyond the school day are outstanding. Every day there is a large number of different activities on offer to the students, including the opportunity to study for extra examinations and make a real difference to life for others, such as improving the environment or organising the supply of 'Aqua boxes' for the Tsunami Appeal. Participation in sport and the arts is exceptionally high. There is excellent provision for extra-curricular sport. Mass participation is facilitated through the house competitions, while the school teams reach very high standards at all levels. Many students benefit from professional connections with the Birmingham Conservatoire, the BBC, the RSC and the Royal Opera House. These programmes are recognised through the school being awarded Sportsmark and Artsmark.
44. The teachers are exceptionally well qualified to teach their subjects, because so many of them teach to A-level as well. All subjects are taught by specialists and their knowledge of their subjects, and of the GCSE criteria for assessment, makes a major contribution to the very good teaching. The school also has very good support staff; technical support is of a high quality so computers, equipment and apparatus do not break down. In consequence, teachers have confidence in the resources they use. The resources themselves are of very good quality, with an outstanding resource in the school farm.

Example of outstanding practice

The school farm (part 2)

The major function of the school farm is to provide facilities for courses in GCSE rural science, NVQ agriculture and GCSE, AS and A-level environmental science. Hence the farm enables the school to offer its very wide range of curricular opportunities in Years 10 to 13. However, the importance of the farm to the school extends well beyond the bounds of the curriculum. It provides an opportunity outside lessons for those who wish to work in agriculture and horticulture, or even veterinary science, to practise the skills that will be required.

Sixth form

The curriculum is very good with the same excellent range of extra clubs and activities as there are for the main school. The sixth form has a very good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum; resources are very good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are a large number of advanced level courses available.
- The community service programme provides excellent opportunities for personal development.
- The provision for religious education is very limited which is a statutory breach.

Commentary

45. The school is very successful in encouraging students to stay on into the sixth form. There are very good opportunities to study vocational courses to meet the wide range of interests and aspirations of students. The vast majority of students reduce their A-level work load at the end of Year 12 by focusing on three A-levels rather than four. This leads to students achieving very well in their individual subjects, while giving them time to work in the community.
46. The community education programme, which is compulsory for all students, provides an outstanding opportunity for students to 'give something back' to the local community. Each student organises their own activities which include working in charity shops, helping the town

with the 'Britain in Bloom' competition, helping in local schools, sports coaching and helping with the Duke of Edinburgh Award. These are, however, just a few of the examples of the activities that students choose to do; even though it is compulsory, the students thoroughly enjoy their activities and most go far beyond the expected minimum. All students also undertake work experience in each year.

47. The extensive range and number of extra clubs and sports enables students to develop skills and broaden their experience. Students are prepared well for their next stage of learning through a satisfactory careers programme and good links with universities and colleges. The school does not, however, provide religious education for all students.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides students with good support and guidance and has very good arrangements for taking account of their views. Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is very good. The quality of personal and social education and careers guidance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's house system provides students with very good pastoral care.
- Very good relationships between staff and students enhance the effectiveness of the school's provision for personal guidance.
- The school monitors and supports students' personal development very well.
- The school has extensive arrangements for seeking out and taking account of students' views.

Commentary

48. The school is a caring community where students' health, safety and well-being have a high priority. Its formal health and safety policy covers all aspects of school life, and is backed up by clear procedures and good practice. It makes very good provision for risk assessment, first aid and child protection. The governing body has oversight of, and appropriate involvement in, all these issues. The school is very aware of how good pastoral care underpins academic progress, and has created systems that successfully link the pastoral and academic areas of its work.
49. The school delivers very good quality care through a house system, with the head of house having oversight of support and guidance to students in his or her house. This provides very good continuity of care. The heads of house are experienced and effective in dealing with problems, and therefore inspire the respect of members of their house. Heads of house and form tutors work well together as a team. They meet regularly to discuss students' welfare and progress. The house system is also very effective in creating bonds between students in different year groups and encouraging them to support and help one another. Individuals feel valued as members of a team, and are keen to work hard and do their best out of loyalty to their colleagues.
50. Arrangements for monitoring students' well-being are very good, and as a result students receive appropriate and effective day-to-day guidance. Heads of house and form tutors know individuals well and follow their progress closely on an informal basis. They have very good relationships with their tutees, who therefore feel comfortable about asking staff for help. The school makes very good arrangements for peer support. Members of the sixth form run a very well organised anti-bullying campaign (ABC). They act as official befrienders to Year 9 forms, supervise a quiet room at lunchtime, and offer a confidential support service. Students have a very high opinion of the work of the ABC. They say that they would go to it if they had any worries about being bullied.

51. The school has very good formal systems for tracking students' overall progress. Pastoral staff keep detailed records of their attendance, behaviour and achievements, and these provide them with effective tools for monitoring students' well-being. Homework planners, known as 'link books', are also a very valuable source of information. By checking them on a regular basis, tutors, heads of house and senior managers get a very good picture of students' attitudes to learning and involvement in school activities. These procedures enable members of staff to identify individuals who are not making adequate progress. There are very good arrangements for students who need extra support. The school works closely with outside agencies over the provision of specialist help for individuals with serious problems. It gives very good care and guidance to students with special educational needs and to 'looked after' children.
52. Students are satisfied with the guidance and support that they receive regarding their academic work. They think that it is helpfully assessed, and they feel free to ask their teachers for help when they find tasks difficult. Students are justified in having positive views. The school makes good arrangements for monitoring and supporting their academic progress. For example, all of Year 9 and Year 11 have one-to-one interviews with their tutors in order to discuss how well they are doing and to set targets. Teachers' guidance and advice to students are founded on good assessment of their work, and give them a good understanding of how they can raise their attainment.
53. Staff in the special educational needs area make a very good contribution to students' personal, as well as their academic, development. They are available to advise students throughout the day and run a homework club at lunchtime, where students receive individual help in organising their work better. Annual reviews for students with statements are well planned and individual education plans are regularly reviewed, to check how well students are getting on. Staff know how important it is to boost students' self-confidence and work hard to encourage students to do their best.
54. The school has very good arrangements for consulting students. The governing body and senior management team are very keen to discover their collective view on major issues, and use a range of formal methods to achieve this end, such as student councils, questionnaires, and learner forums. The school responds very positively and implements reasonable proposals. It also takes seriously spontaneous requests from individuals and groups of students. Members of staff listen with care to what they have to say and, when they make a good case, take action. There are many students who have brought about changes to the running of the school, such as the use of the tennis courts for football at lunchtime.

Sixth form

Students receive good support and guidance. Arrangements to promote their welfare and health and safety are very good. Students get very good opportunities to express their views and influence the running of the school. Provision for guidance on careers is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school monitors students' progress closely and gives them good individual support and guidance.

Commentary

55. The standard of care in the sixth form is similar to that in the main school and shares many of its strengths. There are the same very good procedures for health, safety and welfare. The answers to the pre-inspection questionnaire suggest that a large number of students think that there is no adult in school who knows them well. However, evidence collected during the inspection did not support this conclusion. Observations and discussions indicated that, as in the main school, students have very good

relationships with members of staff. They appreciate the way teachers treat them as adults and listen with respect to their views. It is true that some students say that they would not go to a member of staff about personal problems. However, it is not that they feel that staff are unsympathetic or unapproachable; they simply think that their parents are the appropriate people to turn to about personal worries.

56. Students are very satisfied with the quality of academic support and guidance. They say that teachers are readily accessible and always willing to provide further explanations and help. Students correctly think that their academic progress is well monitored and that they receive constructive advice on how to improve their work. They are also right in saying that they get good support from tutors and the head of the sixth form when they are applying for university entrance.
57. There are very good arrangements for sounding out and taking account of students' views. Students are mature and articulate, and have the confidence to express their opinions to members of staff. Their concerns are followed up, and where justified are addressed by the school. The sixth form council has a significant impact on the life of the sixth form. For example, it requested and obtained the refurbishment of the common room at a cost of £10000.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents and excellent links with the community. Its links with other schools and colleges are very good and enhance students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses in the main school

- Parents give very good support to their children's learning.
- Parents are very satisfied with the school, and the school has very good arrangements for consulting them and involving them in its work.
- There are close and effective links with local middle schools.
- The school has extensive links with other high schools through its status as a specialist college and its involvement in the Leading Edge partnership.
- Links with local employers are very good and enhance students' opportunities for learning.

Commentary

58. Parents believe that the school gives their children a good education and looks after them very well. The pre-inspection parents' meeting and questionnaire revealed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's work. Parents are very pleased with the quality of teaching and the progress that their children make. Everyone who completed the questionnaire said that members of staff expected students to work hard and do their best. Parents are least satisfied with information on progress, but even here around nine out of ten of them feel well informed about their children's learning.
59. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. They do not support the minority who think that information on students' progress is inadequate. In the view of inspectors, the school makes good arrangements to inform parents about their children's achievements and personal development. Students' link books are very effective as a means of day-to-day communication between home and school. They are well used to record a wide range of information about students' learning and the life of the school, such as homework tasks, targets, merits and notices to parents. Form tutors check link books regularly, and parents read and sign them each week. The school has very good systems for notifying families when their children are either doing particularly well, or are in danger of underachieving. It sends

home 'praise cards' or 'cause for concern cards' as appropriate in order to put parents in the picture. There is good provision for routine and formal feedback on students' progress. All parents are invited to consultation evenings with their children's subject teachers. They also receive interim and full written reports each year. The latter are satisfactory, overall. Some subject reports contain good accounts of students' strengths and weaknesses, as is the case in English. However, many subject reports are not diagnostic and therefore do not help parents to support their children's learning. They focus heavily on students' successes and say relatively little about areas for improvement.

60. The school is very keen to secure parents' support and to involve them in students' learning. It has very good procedures for sounding out their views, consulting them on decisions and acting on their ideas. Members of staff consult parents at an early stage if they have concerns about a child's attendance, behaviour or work. They treat parents as partners in efforts to solve the student's problems. There are regular consultations at whole-school level. The school makes very good use of surveys to find out what parents think, on a wide range of issues, for example the induction process, consultation evenings and catering facilities. It provides very good feedback; the results are published in the school newsletter. Parents are very satisfied with these arrangements. They say that the school seeks and takes account of their views, and responds very well to any complaints, concerns and ideas that they put forward.
61. Parents make a very good contribution to students' learning and the life of the school. They want their children to achieve well and are therefore very supportive over attendance, discipline and hard work. They encourage students to learn at home. For example, they do their best to ensure that homework tasks are done properly and on time. A very high percentage of parents attend consultation evenings in order to discuss their children's progress with tutors and subject teachers. They give very good support to school performances and to functions organised by the parent teacher association. Induction evenings and curriculum evenings are very well attended. This was the case at the careers evening that took place during the inspection. A good number of Year 9 students and their parents came to this event and spent around two hours listening to a talk and working together on a presentation.
62. The school has very good links with other schools. It is a member of the Leading Edge initiative, and through it works closely with five other high schools. Members of staff and students benefit from the sharing of best practice in teaching, organisation and leadership. The school has a very constructive partnership with the three middle schools in its catchment area. All parties are very aware of the difficulties arising from the transfer of students in the middle of Key Stage 3. They have successfully addressed the problem by developing a very strong partnership with one another. They liaise very effectively over the transfer of students. Members of staff meet regularly to exchange information and plan the programme of induction events. These arrangements enable Year 8 to progress smoothly from their middle schools to Thomas Alleyne's. The links between the schools extend well beyond the induction of students. Strong curricular links have been established in ICT and design and technology as a result of the high school's status as a specialist technology college. There are also very good links between the schools over the teaching of modern foreign languages and the provision of summer school for higher attaining students

Example of outstanding practice

The school farm (part 3)

The school does not regard the farm as simply a facility for its own students but makes it available to visiting students from other schools in the area. Students from a local special school, on a regular visit to the farm, used results from earlier exercises in weighing pigs to draw graphs to demonstrate gains in weight. Later they showed great interest in the task of worming sheep and helped to gather the animals calmly and sensibly (unlike the inspector, who tended to panic). Staff from the special school report that students very much enjoy their visits to the farm, have learnt much about the animals and have become significantly more confident in

63. The school has an excellent partnership with the local community, as recognised by the award of the Charter Mark. The links are mutually beneficial. Organisations such as Burton College and the local youth club make good use of the school's facilities. The support of the local community enriches the curriculum and provides students with additional opportunities for learning and personal development, as when Year10 students go to local employers for work experience. The school has very strong links with local industry. It receives excellent support from JCB. The company is the school's main sponsor for technology college status. It provides extra resources for learning and participates in school events, such as Technology Day.

