

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THURSTABLE SCHOOL**

Tiptree, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115329

Headteacher: Mr Nick Hammond

Lead inspector: Mr James Bowden

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> March – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268994

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school:              | Comprehensive                                  |
| School category:             | Foundation                                     |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11-18  |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed  |
| Number on roll:              | 1169   |
| School address:              | Maypole Road<br>Tiptree<br>COLCHESTER<br>Essex |
| Postcode:                    | CO5 0EW  |
| Telephone number:            | 01621 816526                                   |
| Fax number:                  | 01621 815409                                   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr Tony Webb                                   |
| Date of previous inspection: | 11 <sup>th</sup> January 1999                  |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Thurstable is a popular 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive specialist sports college attracting pupils and students from a wide area. There are 1169 on roll, 168 of whom are in the sixth form. This is about the same size as other secondary schools with a sixth form. The school's socio economic circumstances are average. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. However, the selective system in the local authority means that the school has fewer higher-attaining pupils than would be expected for a comprehensive school. The sixth form is increasingly popular. It has grown considerably since the previous inspection and the range of courses on offer has increased. A unique feature of the school is the girls' sixth form football academy, which is now growing in popularity and is starting to draw applicants from other schools. The percentage of pupils on the school's list of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. About half of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils with a statement of their particular needs is below the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also below the national average. A well below average percentage of pupils is from ethnic minorities and there are hardly any pupils whose first language is not English. A small, number of pupils are settled travellers and are well integrated into the school. Few pupils join the school during the year; so mobility is low, and about one half of the pupils stay on to join the sixth form. The school is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Project Trident, Young Enterprise, the Colchester Teacher Training consortium and is the 'hub' school in the local school sports partnership programme – working with four other secondary schools and 27 primary schools. The

school gained the Healthy Schools award in 2001, Investors in People status for the third time in 2003 and, was re-awarded Sportsmark status earlier this year. The school also hosts a variety of community provision.

NB: Throughout this report 'pupil' is used in Years 7 to 11 and 'student' is used in the sixth form.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |             |                | Subject responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|---|
| 7926                           | J Bowden    | Lead inspector |   |
| 19798                          | J O’Keefe   | Lay inspector  |   |
| 33698                          | P Doran     | Team inspector | English; sixth form English   |
| 1503                           | T Browne    | Team inspector | Mathematics; sixth form mathematics   |
| 4922                           | M Driver    | Team inspector | Science; sixth form biology   |
| 32231                          | A Lyons     | Team inspector | Information and communication technology; sixth form information and communication technology |
| 11258                          | I Rushforth | Team inspector | Art and design  |
| 2495                           | B Munden    | Team inspector | Design and technology   |
| 35060                          | K Robinson  | Team inspector | Geography   |
| 20767                          | J Royle     | Team inspector | Music; English as an additional language  |
| 31682                          | A Storey    | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages; citizenship   |
| 31192                          | J Stewart   | Team inspector | Physical education; sixth form physical education   |
| 23307                          | N McDonough | Team inspector | Religious education   |
| 18835                          | J Mullan    | Team inspector | Special educational needs   |
| 33135                          | K Ropek     | Team inspector | Sixth form art and design   |
| 10817                          | G Rayner    | Team inspector | History   |
| 33448                          | J Wye       | Team inspector |   |

The inspection contractor was:

### **e-Qualitas Limited**

Langshaw  
Pastens Road  
Limpsfield Chart  
OXTED  
Surrey  
RH8 0RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet *‘Complaining about*

*Ofsted Inspections'*, which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>       |           |
| <b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>                             | <b>10</b> |
| Standards achieved in subjects and courses                      |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities          |           |
| <b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>              | <b>14</b> |
| Teaching and learning   |           |
| The curriculum  |           |
| Care, guidance and support                                      |           |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community       |           |
| <b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>                                | <b>22</b> |
| <b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>                                 | <b>23</b> |
| <b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> | <b>25</b> |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>               |           |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>                   |           |
| <b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>        | <b>51</b> |