Sixth form

The sixth form has a very good partnership with parents. Its links with the community are excellent and with colleges and universities are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes very good arrangements to secure parents' continuing involvement in their children's learning.
- Students' extensive participation in community service makes a positive contribution to their personal development and to the life of the local community.

Commentary

64. The sixth form's arrangements to inform parents about their children's learning are similar to those in the main school. There is a regular cycle of reports and consultation evenings, and parents are welcome to see members of staff at other times to discuss any problems and concerns. The school continues to value their ideas. It has very good procedures for seeking out and taking into account parental opinion. It consulted parents on the sixth form uniform and acted on their views.
65. Parents make a positive contribution to attainment and progress. They have high aspirations and are very supportive of students' learning. The majority of them expect as a matter of course that their children will stay in the sixth form and complete their courses. Parents give practical help with applications to universities and colleges, as when they take students to open days and interviews. Students feel that their families give them very good support and guidance, and this has a very positive impact on their learning and personal development.
66. The sixth form has very good links with the community and with local schools. Many students work with local organisations via the sixth form's programme of community service. Other students are involved as part of their course of study. For example, physical education students run the sports day at one of the local middle schools. The head of that school describes them as "invaluable and very good role models". The sixth form has very good links with colleges and universities. Its contacts enable students to obtain the information that they need regarding opportunities in higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is excellent, as is the school's governance. The leadership of other key staff and the quality of the school's management are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff, students and parents all have a high degree of respect for the outstanding leadership of the headteacher.
- There is a high degree of consistency in the quality of leadership of other key staff.

- Governors carry out their duties outstandingly well.
- The school has very good ways of identifying strengths and weaknesses in its work.

Commentary

67. Above all else, Thomas Alleyne's is a very happy school; students enjoy learning here, staff are happy to work here and parents are extremely pleased with the quality of education it provides. The reason for this high level of satisfaction is simple: the school's very good ethos of firmness and fairness with all concerned, creating a genuine partnership with all parties. This ethos comes directly from the headteacher.
68. The headteacher is an outstanding leader; he has a very high level of respect from staff, students and parents alike. All know that they will be treated fairly and that their concerns or ideas will be taken seriously. Above all else, parents and students know that lessons will not be disrupted by poor behaviour, and teachers know that if poor behaviour occurs they will be supported in dealing with it and it will be dealt with swiftly. In consequence, students know the rules by which they must abide and all parties have confidence that these rules will be upheld by all.
69. The leadership of the headteacher has a knock-on effect on the leadership of other key staff, which is very good. Firstly, the headteacher and governors do not compromise on quality when appointing managers; they want, and get, only the best. Secondly, the headteacher is supported by a very effective senior management team. In addition, middle managers all share the headteacher's drive for improvement. They are confident in trying out new ideas, safe in the knowledge that the senior management will support them and that it is better to try and fail, rather than stagnate. It is this continual push for improvement that is bringing about the rapid rise in examination results. There is a high degree of consistency of quality across middle managers, with the senior team and many heads of departments and those in pastoral roles being very good. However, art and design stands out for its outstanding leadership, bringing about the best results year after year.
70. The management of the school is very good. Day-to-day administration is excellent, ensuring the school runs very smoothly. The school is self-critical and is always keen to act on any weaknesses. The actions it takes are effective in bringing about improvement. For example, GCSE results in geography have not been as good as in the rest of the school. A detailed analysis was carried out and the fault appeared to lie at the door of insufficient preparation for the coursework element. The department put a plan into place to address the coursework problems; these have been successful, and the quality of teaching is now good in Years 10 and 11. The school uses data very well to analyse its performance, providing teachers with data on every individual student that compares the student's performance in the teacher's subject with every other subject in the school. However, there is a slight problem in this approach, as the art and design results are so far ahead of most other subjects that it is difficult for other subjects to appear to do well even when they have!
71. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. Students with learning and behavioural difficulties achieve as well as other students. The co-ordinator leads a united team of staff who are fully committed to helping students learn and feel secure in their work. Administration is very efficiently carried out and improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
72. Both performance management and professional development are very good. They complement and support one another very well. The school runs very successful school-based training, making use of a wealth of staff expertise. The school gives performance management a high profile and allocates time throughout the year for training, target setting and focused observation of teaching. This focused observation is both innovative and highly effective. It involves all lessons being observed and assessed against exactly the same criteria. The results are then plotted on graphs and used to illustrate relative strengths and

weaknesses in subjects. These in turn are used to produce targets for the subject, which the staff use to develop an action plan. However, the school is not using the clear differences in strengths and weaknesses across departments to raise the quality of teaching for all, because the strengths in one subject are not being matched against the weaknesses in another.

73. The governors deserve a great deal of credit for the school's success; their work is excellent. Governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is exceptional, both in broad terms and in minute detail. This has been brought about by the way they monitor the school. As well as receiving the usual reports, both verbal and written, they also have other innovative ways of finding out what is going on. For example, they commission reports from outside bodies on aspects of the school's work; they frequently consult with parents, and they have a 'Governor of the Month'. This latter initiative is where a governor is designated to spend time in the school for a particular month. They can go where they like, talk to whomsoever they wish and delve into any area of the school's work they want to. Above all else, the governors have the same high aspirations for the school as the headteacher; they support the setting of very demanding targets, are quick to identify areas of weakness and are strong in dealing with them. The only weakness is their failure to overcome the school's difficulties in providing a daily act of collective worship for all students.

Example of outstanding practice

The school farm (part 4)

The farm is not an expensive facility for the school; a useful income results from the sale of turkeys at Christmas, in addition to the proceeds from selling other produce through the year and rearing calves on contract. The farm buildings, although serviceable and very well cared for, are now becoming rather old and in need of some updating and refurbishment. A farm board has been established with plans to increase the farm income and enable improvements to be made.

The leadership of the school must take great credit for preserving the farm through an era when, nationally, the whole emphasis in Years 10 and 11 was on the specified National Curriculum. Many schools found that additional options, including such subjects as rural science, could no longer be offered; extra resources like farms and gardens could no longer be justified or afforded. This school, however, clung to its farm. Now the importance of vocational subjects is being recognised, courses are springing up across the country and this school already has the resources that it needs to support a range of vocational courses that are particularly relevant to students in a rural area.

74. The school's management of its finances is excellent. Its budget is below the average for other schools, and this does not take into account that the school only has students from Year 9 onwards when its income is being compared to schools with students in Years 7 and 8. The high morale of staff ensures a very low rate of staff absence; the students' respect for property means that the school spends relatively little on routine maintenance. The most recent audit described systems as some of the best ever seen by the auditor. That the school can provide such a good education on such a relatively low income demonstrates the school's outstanding value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4437910	Balance from previous year	253400
Total expenditure	4453746	Balance carried forward to the next	237564
Expenditure per student	3351		

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good, as is its governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very thorough systems are in place to monitor students' performance and development.
- The management of the curriculum is particularly good.
- Students do not receive enough religious education.

Commentary

75. Standards have improved in the sixth form as a result of its very good leadership and management. The head of sixth form combines the monitoring and promotion of both the academic and pastoral welfare of students very well. Tutors in the sixth form are a very good team. Systems are very thorough, allowing students a great deal of autonomy and independence, whilst at the same time ensuring a safety net for those who cannot quite cope on their own. In many ways, the management of the sixth form has achieved an ideal balance of very good achievement in individual subjects combined with excellent opportunities for students to develop as individuals.
76. Governors carry out their duties with the same enthusiasm and attention to detail as they do in the main school. However, the amount of religious education taught is insufficient to meet statutory requirements and students do not always attend a daily act of collective worship.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is good and successfully supports and complements school-based work.
- Good use is made of local employers and partnerships in order to enhance learning.
- Over one third of students take advantage of vocational courses which provide flexible learning opportunities.
- Departments do not consistently take advantage of opportunities to enrich learning.

Commentary

77. Work-related learning courses are successfully building upon the Year 10 work experience programme where very good links have been established with local employers. Students understand work experience supports and complements the work they do in school. Students benefit from thorough preparation and debriefing of work experience. The majority of students successfully find their own placements, in a very wide range of situations, from local companies to work in London's Inns of Court. Careers promotions and opportunity evenings for students and parents give opportunities to consider courses away from school like apprenticeships. Partnership with the engineering company JCB, in addition to developing interests in engineering, has supported environmental work for students. Good partnerships with precision engineers, the district council and auctioneers have enabled exchange of computer expertise. About one third of students choose a wide range of vocational courses, like manufacturing, health and social care and agriculture. A flexible curriculum allows a minority of students to follow college courses, which successfully meet their needs.

78. Subjects like PSHE, drama, rural studies and ICT involve students in problem solving and working both independently and collaboratively. Such skills are easily transferred to the work place. In lessons, students are often engaged working in groups and delivering presentations; for instance Year 10 students give computer presentations about their work experience and students with special needs give presentations about their days of experience working at Tesco's. Through the PSHE programme, students understand the needs of employers, the changing world of industry and commerce. All Year 11 students prepare letters of application and curriculum vitae and prepare for interviews. The Rotary Club and local employers give students the opportunity to be involved in mock interviews.

79. The programme is successfully co-ordinated by two deputy headteachers. The audit of provision has enabled a successful evaluation and development of the subject. Very good partnerships with local employers, like the engineering group JCB, and national bodies like the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, have been forged, so creating good first-hand experience for students. Art, design and technology, ICT and music have very successfully created local and national links to bring the real world into their subjects, improving students' learning and achievement. However, some subject areas do not yet have a clear understanding of the potential for work-related learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, teaching and learning from Years 9 to 11 are, overall, very good.
- The curriculum provided gives very good support for lower attaining students, so helping them to achieve very well in their GCSEs.
- Leadership and management are very good; standards have risen significantly.
- The monitoring of teaching has not yet been successful in eliminating unsatisfactory and less effective practice and in spreading best practice.

Commentary

Examination results

80. Results in the 2004 national tests, at the end of Year 9, were above average. There have been big fluctuations from year to year in results in recent years. In 2004, results in GCSE English were above average and in English literature they were well above average. The proportion of students entered for GCSE is much higher than the national average.

Standards and achievement

81. Students' attainment on entry in reading and writing is average, though their attainment in speaking and listening is above average. Their overall achievement, from entry to the school to GCSE, is very good, brought about by consistently making better than expected progress in all years.

82. Speaking and listening are strengths in the school. By Year 9 most students can express themselves clearly in speech and higher attainers are usually fluent and can use a wide vocabulary. Many can adapt what they say to the circumstances in which they are speaking. Students listen alertly and respectfully to the views of others. Most students are able to structure their written work well and can communicate clearly, though the work of lower attainers tends to be marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Standards of reading are generally good, with middle and higher attaining students reading aloud with good expression.

83. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to improve their skills at a rate that means they progress to become well above average. The majority of students are articulate, are

willing to ask questions and can elaborate their ideas when asked to do so. Standards of reading are very good. Most students show a good insight into challenging literature. Higher attainers have a very good understanding of the techniques used by writers, and can explain themselves precisely and in some depth when questioned. Students improve particularly well in writing. Many students can organise their writing well and can write for different audiences. Students plan and redraft their work with care, and as a consequence what they do write is considerably more accurate than it was in Year 9.

Teaching and learning

84. Teaching and learning throughout the school are predominantly good. The cumulative effect of this is that the provision that the school makes for teaching is, overall, very good.
85. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess very good subject knowledge and use this to formulate questions that provoke thought, debate and deeper understanding. Teachers not only know their subject well but also are aware of the requirements of the course and criteria used in assessment. This, in turn, means that students are very aware of what they must achieve in order to attain high standards. Teachers have high expectations of students. They are expected to behave politely, to co-operate with each other and their teachers in class and to work hard. In the vast majority of cases, this is exactly what they do. Teachers set tasks for homework that are relevant to class work and students complete these conscientiously. A number of teachers use the three-part lesson to advantage. This helps to create variety in lessons; students know what is expected of them and there are opportunities for them to consolidate their learning. Most of the lessons seen were well prepared, included variety and opportunities for students to be active participants in the lessons and were conducted at a brisk pace. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed to support students with special needs. When students' written work is marked accurately and thoroughly and targets are set for improvement, students work hard to raise their standards. However, when marking is of an unsatisfactory standard, progress is slow. In general, students have very good attitudes to their studies, behave well and make a good contribution to their own learning.
86. When lessons are less effective or unsatisfactory, the work lacks variety, the pace is slow, students' interest wanes and they become restless, noisy and ignore the teacher's instructions. When teachers talk for a large proportion of the lesson, and provide little opportunity for students to contribute, or tell students what to do rather than showing them how to do it, students tend to lose concentration and their progress is relatively slow.

Leadership and management

87. The head of department is a very good role model. Assessment data is used effectively to monitor the progress of students and results in 2004 were an improvement on those obtained in 2003. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teachers work together well and share ideas. Though monitoring of teaching does take place, it has not yet been successful in eliminating unsatisfactory and less effective practice and in spreading best practice.
88. The curriculum provided gives very good support to students who are relatively low attainers in English. In Year 9, such students attend the literacy club. In Years 10 and

11, small groups of students are withdrawn from mainstream English classes to be given intensive teaching in basic literacy skills. Such teaching makes an important contribution to such a high proportion of Year 11 students obtaining grades A*-G in their GCSEs.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

89. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are above average. Speaking and listening are a relative strength in school. Most students are articulate and confident and are willing to contribute to class discussions. They listen attentively to others and are respectful of different points of view. Students understand what they read and can communicate clearly in writing. Skills in literacy improve as students move up the school.
90. A literacy club is provided for lower attaining students in Year 9 when they enter the school and this effectively helps them to 'catch up' with their basic skills. Additionally, a group of students is very well supported in the withdrawal classes in English in Years 10 and 11. Students also make very good progress in such subjects as art, music and modern foreign languages as a result of the clear, explicit and relevant teaching of skills in reading and writing. However, there is inconsistency across departments, with the result that students do not develop the same level of skills in communicating their ideas in all subjects. In particular, there is inconsistency with respect to marking and to the level of attention paid to basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Modern foreign languages

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection.	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of good teaching standards have risen since the previous inspection.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and has contributed to the rise in standards.
- The majority of students behave well and have good attitudes to work, but there is a small minority whose attitudes are unsatisfactory.
- Students receive very good personal and academic support from their teachers.

Commentary

Examination results

91. In 2004, GCSE results were above average in all three languages. Boys do less well than girls in examinations, but results for boys are still above those for boys nationally. Results have improved since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

92. At the end of Year 9, standards are above average in French and average in Spanish and German. Students do not begin to study Spanish and German until the start of Year 9, so while standards are relatively lower in these languages, students are still achieving well. The above average standards in French are a clear improvement on the standards with which students enter the school. Writing skills are above average, with speaking, listening and reading all broadly average. The above average standards now evident in Year 11 reflect the emphasis placed on raising standards by the head of department; writing remains above average, but skills in the other aspects improve to match this level of attainment.

Teaching and learning

93. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, not only of the language and grammar structures, but also of how best to prepare students for examinations. This is an important factor in the improvement in results that is taking place. In general, teachers control their classes well and no time is lost because of poor behaviour. However, a small minority of students, mainly boys, cause disturbance in some lessons. This is more evident in Years 10 and 11. Teachers sometimes do not have strong enough strategies to manage the behaviour of these students or good enough teaching methods to engage their interest. In many lessons, teachers do not give sufficient attention to the requirements of either higher or lower attaining students, more so in Year 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Assessment procedures are very good. Very good use is made of the data provided to show students how they can improve their work. Homework is set regularly. There is a strong emphasis on aspects of literacy in most lessons and modern foreign languages make a very good contribution to students' literacy development. The department has a languages laboratory with a computer suite and the subject's contribution to learning with computers is very good.

Leadership and management

94. The curriculum is good. All students study two languages in Year 9 and an encouraging number continue this to GCSE. The curriculum is considerably enriched by a number of trips and exchanges. A number of local business people visit to talk to students about the importance of languages in industry. The school is a lead school in the development of languages in primary schools. Teachers give very good personal and academic support to students through advice and extra classes. Modern foreign languages make a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject is very well led by the head of department who has a whole team of teachers clearly focused on improving examination results further. Management of the subject is good, with careful analysis of data from assessment and examinations, and the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics support students' achievement very well.
- The students benefit from good regular assessment and the resulting data is used well to monitor their progress.
- The highest attaining students in Year 11 are well provided for with GCSE statistics and introductory AS-level mathematics, resulting in well above average standards.
- Leadership and management are very good, resulting in a very clear vision for improvement.

Commentary

Examination results

95. Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average and continued the rapid upward trend in these results. The GCSE results, in 2004, were lower than those in 2003, but were above the national average.

Standards and achievement

96. The students' consistently good achievement, combined with the very good curriculum provision in Year 11, results in very good achievement, overall. Consequently, standards observed in Year 11 lessons were higher than those attained in the recent 2004 GCSE mathematics examination. In Year 11, higher attaining students have well above average data-handling skills, enhanced considerably by their additional study of GCSE statistics. They can produce and interpret with ease cumulative frequency diagrams and can calculate accurately the standard deviation of a data set. The lower attainers have below average shape, space and measuring skills. Whilst they can prove the sum of the angles in a triangle, they struggle to calculate the sum of angles in a polygon due to their weaker numerical skills. However, standards are made even higher by the way that students also study parts of the AS-level course in mathematics. In both the statistics and AS-level courses, students are achieving very well. Overall, students end Year 11 with a much wider range of qualifications in mathematics subjects than is usually the case. By the end of Year 9, students' algebraic skills are well above average and the students make good progress having entered the course with slightly above average standards. Higher attaining students can use algebraic methods very effectively to solve simultaneous equations. However, lower attainers' shape, space and measuring skills are much weaker. Whilst they can calculate the area of a rectangle they struggle with the estimation of length, mass and weight.

Teaching and learning

97. The consistently good teaching observed in lessons across all years results in very good teaching provision and very good learning, overall. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. This, combined with their good rapport with the students, results in the students achieving well in lessons. Teachers make good use of the three-part lesson structure in their planning. They use good starter activities, to get students going in lessons, though the finishes do not sufficiently recapitulate what has been learnt or set the scene for the next lesson. Students' own assessment of their learning is developing and helpful, constructive marking is provided. However, the comments are often more celebratory than diagnostic and do not inform students of the level they are working at, especially in Year 9. In the top sets, the most able are well challenged; however, the more able students in other classes do not always have work matched to their needs. Teachers where possible

are using ICT as a resource to aid student learning. Students also have good access to ICT to develop further their mathematical skills, as seen in one Year 9 lesson on index notation. Homework is provided regularly and this assists well in the students' understanding and raising of achievement.

Leadership and management

98. The head of department is a very good role model to staff and students, providing very good management and leadership, with a very clear vision for improvement. Schemes of work are in place, though are not sufficiently developed to further support teaching. Monitoring of teaching, students' books and homework is rigorous and assists well in the raising of standards. The students benefit from good, regular assessment and the resulting performance data is used well to monitor their progress. Students also record the outcomes of their assessment; though occasionally they are unsure of their target grade/level or how this may be achieved. Very good self-review of the department's performance takes place and informs both target setting and development planning well. The highest attainers in Year 11 are well provided for with early entry in GCSE mathematics. They then study GCSE statistics in which they do very well and also start a module of the AS-level mathematics course. Good enrichment activities support and engage the students well and include monthly puzzles, a maths club and Easter revision days. Good community links have been established with local middle schools, resulting in the sharing of good practice and assisting the students' move to the high school. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, especially in the rapidly improving results in Year 9.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. Standards of mathematics as a basic skill across the curriculum are above average. The mathematics department has delivered training to other subjects on the teaching and learning of mathematics. In a few subjects numeracy is a feature, such as in PHSE where students in their work on personal finance analyse information well on Internet accounts. However, this is not the case in the majority of subjects where numeracy is not sufficiently embedded to develop students' numerical skills across the curriculum. Lower attaining students are well provided for with a numeracy club, where withdrawal during form time allows the students' numeracy skills to be developed. The parents of these students are also invited to an evening meeting to raise their awareness on how best to support their children in developing those numerical skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Students experience consistently good teaching in all year groups and each strand of science. This adds up to a very good overall experience of teaching and learning.

- In Years 10 and 11, the excellent range of courses, including the separate science subjects and a rural science course, gives all students the best possible opportunities to achieve.
- There are some slight weaknesses in teaching when physics topics are taught by non-physics specialists, particularly in Year 9.

Commentary

Examination results

100. In the 2004 national tests, at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average, as they have been consistently over the last few years. Results in the 2004 GCSE science examinations were also well above average, overall. Almost a quarter of the students in Year 11 took three separate science subjects, instead of the more usual double award science; this proportion is around five times higher than the national average.