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Thurstable is a good school.** In the main school, pupils attain above average results at the end of Year 11 from average attainment on entry. In the sixth form, students attain average results from attainment on entry which is below that usually found in sixth forms. Teaching is good and pupils and students are achieving well. The school is well led and managed. The head teacher gives very good leadership. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Results are improving because teaching is good
- The excellent vision and sense of purpose of the headteacher has led to many significant improvements
- The impact of sports college status is outstanding, particularly on curricular provision for sport and the quality of links developed with the community and other schools
- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are not as consistently good as in other years
- The school provides a very caring, safe and healthy environment in which pupils can learn
- Attitudes and behaviour are good although the learning of pupils in some lessons is affected by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority
- Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular activities are very good

**Progress since the previous inspection in 1999 has been good**, although some issues of class behaviour management remain. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning has improved, particularly in the resources available. Pupils' personal development, in terms of a broader awareness of Britain's ethnically diverse society, has improved and the statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form is now met. Effective leadership and management and very good teamwork have moved the school forward well since the last inspection. Improvements have been recognised by several awards and the school's inclusion in national lists, including the top 200 for most improved GCSE results.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Overall, pupils achieve well.** At the end of Year 9, in 2004, overall test results in English, mathematics and science were average but, compared with similar schools, mathematics was above average, whereas English and science were below average. Over the past three years, results have been rising in line with the national trend. Current standards in Year 9 are average. They are above in physical education. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE in 2004 was above the national average and broadly in line with similar schools when taking into account pupils' best 8 GCSE examinations. Over the past three years, results have been rising above the national trend. The progress of these pupils, when measured from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 11, was above that found nationally. Current standards in Year 11 are at least average. They are above average in art, physical education and religious

education. Overall, pupils are achieving well and being well prepared for their examinations. This is equally true for those with special education needs, those recognised as being gifted or talented and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school's target for the proportion of A\* to C grade passes is similar to the results attained in 2004. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. A-level results in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average. In the sixth form, current standards in the focus subjects for the inspection are average overall and above average in English, ICT and art and design. Students are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** The good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils contribute well to their achievement. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good. Attitudes of sixth form students are very positive.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good. Teaching is good** overall, with a significant amount that is very good and very little unsatisfactory. Throughout the main school, teaching and the subsequent learning are very good in physical education. Teaching is particularly effective where activities are varied, pupils are made well aware of what is expected of them and they are actively involved in their learning. Pupils are generally keen and interested learners, they work hard and learn well. On occasion, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils disrupts the learning of others. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not as consistent as in other years, in its pace and challenge, the management of behaviour and the use of marking. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and students learn well. In some lessons, students do not have enough opportunities for independent learning. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and students well. Very good extra-curricular learning opportunities greatly enhance the quality of the curriculum. Sporting provision is particularly strong. Pupils are very well cared for and well supported and guided throughout the school. Their views are valued well. Good partnerships with parents and very effective links with the community and with other schools and colleges support pupils' achievement.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The very good leadership of the headteacher and his excellent vision and sense of purpose have resulted in a school much changed since the previous inspection. Senior staff, including those with responsibility for subjects, lead well. Management and governance are good. Governors are very committed to the school and have worked closely with the leadership team to ensure improving standards and improving quality of accommodation. Despite the best intentions of the school, it has not been possible to ensure that all pupils are receiving their entitlement to a daily collective act of worship because of lack of suitable accommodation.

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

Parents are generally supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides, many commenting how happy and confident their children had been since starting at the school. Parents feel that teaching is good overall. Their main concern is the lack of self-discipline of the small minority of pupils who are disruptive in some lessons. The inspection team agrees with these views.

Pupils are happy with the school and the quality of care and education they receive. They particularly like the range of extra-curricular activities and clubs that are provided. Most are impressed with the improvements in accommodation as a result of the school gaining sports college status. In their response to a privately commissioned questionnaire, pupils were divided over how effectively the school would deal with incidents of bullying. These concerns were not substantiated in further discussions held between pupils and inspectors.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Ensure the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 becomes as consistently good as in other years
- Ensure that the best practice in the management of the small minority of pupils who misbehave is adopted more consistently by all teachers
- Provide more opportunities for students in Years 12 and 13 to learn independently