Standards and achievement

101. All students have at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the topics they have studied recently. Higher attainers often reach standards that are very high for their age. For example, some students in Year 9 have excellent understanding of the factors that affect the pitch of a note from a stringed instrument. Standards are also very high in the separate science courses in Years 10 and 11. In lower attaining groups, practical and investigative skills are often better than the standards that students reach in other aspects of science.

102. Many students can demonstrate their understanding well when answering the teacher's questions in class but find it more difficult to express themselves clearly when writing answers to unfamiliar questions from worksheets and examination papers. This weakness is compounded for some boys because, although keen on science generally, they are reluctant to put much effort into their written work.

103. Students enter the school with standards in science that are above average. At the end of Years 9 and 11, students do better in tests and examinations than might be expected, given their test results when they entered that particular stage. However, students' achievement overall is actually very good and better than indicated by a straightforward analysis of results. The quality of teaching and learning is clearly the major factor in producing this achievement. However, another important strength is the excellent science curriculum, which gives students the best possible range of opportunities in which to achieve. Higher attainers follow the three separate science courses in the time normally allowed for double award science. The other students follow a carefully planned course that encourages and motivates them and leads to a double award GCSE. Rural science provides many interested students with extra opportunities for GCSE passes or vocational qualifications. GCSE environmental science is also on offer as an extra course after school. The result is that students gain many more GCSEs in science at this school than is usually the case.

Teaching and learning

104. The main strength of teaching is the high level of consistency of good quality teaching that students receive, irrespective of their year group or the strand of science being taught. Hence students' learning in science is good at every stage; each teacher can build on the secure work done in earlier years and the result is that students experience teaching and learning that are very good, overall.

105. Teachers generally have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan lessons carefully and provide a wide variety of learning activities to maintain students' concentration. Teachers are particularly skilled in questioning, constantly probing to get students to explain why things happen. They make very good use of interesting resources, including geraniums in the polytunnel, the interesting combination of sugar with concentrated sulphuric acid, animal hearts and lungs and kiwi fruit, to hold students' attention and help them to understand and remember.
106. In very good lessons, the pace is particularly quick. In one lesson, for example, students made their own notes as the teacher explained, did a quick test, recited together, watched a demonstration and finally wrote up their notes for homework, all providing constant reinforcement of the major points that students needed to remember about the lungs. Students' exercise books reveal some weaknesses when physics topics are taught by non-physicists, particularly in Year 9. For example, not all students' books contain enough information or examples on calculating pressure.

Leadership and management

107. The head of department is constantly seeking to improve both the opportunities for students and their achievement in science. Teachers, technicians and teaching assistants work very well together as a team and are fully committed to the department's training programme and plans for improvement. Monitoring of the department's work is very good; lessons are observed, results analysed and new initiatives are all thoroughly evaluated to determine their impact on students' progress. The department recognises that more observation of each other's lessons would be beneficial, in order to share more effectively the very good techniques that different teachers have to offer.
108. GCSE examination results have remained well above average since the previous inspection. The department's ICT resources have improved and the schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are now very good. Hence, the department has made good progress.

Rural science

Provision in rural science is **very good**.

109. Two groups in each of Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE rural science course while a further two groups follow vocational courses leading to NVQ qualifications in agriculture. All the courses make full use of the school's small farm with its vegetable plots, sheep, calves, pigs and poultry. The farm provides an excellent resource for rural science.
110. In 2004, almost all students taking GCSE rural science were successful in gaining a grade and over half gained the higher grades A* to C. There are no national statistics for GCSE rural science so it is not possible to compare the results with national averages.
111. Teaching and learning in rural science are very good. It is the most popular optional subject, though not everybody who would like to take it can do so because there are only limited places available. The attitudes of students on the courses are very good; students enjoy the lessons, especially when they take place outside and use the facilities of the farm. In particular, these courses provide many students who have an

interest in farming and the countryside with an opportunity to develop these interests in a well-organised and supportive atmosphere.

112. Many of the students who take the vocational rural studies courses, find academic study a struggle and gain great pleasure and satisfaction from developing their practical skills, whether tractor driving, trimming a sheep's feet, weighing pigs, laying concrete or caring for poultry. The courses, together with the tremendous support provided for these students by teachers and the technician, make a huge contribution to these students' personal development. Students welcome visitors who come to the farm, talk confidently and enthusiastically about what they have learnt and realise the importance of the skills they are learning in terms of preparing them for finding employment in a rural area.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as the result of very good teaching.
- Excellent assessment provides teachers and students with the highest quality information on progress.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that all students achieve very well, whether they are taking a GCSE course or not.
- Very detailed booklets tell students exactly what they should be doing to improve yet further.
- Students in Year 9 do not achieve as well as others because the school does not always have the necessary information on what they have learnt before they enter the school.

Commentary

Examination results

113. GCSE results in 2004 were above average. These results represent very good achievement as the students had not studied much ICT in Year 9.

Standards and achievement

114. Students enter the school with average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average and students have achieved well. Students use computer packages with confidence, justifying their choices of software for each task. They have a good understanding of the need to adapt their work to the needs of different audiences and understand well the potential ICT offers, such as when considering a drama production. Students are not over-reliant upon their teachers and will explore the features of a software package, without prompting, to solve problems. Students annotate their work purposefully and keep good records of how their work has been developed.

115. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. As these students received very little ICT teaching when they were in Year 9, their standards were below average when they moved into Year 10. Hence, their present standards represent very good achievement. Students taking GCSE understand the features of differing types of databases and confidently use more complex functions in spreadsheets. Students not taking GCSE also have higher than average skills in word processing, databases and spreadsheets.
116. At all ages, students with special educational needs achieve as well as others through work which is targeted to meet their individual needs well. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Teaching and learning

117. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is complemented by a superb series of booklets which accompany every topic. These describe exactly what is to be learnt and how it is to be learnt. Using these booklets also develops students' ability to work on their own. They can, and regularly do, access these materials over the Internet from home. Different levels of booklets have been produced to meet the needs of different levels of achievement. An outstanding assessment system ensures that teachers and students know exactly what progress is being made. Parents are able to access this information over the Internet.
118. Whilst teaching and learning in Year 9 are good, they are not as good as in Years 10 and 11 because the school does not receive sufficiently detailed information for all students on what they have previously learnt. Additionally, teachers do not know the students in Year 9 as well as they do older students. This means that teachers are not able to match the work to the students as accurately as they do in Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management

119. In addition to implementing the assessment system and producing the most helpful course booklets, a comprehensive system has been implemented to ensure that students not taking GCSE develop their ICT skills and receive their entitlement under the National Curriculum. The needs of every student are carefully assessed and any deficiencies met through intensive study at a local college of further education. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection because students' achievement, the quality of teaching and assessment have all improved significantly. The school is also benefiting from extensive collaboration with the local community, such as when students produce websites for the town and other schools and when staff provide ICT solutions for local businesses.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

120. Students display above average levels of competency in ICT. They use their skills extensively and confidently, knowing how computers can aid their studies. The school has collected information on where each student will use computers in their subjects and, collaborating with a local college, puts on individualised courses so that each student has the necessary skills for their coming work. Records are then kept to show the progress each student is making. The school is very well equipped with ICT equipment. This is supported by a team of a highly knowledgeable system manager and technicians who make a major contribution to learning by ensuring that all equipment is maintained in excellent working order.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement in Years 10 and 11 is leading to rising standards.
- Good management is sorting out the problems with GCSE coursework.
- The arrangements to assess and monitor progress in Year 9 are insecure.

Commentary

Examination results

121. Results in the 2004 examination were average and similar to those achieved in the previous year. The main problem in the examination was the coursework, where students lost more marks than they should have.

Standards and achievement

122. By the end of Year 9, students improve map skills and knowledge of places because teachers emphasise them in lessons. Students read data and use it to illustrate and evaluate information, but standards are lower than expected because of inaccuracies and lack of care in presentation. Students are aware of world issues, such as the effect of international tourism on the cultural heritage of Kenya's Muslim population. They are competent in using number to plot graphs but answers lack adequate explanation. Many students write well-developed and accurate accounts on topics but standards of lower attaining students are below average because of grammatical weaknesses. By the end of Year 11, students have achieved well, based on their standards when they entered the course. They have improved the standard of their map work and broadened their knowledge of global topics, such as development of world population. They have a good understanding of a wide range of terms and can use them in appropriate contexts. Writing skills are much improved. Many students, however, make insufficient use of named examples to complement theoretical knowledge, and question answering skills are not developed well enough.

Teaching and learning

123. In Year 9, lessons have clear aims and they are well planned. Most lessons begin with consolidation of work previously covered, but lesson summaries are not always used effectively. Lessons are interesting because teachers use a variety of well-produced resources. This generates interest and time is used well, but teachers do not always match tasks and resources to the needs of individuals. As a result learning is not fully effective for higher and lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs. Work is marked regularly and students respond well to encouragement, but they do not know how well they are doing against national

standards and how to improve. In Years 10 and 11, students benefit from specialist teaching, lessons are well managed and this leads to them achieving well. Good progress is made in using a range of map skills and ICT to present GCSE coursework and students are achieving better because they are receiving better guidance on how to improve their coursework. Occasionally, teachers talk for lengthy periods so that students are not engaged enough in the lesson.

Leadership and management

124. The subject improvement plan is linked to whole-school planning. GCSE data is well used to review students' achievement, but teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is generous. The emphasis placed on improving coursework is leading to higher standards in Year 11. Schemes of work provide good information, except for planning to teach citizenship and contributions to support students' literacy skills.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Year 11 because of good, enthusiastic teaching.
- Students are well motivated to succeed.
- Teaching of literacy skills lacks sufficient structure and consistency.

Commentary

Examination results

125. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were average, similar to 2003, although in previous years they were higher. Reasons for this drop have been identified and teachers have adopted appropriate strategies to improve students' attainment.

Standards and achievement

126. In Year 9, students reach average standards and, as their attainment is average when they enter the school at the start of that year, their achievement is satisfactory. In their oral work, especially, students show that their skills have developed well in using historical evidence to interpret events; their writing is of average standard. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others because teachers provide differentiated materials and learning styles that enable them to understand difficult concepts.

127. History is a popular option for GCSE courses and in Years 10 and 11 students develop good analytical skills. The written answers produced by the great majority of students show an above average standard of understanding and reasoning, as in the work that assessed how far Custer's personality influenced the US army's defeat at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Students of all levels of attainment achieve well and the standard of work seen is higher than the 2004 GCSE results would suggest. The

analysis of examination performance that was undertaken identified lower than expected marks gained for coursework as a key factor that depressed results, especially those achieved by boys. Action taken following consultations with an external coursework moderator has resulted in the clear improvements evident in the work of students currently studying history.

Teaching and learning

128. In Year 9, standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and regularly provide interesting and challenging learning tasks. In the challenging lesson on the use of propaganda posters by the Nazis, for example, the atmosphere buzzed as students discussed animatedly what the visible and the implied messages told them. The assessment of students' written work, however, is not of such a consistently good standard as teaching in lessons. The quality of marking varies between teachers and not enough information is provided in written feedback to tell students how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Strategies for teaching literacy skills, including speaking skills, are insufficiently identified and are not consistently used in lessons. Students' learning is enriched by good use of study visits.
129. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. The analysis of previous GCSE results, fully involving all teachers, has resulted in more effective coursework lessons that make full use of time and challenge students' thinking and organisational skills. Students now produce good coursework assignments and produce them by the deadlines because teachers emphasise the importance of this in gaining good GCSE grades. Assessments of other written answers are accurate although students still do not benefit from detailed feedback from teachers that tells them what improvements will gain higher grades.

Leadership and management

130. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory and management is good. The experienced and hard-working head of department is enthusiastic and inspires other members of the team. His management is organised and efficient and the mutually supportive ethos in the department benefits all, and underpins the very good relationships that teachers have with students. Progress towards more interactive learning, however, has been slower than in many history departments. The implications for history teaching of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Policy, for example, have not been fully realised, and the department's assessment and marking policy is underdeveloped.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and values.
- Results for the full GCSE course and early entry short GCSE course are well above average, despite the low time allocation.

- The use of assessment data to guide planning, and to monitor the progress of different groups, is underdeveloped.

Commentary

Examination results

131. Results in 2004 for the full course GCSE, that was completed in half the recommended time, supplemented by voluntary after-school classes, were very high. Results for the short course completed by students in Year 10 after only one year were well above average. Results of the short course completed by students in Year 11 after two years were below average and were affected by the negative attitudes of a significant number of students. These negative attitudes are not representative of the attitudes of students in the school now.

Standards and achievement

132. Students enter the school with broadly average standards in religious education. Standards in Year 9 are now above average and achievement is good. Students reflect on what they have learned and apply it to their own experiences. Higher attaining students in particular write with sensitivity and reasoning. Work interpreting the effect of the holocaust on the beliefs of different survivors demonstrated clear understanding of the feelings and experiences they went through. Students with weaker literacy skills demonstrate this understanding through their oral work, achieving a higher standard than their written responses which are more limited and lack explanation and reasoning.

133. Standards in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Teachers encourage students to consider the effect of what they learn, and to review their own beliefs and values in the light of new understanding. The standard of the independent work of the higher attaining students is very high and they apply thought and sensitivity to the issues considered. A minority of students are less motivated and although they are happy to be involved in the oral work of the class, they make minimal effort over their independent written responses.

Teaching and learning

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Thoughtful planning makes best use of the time and focuses on the lesson's key objective. Students maintain their concentration and experience a sense of achievement because of the brisk pace of most lessons, and tasks that are appropriately challenging. Students and teachers work together and this co-operation is enabling students to achieve well. Students following the full GCSE course are highly motivated, but they do not have textbooks for personal use and this limits the opportunities for independent study.

Leadership and management

135. The department is well led. Teachers have high aspirations and a shared commitment to the success of their students. Assessment and review procedures are being developed. Although there is not yet a body of previous assessment data, students are being encouraged to reflect on their own achievements and to identify their way forward. The efforts made to ensure all students have the opportunity to follow the full GCSE course are commendable and demonstrate a high level of commitment by teachers and students. ICT is used well as a teaching aid, but its use to support independent learning is at an early stage.

136. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Students are now involved in their assessment and the number of students studying a full course in religious education has risen significantly.

TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching.
- Standards are improving as a result of good leadership and management.
- Teachers do not always match the work to meet the needs of higher attaining students which leads to a lower than average proportion of the very highest grades.
- The assessments that teachers make at the end of Year 9 are far too generous and are not used to match work to the needs of all students.

Commentary

Examination results

137. Results in GCSE examinations were average in 2004 and students did worse in design and technology than in most of their other subjects; the percentage of GCSE A* and A grades was below average. Results have varied from year to year, partly due to changes in staffing and the curriculum.

Standards and achievement

138. Students enter the school with broadly average standards, although their practical skills are below average. By the end of Year 9, students' practical skills improve and are average. They know about modified starches and how these are used in modern day food products. Students use the basic functions of a computer-aided design package to produce designs for a board game although lower attainers struggle with drawing lines. Students' designing skills are average. They know what they want to design but many have below average skills of sketching and do not always annotate their work. Students have good research skills and use the Internet well to enhance their projects.

139. By the end of Year 11, students' practical skills are still average although their design skills are above average. Students' coursework is well organised although standards of writing are weak, particularly those of the boys. In textiles, fabrication work is average. Higher attainers produce quite exquisite ball gowns whilst lower attainers struggle with basic sewing techniques. The quality of graphics work varies in quality from average to well below average. In one Year 11 class, students' graphics work was of a low standard and there was a lack of creativity and many in this group are underachieving. This group of students have had six different teachers in the last year which is one reason for them underachieving. Students have an above average knowledge of control systems and use technical vocabulary to describe their electronic circuits.

Teaching and learning

140. Whilst teaching is satisfactory in Year 9 it is not as good as that seen in Years 10 and 11. The main difference is that teachers have a good command of the examination syllabus in Years 10 and 11 and use this to set standards and benchmarks for students. In Year 9, staff do not make enough use of National Curriculum levels to

match work to the needs of the students which results in students' achievement being satisfactory rather than good. In Year 9, the pace of teaching is satisfactory; in Years 10 and 11 teaching is quicker and teachers make more use of short focused tasks which help to sustain students' concentration.

141. In all years, teachers normally indicate to students what is to be learned in the lesson although they do not always check if students have been successful; this leaves some students not knowing how to proceed in the next lesson. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive which helps to build students' self-esteem; in many lessons, students are confident enough to ask searching questions of their teachers. Teachers do not always match work to the needs of the highest attainers which was evident in the lower than average percentage of A* and A grades at GCSE. Teachers have very high expectations of how students should behave and for the most part students respond very positively.

Leadership and management

142. Good leadership has identified the reasons why students did worse in design and technology than in most of their other subjects. A more stable teaching staff and changes to the curriculum have refocused the department on how to improve students' achievement. The management of the department is also good; there is extensive documentation and support for staff. One weakness is the assessments made by teachers at the end of Year 9; they are far too generous and are not used by teachers to match work to the needs of all students. A strength of the department is the way that teachers from Thomas Alleyne's work alongside teachers in partner middle schools as part of the specialist technology college programme. This enables the school to gain a better insight into what students are taught in Years 7 and 8 and at what standard they arrive at Thomas Alleyne's. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory; teaching and standards are similar to those noted in the previous report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and contributes directly to the very high standards.
- There are excellent leadership and management that inspire teachers, students and even visitors.
- Planning is exemplary in depth and detail ensuring structured learning in every lesson.
- Learning is supported by extensive extra-curricular provision.

Commentary

Examination results

143. In 2004, GCSE results were very high, with all but three students gaining A* to C grades. A quarter of all students gained A* and over two thirds A*/A grades. Students consistently do better in art and design than they do in their other subjects. Results have been at similar levels since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

144. Students enter the school with average standards. By the end of Year 9 they produce very good drawings from direct observation, a key feature in all units of work. They do a wide range of imaginative and experimental work in a range of materials that explores the impact of composition and surface pattern in very good depth. The multi-cultural influence embedded in all themes widens students' experience of different art forms.

145. By Year 11, standards are very high with all students on course to gain A* to C grades and approximately half of all students at A*/A standards. Work is highly expressive with exquisite drawing from still life in all units of work. In studies of surface pattern and texture, techniques of weaving and overlapping are used creatively and imaginatively with outstanding use of colour. Art history is an integral part of all units of work and extends students' vision and ideas far beyond that usually observed.

146. Overall, from their starting points when they join the school, students' achievement is outstanding by the time they leave Year 11.

Teaching and learning

147. Students experience so much consistently very good teaching that, overall, the teaching provision made by the school is excellent. All teachers have very good expertise. Planning is exemplary for all units of work; students are given clearly written, detailed guidance on how to structure their work. There is clear guidance on how to structure written notes that makes a good contribution to raising students' skills in literacy. The teachers give very good demonstrations of the key skills of drawing and painting, especially with regard to line, tone and texture. Assessment procedures are exemplary and ensure that all students fully understand the criteria for reaching the higher grades.

148. There is very good order and organisation within all lessons so there is effective use of time. All students get very good one-to-one guidance and support so they all make very good progress. The teachers give extensive extra time daily to enable students to meet the demands of the course. Visits to art galleries and visiting artists also contribute significantly to the provision. Students are interested and diligent and are good independent learners. Behaviour is excellent. Art and design is made relevant to the world of work by links with display and advertising.

Leadership and management

149. There is outstanding leadership giving excellent support to a dedicated and committed team of specialist teachers. The guidance on planning, with an 11-point process for development in all units of work, is the key to the success of the department. Storage requirements are solved by suspending three-dimensional work from the ceilings; this creates an inspiring environment for all who work in or visit the department. There are high quality displays of students' work around the school celebrating students' achievements and enhancing the school environment. The subject makes a very good

contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering emotions and personal intent in students' own work and in the work of artists studied. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Boys' standards and achievement have improved significantly and there is now good provision and use of ICT.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching very effectively supports the individual and collaborative pursuit of excellence.
- The outstanding quality of extra-curricular provision inspires students to be confident concert performers and makes an excellent contribution to the ethos of the school.
- Insufficient analysis of students' performance has omitted to identify and address lower attainment of boys in Year 9.

Commentary

Examination results

150. The small numbers involved make comparisons with national averages impossible. However, students have done much better in GCSE music than in most of their other subjects in recent years. Three-quarters of all students obtain A* or A grades each year.

Standards and achievement

151. By the end of Year 9, students have a keen awareness of different musical styles and genres, readily emulating these in group performance and improvisation. Higher attaining students express themselves musically without inhibition, communicating structure and content convincingly. Lower attaining students are sensitive to the mood and intention of the music they encounter. By the end of Year 11, students' compositions draw skilfully on analysis of their instrumental repertoire and study works, often showing marked originality. They perform challenging music confidently and supplement coursework with detailed commentaries. Very good understanding of technical vocabulary and notation enhances their aural perception. Students with less advanced instrumental skills analyse music less acutely. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well.

Teaching and learning

152. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and skilled planning of lessons inspire musical sensitivity and high technical competence, promoting individual and collaborative learning very well. Listening, performing and composing are very well integrated, consolidating learning and ensuring that all skills are treated equally. Opportunities to reinforce learning through listening a second time to music discussed in class, recording work, and providing musical illustration are inconsistent; some teachers do this as a matter of course, while others miss such opportunities. Regular and relevant homework ensures continuity between lessons. Good oral feedback helps students to improve, but marking is not diagnostic and spellings are often left uncorrected. Students' attitudes, overall, are excellent, with high levels of participation in voluntary music making. In Year 10, an above average proportion of students now opts for music.

Leadership and management

153. Since the previous inspection extra-curricular provision has gone from strength to strength. While talented students are not formally identified, they benefit enormously from: the outstanding quality of musical productions; choral and instrumental ensembles; performance opportunities in the school, the community and abroad; strong links with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Birmingham Conservatoire and

other external agencies; and the opportunity to assist the advanced skills teacher's dynamic outreach to first and middle schools. An above average proportion of students takes instrumental lessons. Analysis of assessment data lacks rigour, omitting to identify and address boys' attainment in Year 9 falling behind that of girls by a wider margin than is the case nationally. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory. When two classes are timetabled simultaneously, inadequate soundproofing markedly impairs the quality of listening and, when both classes are from Year 9, students cannot hear what they are doing in practical tasks with over 50 students in one room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 as a result of good teaching.
- High levels of participation in lessons and extra-curricular activities reflect the very good attitudes of students.
- An excellent extra-curricular programme offers all students, especially the gifted and talented, opportunities to excel in school and beyond.
- The curriculum is not fully inclusive because boys do not study the breadth of experiences that girls do in Year 9.