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Continue efforts to enable all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THURSTABLE SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good and cost effective sixth form.** Numbers have increased since the last inspection. Examination results have improved and now match those nationally. Teaching is good overall, resulting in good achievement. The curriculum is good and is being improved by providing students with a wider choice of vocational courses. The sports college specialism is having a highly beneficial impact by including a unique girls' football academy. Students are prepared to work hard and respond very well to the opportunities they are given. The sixth form is effectively led and managed.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Results are improving because of good quality teaching
- Students' very positive attitudes contribute strongly to their achievement
- The sixth form is becoming an increasingly popular choice for students because the curriculum is tailored to their needs and aspirations
- Some teaching does not offer enough opportunities for independent learning or give clear guidance on how students can improve their performance
- Leadership and management is committed to further development and improvement in sixth form provision

### 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     | <b>Good in English language.</b> Well-planned lessons and very good relationships are conducive to learning and promote good achievement.                                      |
| Mathematics                              | <b>Good in mathematics.</b> The numbers taking the subject are increasing. The students are keen and achieve well in response to the expertise and experience of the teachers. |
| Science                                  | <b>Good in Biology.</b> Good teaching results in students learning and achieving well.   |
| Information and communication technology | <b>Good in AVCE ICT.</b> Students with varied previous experience of ICT achieve well and often out-perform what is predicted.   |
| Humanities                               | There were no focus subjects in this area.   |
| Engineering, technology and              | There were no focus subjects in this area.   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| manufacturing                           |  |
| Visual and performing arts and media    | <b>Good in art and design.</b> Students achieve very well by responding enthusiastically to very good teaching.  |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel | <b>Good in physical education.</b> Teachers' very good knowledge and use of ICT enable students to achieve well. Curriculum developments are very good and the girls' football academy is very successful. |
| Business                                | There were no focus subjects in this area.   |
| Health and social care                  | There were no focus subjects in this area.   |
| General education                       | There were no focus subjects in this area.   |

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

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Very good staff-student working relationships underpin the life and work of the sixth form. Students value the quality of induction arrangements for the sixth form. Clear and effective support structures for students make a significant contribution to their good achievement and personal development. The recently introduced student tracking and assessment record gives teachers very detailed information about their students and this enables them to provide effective guidance. However, the marking of students' work is not yet consistently effective in identifying what needs to be improved and how. Students are effectively supported with career guidance and in applications to higher education.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is well led and managed. Leadership has effectively secured improved achievement and promoted a happy sixth form in which all students are welcome and do well. It has been very effective in building the well-balanced and committed team of tutors that is an important factor in the growing success of the sixth form. Development planning provides a general guide to further improvement, but is not always specific enough about who will be responsible for improvements and how success will be measured. Although some teaching groups are small, the sixth form is cost effective.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very positive about the school and the support they receive. They appreciate the quality of the working relationships they have with the headteacher, senior managers and their teachers. They also value the wide range of opportunities they have to be involved in the life of the school.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the national average. GCSE results are improving. Standards of work seen across the school are average overall.

#### Main strengths

- GCSE results have improved over the past four years and the proportion of pupils gaining at least 5 A\* to C grades was above the national average in 2004
- Results in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 in mathematics were above both the national and similar schools average
- Pupils achieve well overall because of good teaching and their mostly positive attitudes to learning
- Pupils and students achieve particularly well in physical education across the school

#### Commentary

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school, based on the Year 6 national results in English, mathematics and science, is broadly in line with the national average. However, the selective system in the local authority means that the school has fewer higher-attaining pupils than would be expected for a comprehensive school. Overall results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 9 in 2004. When the school's results are compared to those of similar schools (schools where pupils started in Year 7 with similar levels of attainment), results are also broadly in line. Results at this age have been rising in line with the national trend up until 2003. Mathematics' results improved in 2004 but results fell in English and science, and were below both the national and similar schools average. Results in English have varied year on year. Difficulties in recruitment of specialist staff, which have now been resolved, have had a negative impact on some results.
2. Standards in the present Year 9 are average in most subjects but above average in citizenship and physical education. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in subjects other than the core subjects is variable and dependent on their experience in their primary school. In relation to these entry standards, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall by Year 9. They achieve well in art, citizenship, design and technology and history, and very well in physical education.