Commentary

Examination results

154. Students are unable to study for GCSE.

Standards and achievement

155. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' different starting points on entry to the school. Nevertheless, boys achieve well in basketball, and girls in netball. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, and achieve at the same rate as their classmates. In Years 10 and 11, standards are above average. Achievement is good, well illustrated by girls and boys in swimming. High attaining boys achieve well above average standards in football, applying their skills in the game with style and exuberance. Very high standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport, reflected in students' many successes in a range of sports at county, regional and national level. In 2004, the senior football team became County Champions, and reached the last 16 of the English Schools' Championships.

Teaching and learning

156. Knowledgeable teachers manage the students very well, and create an ethos that demands high standards in all respects. These are achieved, and students have respect and very good attitudes towards the subject. Standards of participation, dress and behaviour in lessons are of the highest order. Students also show their

commitment by very good support of extra-curricular activities. It is the level of challenge, together with the involvement of students in their learning, which separates the good teaching from the satisfactory. The best learning occurs when students are challenged intellectually, as well as physically, with high expectations for students to evaluate and improve performance. Too often, the teachers tell students what to do, rather than allowing them to think for themselves, and become more independent; this is particularly the case in Year 9. Students do not have enough planned opportunities to learn how to evaluate and improve performance. There is insufficient planning for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Leadership and management

157. Strong leadership supports traditional values, and has a clear view of what constitutes good physical education. An excellent extra-curricular programme, run by highly committed staff, offers a wide range of opportunities for all students, especially the gifted and talented, to excel. However, the curriculum is not fully inclusive, as boys do not study four areas of physical education in Year 9, thereby narrowing the breadth of their experience. The focus on regular fitness testing, as students move through the school, is a strength of the curriculum, and of particular value to students in emphasising the importance of an active lifestyle. There is insufficient planning for the development of students' literacy, numeracy and citizenship. The school is very close to achieving the aim of the national strategy for all students to have at least two hours a week of quality physical education.

158. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved, and new curriculum initiatives introduced, successfully.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Well above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Very good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Very good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching brings about very effective learning for students of all abilities.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subject with their students.
- Staff use their commercial experience well to extend students' learning.

Commentary

Examination results

159. Results in 2004 were well above the national average; a high proportion gained the very highest grades.

Standards and achievement

160. Standards are well above the national average and students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Students' knowledge and skills are well beyond what might typically be expected. Students work to their capacity and respond well to challenges. Year 11 students show a clear understanding of key business ideas and processes, such as internal and external economies of scale. Notes are carefully written and students communicate confidently and accurately. They are developing very good evaluative skills and work together well to produce a consensus of opinion. All are keen to contribute in lessons and are good at arguing their case in class discussions.

Teaching and learning

161. Teaching is very good and students learn very quickly as a result. Teachers thoroughly prepare their work. Staff have an enthusiasm for the subject and a commitment which inspires students so that they respond well to the variety of challenges set for them. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and quickly establish a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Teachers provide informed answers to questions and skilfully lead discussions and investigations. Assessment is well organised. Teachers make effective comments on students' written work so that they know how well they are doing and how to further improve their work. Teachers set clear targets in language that students fully understand. In class, questions are well targeted and responses are supportive so that understanding is continually checked. Teachers use their commercial experience very well to further promote students' understanding by making constant reference to the workplace and the real economy.

Leadership and management

162. The department is managed well. The aims and values of the department reflect those of the school and are clear. Staff are well informed and committed to the school's aims. Staffing levels have been inconsistent in recent years, but although there have been many issues with staffing, results have remained consistently high. There has been good progress since the time of the previous inspection. The good features have been maintained and all students are now making very good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

The quality of personal, social and health education is satisfactory. There is a planned programme of provision that gives adequate coverage to careers education, relationships and sex education and drug abuse.

Provision in PSHE is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good curricular links with the middle schools.
- Work experience is well planned and provides students with good placements.
- Parents are constructively involved with careers education in Year 9.
- Arrangements for teaching PSHE were recently revised. The new procedures are not fully embedded and evaluated.

Commentary

163. There is close co-operation with the middle schools over the delivery of PSHE at Key Stage 3. Thomas Alleyne's High School has a good knowledge of what students in Years 7 and 8 have covered, and is able to plan for satisfactory continuity and progression in Year 9. There are no discrete PSHE lessons on the timetable in Year 9. The subject is taught in drama lessons and, in the case of careers, by means of the extra-curricular 'Opportunities Programme'. Schemes of work for the teaching of PSHE through drama ensure that students receive their entitlement. The Opportunities Programme involves students and parents in after-school sessions in which they work together to learn about careers opportunities. The programme was piloted last year and was judged to be a success. The school expects that this year all Year 9 students will take part in the Opportunities Programme.
164. In Years 10 and 11, specialist teachers teach the programme of PSHE in timetabled lessons. The time allocated to the PSHE and careers education is adequate when special events, such as the Sexual Health Roadshow and Options Day, are taken into account. Morning registrations make a small contribution to the subject, such as when students work on their progress files.
165. The quality of teaching in lessons observed during the inspection was good overall and students' achievement was good. Standards of attainment were good in the small sample of written work seen during the inspection.
166. Students in Year 10 benefit from a good programme of work experience. They have access to a wide choice of different kinds of placement with local employers, and are well briefed before they start. The majority of students find their placements fulfilling and enjoyable. They obtain valuable insights into the world of work, and get good opportunities to accept responsibility and use their initiative.
167. At present PSHE, including careers education, makes a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development and to the school provision for support guidance. Delivery of the subject in Year 9 has been radically reorganised and it is too early to assess the impact of the new arrangements.
168. Citizenship is taught through all subjects in Years 9 to 11 and in the form tutorial programme. Significant contributions are made through Year 9 drama lessons and PSHE lessons in Years 10 and 11.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not Applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities to take part in an active-citizenship programme.

- Citizenship in the majority of subjects is insufficiently developed; it is not identified well enough in planning.
- Assessment procedures do not sufficiently inform students of the progress they make.
- A small team of specialist PSHE teachers teach citizenship which ensures consistency.

Commentary

169. Students do not follow an examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

170. Year 9 students join the school with a wide range of experiences in citizenship; standards are average and remain average by the end of Year 9, reflecting their satisfactory achievement. Average standards and achievement are a consequence of a good contribution by the teaching in drama, offset by the limited impact by other curriculum subjects and tutorials. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average, which represents good achievement. The above average standards and the good achievement are a result of a well-planned enrichment programme, off-timetable activities and the structured PSHE programme. All Year 10 students have a very positive experience on a day course called 'Defence Matters Work', which involves problem solving and decision making. Through the house system all students undertake work for a wide range of local charities and give support for a school in Africa. House and school councils are also providing opportunities for all students to take part in the democratic process.

Teaching and learning

171. The consistently good teaching seen across all years is a consequence of the subject being taught by specialist PSHE teachers in Years 10 and 11 and by drama teachers who have thrown themselves into the teaching of citizenship with enthusiasm. Teachers have very good knowledge of citizenship. They apply it well in lessons and as a result students learn well. Lessons are well planned and lesson objectives are shared with students. The majority of lessons include practical activities. For instance, Year 11 students studying personal finance used Internet banking sites to successfully analyse the best options for their personal banking. Similarly in drama, students work well in realistic role-play situations. They debate in twos and threes, different scenarios, like drugs in society. The majority of students experience a wide range of rural activities at the school's farm. These experiences contribute well to students' understanding of the rural community. Students gain a wide understanding of society through practical situations. However, the scrutiny of students' files shows a limited amount of citizenship is committed to paper. Students are strongly encouraged by teachers to become involved in citizenship and they respond very well. Students' very good attitudes underpin their learning.

Leadership and management

172. The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory. Aspects of citizenship have been successfully integrated into the Year 9 drama programme and the PSHE programme in Years 10 and 11. However, the co-ordinator has insufficient time to effectively monitor and evaluate the contribution made by other subjects. Rural science and religious education make good contributions to citizenship but, in the majority of subjects, citizenship is insufficiently developed as the citizenship focus is not made sufficiently explicit in lessons. Assessment and reporting procedures do not reliably inform students of the progress they make in the three strands. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE 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	30	100.0	98.3	83.3	50.2	105.3	87.1
Biology	27	100.0	96.6	37.0	40.0	82.2	79.3
Business studies	16	100.0	98.9	25.0	39.4	81.3	80.8
Chemistry	21	100.0	97.7	66.7	50.0	99.0	85.7
Performance studies	6	100.0	99.2	50.0	40.4	86.7	83.5
Economics	5	100.0	98.8	60.0	54.3	88.0	89.8
English literature	58	100.0	99.4	36.2	44.9	83.4	85.5
Design and technology	26	96.2	26.9	35.0	35.0	74.6	77.9
French	9	100.0	99.0	66.7	53.1	97.8	88.9
Geography	12	100.0	98.8	66.7	46.4	95.0	85.2
History	30	100.0	99.0	53.3	45.6	90.0	85.1
Information technology	15	93.3	96.3	13.3	25.7	68.0	71.1
Mathematics	34	100.0	96.8	67.6	56.6	97.6	89.5
Other sciences	6	100.0	97.4	0.0	44.2	66.7	82.5
Other social studies	40	100.0	97.4	42.5	42.7	94.0	81.6
Physics	18	100.0	96.7	50.0	45.3	91.1	82.6
Sociology	9	100.0	98.5	11.1	45.3	66.7	84.6
Sports studies	15	100.0	97.8	33.3	30.9	88.0	75.4
Health and social care VCE	18	100.0	93.5	5.6	24.9	67.8	70.0
Art and design VQ	14	100.0	94.8	100.0	45.3	117.1	82.4

The school recruits relatively large numbers for all courses and the retention rate is high for all subjects.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this report was on English and French, although lessons in Spanish and German were sampled. Standards in both languages are above average. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Students show a high level of motivation and good independent learning skills.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships are a major strength of the department.
- Staff are very hardworking and passionate about their subject.
- Students do not express themselves with sufficient skill or cogency because they do not engage sufficiently rigorously in discussion of texts
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

173. Results at A-level were above average in 2003 and average in 2004.

Standards and achievement

174. Students are able to make judgements about texts and to support them with relevant quotations. They study a range of texts and are able to articulate a personal response to them. Students rarely engage in discussion about these views, and do not critically challenge the views of the teacher or of fellow students. As a result, students do not get the opportunity to refine or develop their initial views about texts. Students rarely do independent research on texts, and as a result do not read a range of critical views, or get good literary models for their own writing. This is reflected in written work, the standards of which are broadly average.

175. Students can identify literary techniques, such as similes and metaphors. However, they are not encouraged to take their thinking a step further, and explain the effects of these. Their analytical skills are not as well developed as a result, which means that they perform less well in the examinations than in coursework, where there is more support from the teacher.

Teaching and learning

176. One of the main strengths of the department is the very positive relationships between students and teachers. Teachers are extremely hardworking and committed, and are able to communicate their love of literature to the students. Their enthusiasm for the subject results in excellent behaviour from the students.
177. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, and lessons are well planned. Teachers are keen to share their knowledge with the students. As a result, discussions are unduly led by the teacher. Students are not always given sufficient time to study materials in the paired work, and this does not encourage them to fully explore their ideas. It also means that they are not getting enough time to develop their skills in literary criticism.
178. Teachers have tended to compensate for the mix of attainments in the sixth form group by providing more support materials than would normally be expected. This has encouraged the students to be over-reliant on the teacher. The teachers do not expect students to do pre-lesson preparation, and homework is not set which develops the learning.
179. Teachers tend to use questioning in lessons to get the 'right' answers, rather than using them to monitor the learning. As a result, the less confident students are overlooked. The marking of coursework across the department is quite varied. Some teachers use grades, others use numbers. Comments tend to be about technical weaknesses, and do not relate to the grade descriptors in the examination syllabus. Consequently, students are not always clear about why their work has achieved a particular grade, and what they would need to do to achieve a higher grade.
180. Across the department there is a lack of clarity about the assessment objectives, and how these relate to the AS and A2 modules. This means that lessons tend to focus on the content of texts, as opposed to focusing on the skills of the assessment objectives. As a result, the assessment objectives are not made explicit to students during lessons, which does not give them enough insight as to what would be expected in the external examination.

Leadership and management

181. The head of department is hard working and committed. She provides a good role model for staff. She has encouraged staff to work more collaboratively in their planning, but this has not led to the sharing of good practice in teaching. The systems of monitoring the teaching are not effective in picking up inconsistencies in the assessment of students' work, or in identifying the training needs of individual teachers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

182. Standards of literacy are well above average. The school makes good provision to ensure that the students' literacy skills are developed in other subjects.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
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Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection.	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are above average as a result of good teaching.
- Students have excellent attitudes to work and show a high level of motivation. As a result they achieve well.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Very good assessment shows students what levels they are at and how to improve.

Commentary

Examination results

183. Results at A-level were above average in 2004. Students achieve well in relation to the grades they gained previously in GCSE examinations.

Standards and achievement

184. Students understand the detail of adult spoken and written French. They have a wide vocabulary and discuss important topical, political and environmental issues in depth and detail. They have a thorough understanding of grammar for work at this level. Written work shows a good level of accuracy.

Teaching and learning

185. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, both with the level of spoken and written French required and with the technicalities of how best to prepare students for examinations. Teachers give students a high level of personal and academic support and this improves students' self-confidence. Very good assessment procedures, including the use of marking, give students an indication of their present level of performance and of their likely grades. Students are attentive and highly motivated and respond well to the high expectation that teachers have of their performance. Occasionally, especially when students are working over double periods, teachers do not have a wide enough range of teaching strategies to maintain interest and the pace of the lesson drops.

Leadership and management

186. An encouraging number of students choose to study languages in the sixth form. The curriculum is good and three languages are offered. Trips abroad and exchanges with schools on the continent have substantial benefits in terms of students' learning, experience and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students have opportunities for work experience abroad. Teachers and students work hard together and show a high level of mutual respect.

MATHEMATICS

The focus was on mathematics, but accountancy was also sampled. In the lesson sampled, good teaching resulted in students learning well how to construct a cash-flow statement. The use of mnemonics helped students learn the steps involved. Students responded well

to carefully constructed questions, gaining confidence in their skills. Standards in this lesson were above average.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above Average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, consequently, students are well motivated and work hard.
- The very good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Teachers do not get enough opportunities to learn from each other's strengths.

Commentary

Examination results

187. In 2004, results at A-level were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

188. Overall achievement is good, given the students' attainment on entry to the course. Results improved in 2004 and the standard of work seen is well above average. The quality of students' written and oral work is generally well above that expected at this stage in the course. In pure mathematics, students demonstrate a very good understanding of partial fractions and use this when developing a greater understanding of binomial expansion. In mechanics, students are able to identify and model circular motion with constant speed and can apply the principles of circular motion to the conical pendulum. In further mathematics, students extend their understanding of momentum and collisions to solving problems with oblique collisions with walls.

Teaching and learning

189. Very good relationships between students and teachers promote confidence in students. The very good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts. Teachers give very good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear aims of what students are expected to achieve. Students participate well in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering questions and answers. However, there are often too few opportunities for them to take a more active role in the lesson and to work together in pairs or groups so that they can learn from each other. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work is generally good. The better marking indicates where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

190. The very good leadership and good management are rooted in effective consultation and collaboration amongst teachers. There is a clear vision for improvement. Teachers work very well together and are keen to raise standards in mathematics. The department has developed strategies for raising attainment, particularly by bridging the gap between GCSE and AS-level. There is a very good match of teaching staff to the curriculum with a good diversity of qualities. Good strategies have been developed to support new teachers. However, there is little monitoring of teaching and learning within the department for sixth form mathematics. Teachers have few opportunities to see each other teach so that their skills can be enhanced further. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Results are analysed thoroughly. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject, ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are good links with universities that enhance the mathematics curriculum

Mathematics across the curriculum

191. Competence in mathematics is above average. Students' competency in the use of statistics is particularly good.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on physics, but biology, chemistry and environmental science were also sampled. Teaching in the biology and chemistry lessons was very good and students are clearly achieving very well. In environmental science, the teaching was good and students are achieving well.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good because of the very good teaching.
- Teachers' expectations of students are high.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and of course requirements.

Commentary

Examination results

192. Examination results at A-level were well above average in 2004.

Standards and achievement

193. Approximately 35 students enter the AS-level physics course each year, with GCSE science grades that are average. Standards on both the AS and the A2 courses are

well above average, and achievement is very good. Students' work shows a clear understanding of some challenging concepts, such as wave particle duality, but their extended written answers fail to match the strength of responses to questions requiring mostly mathematical solutions.

Teaching and learning

194. Students achieve very well because of teachers' high expectations of the breadth and depth of work that can be covered in a given time, teachers' very good subject knowledge of physics and its applications, and efficient preparation for module tests. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, and use this to good effect within interesting and challenging lessons. Activities are appropriate and varied, leading to very positive responses from students within an atmosphere of mutual respect and good humour. Assessment is frequent and students receive individualised diagnostic feedback in lessons.

Leadership and management

195. The head of physics provides very good leadership, encouraging high expectations and providing clear guidance on raising standards. The teachers in the physics team work well together and share a commitment to improving students' achievement. The previous inspection report referred to A-level physics in general terms, with achievement described as good. Since then improvements are evident with the quality of teaching and achievement both very good. As a result, progress since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology.

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to students achieving very well.
- Students know exactly how well they are doing and how to develop their work as the result of excellent assessment.
- Very detailed study booklets assist students to develop as independent learners.

Commentary

Examination results

196. Results in the 2004 examination were average. These results were not as high as in the previous year because the students started the course with lower standards.

Standards and achievement

197. The above average standards represent very good achievement over the AS course to date, especially as almost half of the students had not taken the subject at GCSE. Students analyse problems in detail and readily apply the theoretical side of their learning to practical projects. In the A2 course, standards in the current year are also above average and again represent very good achievement given the standards with which students started the course. Students have a good understanding of designing computer systems, producing applications to be used in local companies. Students readily grasp the potential of ICT to increase efficiency and how it underpins features previously taken for granted such as electronic car keys. Students document their work in detail but do not always recognise limitations in their solutions to problems.

Teaching and learning

198. Teaching and learning are very good because the excellent assessment system underpins all work. Each piece of work is supported by high-quality booklets produced by the teachers. Not only do these give very detailed instructions of what is required, but they also tell students exactly what they must achieve to gain examination marks. Students use these booklets, which are also available on-line, most maturely so that they rapidly develop their ability to work independently of their teacher; which is very good preparation for further study. Each step is then meticulously recorded so that teacher and student know exactly what has been achieved to date and the next steps for further development. Students rightly place high value on this support. Teachers' very good knowledge, particularly of ICT applications, also supports learning very well as difficult points are frequently clarified by examples of how that aspect is applied. Students frequently reflect on the power of ICT to affect society. Lessons move at a lively pace because students respond very well to the demanding challenge, knowing that they are expected to conduct further research in their own time to gain the necessary depth of understanding.

Leadership and management

199. Leadership uses the very extensive data maintained on each student to monitor very carefully not only progress being made but also the effectiveness of teaching so that adjustments can be readily made if required. A very strong team approach underpins the teaching so that the contribution of each teacher complements that of the others. The course has been well chosen to meet the needs and interests of the students.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

200. Students display above average levels of competency in the use of ICT. They recognise the advantages brought, especially to conduct research, and so develop their ability to study independently. In no subject inspected did a lack of ICT skills hinder student achievement. In technology-based subjects such as product design and music technology, the use of ICT makes a considerable contribution to learning through industry-standard packages of computer-aided design and manufacture in the former subject and sound manipulation packages in the latter.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on history and psychology, but geography and religious education were sampled. Teaching was good in geography and very good in religious education. Students are achieving well in both subjects.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching produces challenging lessons that move at pace and lead to students achieving well.
- Students work well independently and relish the frequent opportunities to bounce their ideas off each other in group discussions.
- The analysis of students’ previous attainment and the setting of realistic targets for their future achievements are rigorous.

Commentary

Examination results

201. Results in the 2004 examinations were above average.

Standards and achievement

202. Students in Year 12 quickly adjust to the more challenging demands of AS-level work. The great majority produce writing that analyses critically source evidence, evaluates different views and reaches well-supported conclusions. Almost every student continues to the A-level course and, in Year 13, most of them demonstrate above average investigative skills. They become confident independent learners who

produce coursework that reflects clear thinking and a critical self-evaluation of the quality of work they are producing. They bring this constructive critical approach to bear when appraising each other's work in class, and this greatly benefits the quality of all their work.

Teaching and learning

203. All students benefit from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching. Teachers plan their lessons well, including in them a range of individual and interactive activities that challenge and stimulate their students. As a result, students learn well and achieve well in both Years 12 and 13. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students worked animatedly in small groups to pool their ideas, before presenting their group's conclusions to the whole class in impressive, confident style.

204. A good lesson in Year 13 achieved the objective of sharpening students' awareness of the need for careful planning and the inclusion of concise and relevant supporting evidence in examination answers. As a result, students learned well. Teachers are well versed in the requirements of examinations and their assessment of written assignments is accurate and the marking is detailed and thorough. The monitoring of student achievement and progress, through frequent assessment and student target setting, is rigorous. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and they greatly enjoy the lessons.

Leadership and management

205. The subject is managed well and clear leadership provides vision and direction. Well-structured documents that contain thorough schemes of work and guidance for staff are in place. An annual evaluation of students' performance in examinations is carried out and this feeds directly into teaching and learning plans. The maintenance of good standards through the period of changes to post-16 examinations means that good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm.
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve.
- There is insufficient access to ICT.

Commentary

Examination results

206. Examination results in 2004 were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

207. Students have broadly average attainments on entry. During Year 12, students make very good gains in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills, including the use of appropriate specialist subject vocabulary in discussions and in their writing. Year 13 students continue to progress at a very good rate and show well above average analytical and evaluative skills in discussion and in their written work.