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

|   | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 58 (55)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 91 (91)        | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 94 (95)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 35.3 (34.7)    | 34.9 (34.7)      |

*There were 190 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. GCSE examination results in 2004 were above the national average, in the proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A\* to C grades and the average total points score. The school's targets were exceeded. Compared to similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more of A\* to C grades was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining at least 1 A\* to G grade was well below both the national average and that

of similar schools. This reflects the school's policy at the time, not to insist that pupils on alternative education courses take at least one GCSE course, which has now been changed. The trend in the school's results is above the national trend. Boys generally outperform girls but there are gender differences in performance between subjects that mirror the national picture. Analysis of results compared to pupils' earlier results shows that their progress (the value added by the school) from Year 7 to Year 11 was above the national average. Results were above the national average in French. Though the proportion of A\* to C grade passes in physical education was broadly in line with the national average, a far greater proportion of pupils than nationally was entered. Compared to other subjects, pupils attained less well in communication studies, English literature, geography, history and music. The proportion of pupils attaining A\* and A grades was lower than the national average, reflecting the comparatively low proportion of higher-attaining pupils joining the school.

4. Current standards in Year 11 are broadly average. They are above average in art, citizenship, physical education, and religious education. These standards are those seen before the final examination preparation procedures have begun. Overall, and in most subjects, pupils are achieving well. This is because they are taught well and most have positive attitudes and want to succeed. In physical education, where all take an accredited course, pupils are achieving very well.
5. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented achieve as well as their peers. Pupils from ethnic minorities also achieve in line with their peers.
6. Pupils' skill levels are overall in line with what would be expected for their ages in using language, number and ICT to support their learning in other subjects.

#### **Sixth form**

Students achieve well in the sixth form.

#### **Main strengths**

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and their very positive attitudes to learning
- Results are improving

#### **Commentary**

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

|  | School results | National results |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 91.7 (88.4)    | 92.3 (92.3)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 27.0 (24.2)    | 36.2 (35.6)      |
| Average point score per pupil            | 256.8 (248.6)  | 265.2 (258.2)    |

*There were 34 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. Results at the end of Year 13, in 2004, were broadly in line with national results. They were similar to the previous year and an improvement on those in 2002. (A data table towards the end of this report provides information on all courses offered in the school.) Comparisons with national results are only made in this report in subjects where there were five or more entries, and even these should be treated with caution. Results were well above average in communication studies, above average in physics, and average in general studies, history and mathematics. They were below average in biology and religious studies and were well below average in English, and geography. Student numbers were too small to allow meaningful judgements on gender differences.
8. Current standards in subjects that were a focus of the inspection are average overall. They are above average in English, ICT and art and design, and average in biology, mathematics

and physical education. In relation to their below average attainment on entry to the sixth form, students are achieving well. (At the end of Year 11, a small number of pupils move on to other post-16 institutions.)

9. Students showed generally good achievement in lessons sampled in other subjects. Their overall competence in literacy, number and ICT is average.

## Pupils' attitudes and personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are good overall, despite some inappropriate behaviour by a few pupils. The good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports their personal development well. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good attitudes to school and their work, and most pupils behave well
- In some lessons, the inattention and restless behaviour of a minority of pupils is allowed to affect the learning of the majority
- Relationships throughout the school are very good
- The school provides well for pupils' personal development

### Commentary

10. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of its facilities. They attend regularly and most arrive on time in the mornings. Attendance levels are similar to those found nationally and the number of unauthorised absences is lower than average. On-site support from the education welfare officer and the recently established pupil services team ensures that attendance is monitored well. As a result of this, and a rigorous new system for contacting parents on the first day of their child's absence, figures are beginning to improve.

#### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 7.5 | School data          | 0.3 |
| National data      | 6.9 | National data        | 1.1 |

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

11. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to school and their work, and are keen to learn. However, in a significant minority of lessons, a small number of pupils were inattentive and did not listen well to their teachers. Where this was not effectively handled, it had a negative effect on their learning and was distracting to others. In the majority of lessons pupils settle quickly to their work, listen carefully to teachers and as a result achieve well.
12. The very good relationships between teaching assistants (TAs) and the pupils with special educational needs whom they support enable these pupils to make good progress in most lessons. Within the positive learning atmosphere created in the learning support department, pupils withdrawn for focused support develop the confidence to seek the extra help, support and advice they feel they need.
13. Pupils are courteous and friendly to visitors, and relationships between them are very good. Bullying is rare in the school, which pupils say is a friendly place. Should an incident of bullying occur, pupils say that staff always deal with it quickly and effectively. Behaviour around the building and at break times is good, with pupils socialising in small groups and generally mixing together well. Younger pupils respect the role of the prefects at break and lunchtimes. Indicative of pupils respect for the school environment is the absence of litter, graffiti and vandalism. A good system for dealing with more serious behavioural problems has been established through use of the withdrawal room. Pupils are enabled to take time out to consider the impact of their misbehaviour whilst remaining in the school. Procedures for permanent and temporary exclusions are appropriate.

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British                                     | 1118                 | 77                                | 2                              |
| White – Irish                                       | 2                    |                                   |                                |
| White – any other White background                  | 9                    |                                   |                                |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 2                    | 1                                 |                                |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 1                    |                                   |                                |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 1                    |                                   |                                |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 2                    |                                   |                                |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1                    |                                   |                                |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 3                    |                                   |                                |
| Chinese   | 2                    |                                   |                                |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 10                   | 3                                 |                                |
| No ethnic group recorded                            | 18                   |                                   |                                |

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

14. Pupils' personal development is fostered well and their participation in sports events and training is high. Many pupils stay after school to make use, in particular, of the school's excellent sports facilities. This contributes well to the development of pupils' self esteem. The school council works well with its representatives, regularly presenting and discussing other pupils' views and concerns. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility around the school and these are taken seriously. Competition to become prefects is strong and, once appointed, they play an important role in monitoring the premises during break and lunchtimes. Pupils are also very willing to be involved in special events such as the recent musical production as well as helping at parents' evenings. In a Year 9 assembly, a group of pupils confidently took part in a short play looking at the role of women in the home. This was much appreciated by the rest of the year group.
15. Overall, pupils develop well their social, moral, cultural and spiritual understanding. Annual church services provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. Religious education also provides good opportunities by deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as the other major religions. Some opportunities for pupils to reflect were also seen during assemblies but this was less apparent during tutor times. Through the well-planned programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and other areas of the curriculum, for example, religious education, science and geography, pupils have many opportunities to consider and discuss moral and social issues. In a Year 9 English lesson, pupils were actively involved in a role-play to develop their understanding of apportioning guilt between characters in Shakespeare's 'MacBeth'. Throughout the year, pupils are involved in a wide range of charity events, last year raising over £8,000 for national and local charities. At the time of the last inspection, opportunities for pupils to expand their understanding of other cultures were limited. Since then, an annual multi-cultural day has been established where pupils have been able to experience other cultures through a wide range of activities. The many residential trips to countries such as Holland, Germany and France also give pupils good opportunities to broaden their experiences.

**Sixth form**

Students' attendance and punctuality are good. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good.

**Main strengths**

- Students' attitudes to school and their own learning are very good
- Students enjoy the opportunities they have for taking responsibility

## Commentary

16. Students are appreciative of the school and the opportunities it provides for them. Most attend regularly and arrive punctually to lessons. They are keen to do well and, when given opportunities to develop their own learning independently through research activities, they do so confidently. Students are mature and very considerate of others. They are confident and outgoing and relationships between them are very good. Students comment positively on the opportunities provided for them to be involved in the life of the school. They actively support the school by helping to take responsibility for younger pupils when, for instance, mentoring them. They have also organised an advice and guidance group for those who wish to give up smoking.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is satisfactory. A good curriculum meets the needs of pupils and is enriched by very good extra-curricular opportunities. The school takes very good care of pupils and students and supports them well in their learning and personal development. Pupils and students benefit from good links with parents and very good links other schools, colleges and the community.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is satisfactory overall but the quality of the marking of work is inconsistent.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which is used to provide pupils with well-planned, structured and purposeful lessons
- Most pupils have positive attitudes that contribute to effective learning but not all teachers challenge effectively the few who do not
- A significant amount of very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures pupils are well challenged
- Very good teaching in physical education results in very good achievement in the main school
- Pupils are generally well informed about their progress but they are not always given enough guidance as to how they can improve the quality of their work