Teaching and learning

208. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach with infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Good planning and preparation ensure that lessons have clear learning objectives and relevant content and are well organised. Lessons proceed at a very good pace. Core research studies and relevant theory are explained and illustrated clearly and confidently. Suitably challenging questions and discussions are used to shape, consolidate and extend students' understanding.

209. Teachers have high expectations of student achievement within a caring and supportive environment. Students concentrate and work hard during lessons, showing high levels of interest and motivation. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are exemplary. Students reported that they liked studying psychology and that they felt very well supported by their teachers. They valued the feedback they received on their performance, particularly information on whether their completed assignments were in line with their predicted target grades.

210. In some lessons students do not have ready access to ICT facilities, so they are unable to use it to carry out research, present their findings or develop their independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

211. The head of department has a clear vision for the further development of the subject. Data is used particularly well to monitor performance and to predict and set target grades for students. Raising standards is central to departmental planning and this is supported through effective monitoring of performance and the collation of appropriate resources. There is a subject development plan which correctly includes a target related to the further development of ICT facilities for teaching and learning. Provision in psychology has improved since the previous inspection. It is now the most popular subject in the sixth form, with two specialist teachers.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The focus for the inspection was the product design course. The AVCE manufacturing course was also sampled. Students achieve well on this course because of the good quality teaching they receive. Students have a sound knowledge of research techniques.

Provision in product design is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
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Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Good resources and facilities help students to experience a wide range of production processes.
- Good leadership has created an effective team of teachers.
- There are very good links with industry which enhance students' achievement.
- Students do not place enough emphasis on the detail of their designs.

Commentary

Examination results

212. In 2004, examination results were average.

Standards and achievement

213. Students demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of production processes. They are articulate but do not always use the technical language of the subject when describing their projects. Students have above average design skills but do not always pay enough attention to design details that enhance the quality of the products they create. Students' design work is thorough but lacks creativity. Product evaluation is above average, with students often carrying out detailed testing of products. Students make good use of ICT to present work and make good use of computer-aided design and manufacture in the production of their products. Practical skills are average; students use a range of tools appropriately. Very good links with industry enhance students' knowledge and understanding of how industry operates.

Teaching and learning

214. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use this well to focus students on how to attain the best marks against the examination criteria. Relationships between staff and students are very good and students gain in confidence. However, teachers miss opportunities to engage students in detailed debate about the wonders of design and do not always widen students' understanding of design. Teachers match tasks well to the needs of students which enables students of all abilities to achieve well.

Leadership and management

215. Teachers work together well as an effective team. Monitoring procedures are good and have resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Many new courses have been introduced and good facilities aid learning. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on art and design and performance studies. One lesson of music technology GCE was observed in Year 12. Although two students did not have the basis of GCSE music, all students are very enthused by the course, achieving very well. Very good teaching was methodical and communicated subject knowledge very well. Students, all boys, interacted in discussion with the teacher as young professionals, articulate and sensitive to the demands of close microphone recording. One lesson of music GCE was observed in Year 13. This was an exceptional lesson. Teaching was very good, supporting the student both emotionally and academically.

Art and design

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Excellent	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching inspires and enables students to reach very high standards.

- Planning is exemplary and guides students in how to work creatively.
- Excellent leadership instils the highest expectations.
- Students display total commitment to their work.
- There is extensive extra-curricular provision to give students maximum opportunities for success.

Commentary

Examination results

216. Examination results are very high and consistently in the top five per cent of results nationally. In 2004, all but one of the AVCE students gained AA grades; the remaining student gained BB grades. Since the previous inspection, all other students gained AA grades. At A-level, half of all students gained A grades and a much higher than average proportion gained A or B grades. In 2004, two A2 students were among the top five nationally. This represents excellent achievement.

Standards and achievement

217. All AVCE students are on course to achieve AA grades. The work of all students is characterised by very good drawing and painting skills from direct observation. Students are able to make strong impact with the use of line, tone and texture. Final pieces are bold and dramatic. Students have an outstanding awareness of how to select and use imagery to make personal statements in their paintings and sculptures. They can think for themselves and use the freedom to express ideas in individual ways. The students are mature, confident and articulate and speak with energy about their work.

Teaching and learning

218. The students on the AVCE course benefit from the teaching and specialist expertise of all five teachers. This broadens and extends their experience of a range of art forms. Students on the AS and A2 courses also benefit from having two teachers, each of whom has control over specific aspects of the work. All students get intensive individual guidance and support from their teachers. This is of outstanding quality and informs, inspires and enables students to aim for the highest levels. There is extensive extra-curricular provision that includes daily art clubs, visiting artists and visits to art galleries in London and the regions.

Leadership and management

219. There is excellent practice throughout the department and a passion for the subject that inspires teachers and students. Exemplary guidance on planning and assessment is the essence of the success. There is excellent teamwork and a totally cohesive approach to support for the students. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering these aspects in their own working practices and in the work of other artists. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. The very high standards have been maintained.

Performance Studies

220. In Year 12, students begin by taking drama, with elements of music and dance. In terms two and three and for the whole of Year 13, they study drama and either music or dance. The focus of the inspection was drama, but one lesson in music and one in dance were observed. In the Year 13 music lesson, teaching and learning were very good. Students successfully identified minimalist features in a piece of music. In the

Year 12 dance lesson, teaching and learning were very good. Students watched a video and were inventive in their own interpretation of the dance seen.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students' attitudes to work are very good, so that they learn very quickly.
- Standards in written work, although above average, are not as good as standards in practical work.

Commentary

Examination results

221. Examination results were above average in 2004.

Standards and achievement

222. Students start the course with below average standards; many have never studied the subject before, and so their above average standards by the end of the course represent very good achievement. Students in Year 12 are getting to grips with Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and relishing the humour. They use body language and facial expression effectively when presenting an extract in groups. Year 13 students have a firm understanding of the play *Road* and show great enthusiasm and flair in rehearsing and performing a scene. In both years, students' collaboration is excellent and this is raising standards in practical drama. Written work, although above average, is not as good as practical work. The content is often very good, but some vague expression and failure to give sufficient explanations take away some of the impact.

Teaching and learning

223. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons very well to focus on examination requirements. They have high expectations of what students can do and set challenging tasks which make students think hard. Pace is brisk and relationships are strong. Teachers give students the chance to evaluate one another's performance and this helps to improve practical work. Marking is very good. Teachers pinpoint weaknesses and suggest how they might be overcome. When setting written work they demonstrate how to proceed, rather than just telling students what to do. This helps students to improve essay writing.

Leadership and management

224. Performing arts has a high profile in the school. Teachers work very well as a team and meet regularly to plan, and discuss how standards can be improved still further. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained. Teaching, achievement and resources are all better.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focused on physical education.

Physical education

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership inspires an enthusiasm for the subject, and provides a clear vision of the standards required.
- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching and their own excellent attitudes to the subject.
- Not all students have the opportunity to maintain an active lifestyle as part of their enrichment curriculum.

Commentary

Examination results

225. Results in the 2004 examinations were well above average.

Standards and achievement

226. Year 12 students are achieving very well. They show a very good knowledge and understanding of the importance of feedback in skill acquisition. In Year 13, standards in the students' theoretical coursework are well above average. Achievement is very good. Students use the technical language of sport psychology with confidence. They have a very good understanding of attribution and its relevance to performance in sport.

Teaching and learning

227. Teachers are very knowledgeable, and have an enthusiasm for the subject. Students are well motivated by a range of interesting activities that give them an active role in their learning. A particular strength is the way in which teachers use a practical context to consolidate the learning of theoretical concepts. Teachers have high expectations and set a demanding pace. Probing questioning makes students think deeply, and ensures that all make a positive contribution. Students have excellent attitudes and participate very well. Very clear, detailed and informative marking ensures that students know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

228. Very good leadership provides a clear vision of the standards required, and an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Assessment data is used well to set individual targets and record progress. Students appreciate the good support and guidance they receive. There are very good opportunities for students to continue their sporting interests through the extra-curricular programme. However, there is no opportunity for all sixth form students to participate regularly in physical activity, or gain the Community Sports Leader Award, as part of their enrichment curriculum. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Advanced level courses are very well established, standards are consistently high, and teaching is very good.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Learning is significantly enhanced by the links with the business community.
- Teachers do not expect enough of students in discussion.

Commentary

Examination results

229. Results in the 2004 A2 level examinations were average. In AVCE, results were above average.

Standards and achievement

230. By the end of Year 13, A-level students are knowledgeable about the structure and finance of business. They know why firms such as banks choose to re-locate customer services abroad and understand about the importance of planning marketing strategies. Students know about the role of the Advertising Standards Authority in protecting consumer interests, but do not show depth of understanding in written work and discussion. In the AVCE course, students understand the theoretical aspects about how demand and supply affects price of products and use data to plot graphs. They achieve well in relating study to business practice through the Young Enterprise scheme where they use business consultants to plan marketing strategies. Standards are lower when students do not develop answers in enough detail and where grammatical weaknesses occur.

Teaching and learning

231. Teachers are well qualified and they bring a wealth of business experience to lessons. This leads to students improving their understanding about the practical applications of study. The aims of lessons are clear and linked to case studies of business enterprise, so that students gain insight into how business works. In the most effective lessons, students are put under pressure to contribute ideas through presentations and it leads to students improving their understanding of topics and being more self-reliant. In some lessons however, the teacher spends too long talking without allowing the students to contribute. Students benefit greatly from the support and guidance they receive; it raises their self-esteem and confidence to achieve higher, but they do not always receive enough written feedback on the completion of assignments.

Leadership and management

232. The improvement plan is linked to whole-school development, but the criteria against which achievement will be measured are too general. Improvement of standards in the A-level course, however, is not incorporated into planning. The subject is well managed. Data is used to monitor students' progress and the schemes of work provide direction about curriculum planning. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. This is evident in the continuing good achievement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subject which inspires the students and encourages them to do well.
- Students apply their knowledge and understanding to real situations, which improves standards.
- The head of department provides an excellent role model for staff and students alike.
- There is not enough use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

233. Results in the double award AVCE in 2004 were average.

Standards and achievement

234. Students achieve better than might be expected from their GCSE results. Year 12 students already use technical terminology correctly. All can use and explain health measurements, accurately interpret data and effectively draw conclusions about the physiological status of clients. Students demonstrate a secure understanding of health and social care services.

Teaching and learning

235. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Teachers utilise their broad subject knowledge and enthusiasm to motivate students well. They prepare their work thoroughly and the teaching methods used are imaginative, although students do not get enough opportunities to use ICT. Students' individual needs are well catered for and they value the individual approach that each of the teachers adopts. Assessment is well organised. Teachers make effective comments on students' written work so that each knows how well they are doing and how they can further improve their work.

236. Students benefit from five weeks of well-organised work experience, which allows them to experience a wide variety of placements and learn from a range of clients. Throughout the two years they also attend health care placements for one day each week and so they are able to identify aspects of their own behaviour and see how this

impacts upon the care setting. Students therefore have many opportunities to communicate effectively with care workers and their clients.

Leadership and management

237. The head of department leads and manages the department well. She is reflective and self-critical and acts as a role model for staff. She leads a team of staff who are committed to AVCE. The previous report had a joint GNVQ paragraph, which did not differentiate sufficiently between the different courses running and the different key stages. As a result of this, it is not possible to make a judgement as to improvement since the time of the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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