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed in Years 7 to 11 during the inspection in 131 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor     | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| 1(0.6 %)  | 33 (20%)  | 67 (41%) | 56 (35%)     | 4 (2%)         | 1 (0.6%) | 0 (0%)    |

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

17. Overall, the quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good in art, citizenship, design and technology and history and very good in physical education. Despite some recent recruitment difficulties and a significant number of newly qualified and relatively inexperienced teachers, the overall quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection but it has fallen in Years 7 to 9. Parents were concerned about the affect of staff turnover in the teaching of English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The inspection found the teaching of English, mathematics and science in these years to be satisfactory. Parents were also concerned about the negative effect on their children's learning of the attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils in some lessons. Where this was found, learning was not as good as it could have been because teachers did not always successfully challenge those off task.

However, where teachers were adept at challenging those off task, pupils responded well and quickly settled to work. Although there is a formal programme of lesson monitoring and evaluation by senior management, good practice within departments is not always effectively shared to bring about a consistent approach to behaviour management.

18. On the whole, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons, thus offering appropriate challenge and, particularly in Years 10 and 11, preparing pupils well for their examinations. Elements of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are being used effectively in some lessons to improve teaching. Teachers share learning outcomes with pupils so that they are aware of what is expected of them. Useful starter activities help revise and consolidate previous work, and effective question and answer sessions ensure the involvement of pupils in their learning. After a series of structured learning activities, a plenary session draws out what has been learned. In an excellent Year 11 dance lesson, this session was used extremely well to bring together what pupils had gained from the lesson and relate it to the earlier learning outcomes. This identified what pupils had learned and their achievement was excellent. Sometimes, however, plenaries are not as effective as they could be because teachers concentrate on the tasks accomplished rather than involving pupils in discussion on what they have learned.
19. Overall, the attitudes to learning of most pupils in lessons are good and there are good teacher- pupil working relationships. Pupils apply themselves well and work well individually or in pairs and small groups. In a very good Year 10 leisure and tourism lesson, small group work was very well managed so that pupils worked successfully together in discussion. The teacher insisted on high standards of behaviour, so all respected the contributions of one another when listening to the group presentations. Older pupils show pride in their project work, for example in design and technology, and work hard to produce good quality work. This contributes well to their learning and achievement. Homework is used effectively to develop pupils' learning further.
20. The use of ICT is widespread, particularly in Years 7 to 9, as the school has chosen to cover ICT requirements through the teaching in all subjects. Increasing use is being made of interactive whiteboards to enhance the quality of pupils' learning. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of ICT skills. In physical education, ICT is used very well in practical lessons, such as trampolining, to support pupils' learning. Support from technicians is particularly valuable in these lessons. However, in some mathematics lessons, teachers tend to use ICT as an aid for teaching rather than for supporting pupils' learning.
21. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Where teachers use the information they have about the needs of the pupils to plan carefully, involving TAs, and ensure the work is matched to pupils' needs, pupils make good progress. However, this is not consistent. In some lessons, TAs were not effectively deployed, having little involvement in the planning or teaching. Through the use of setting, the school enables teaching in small groups, which then enables pupils to receive extra support and guidance for their learning.
22. The student tracking and assessment record enables teachers to monitor pupils' academic progress and to set targets at the annual consultation day when tutors meet with parents and pupils to discuss progress and agree targets. Here, pupils are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Day-to-day assessment, though satisfactory, is variable. In a Year 7 trampoline lesson, pupils were actively involved in discussing what they had to do to reach particular National Curriculum levels and had a good knowledge of what levels they were currently working at. Pupils are involved in peer assessment in physical education, art and history but there are few opportunities for this in other subjects. Pupils told inspectors that they knew their National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and that their work is regularly assessed at the end of particular units of work.

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also aware of their target GCSE grades. However, in geography, targets for improvement are not helpful as they are vague and lack subject specific detail. The quality and sufficiency of teachers' marking varies, but is better in Years 10 and 11, for example, in essay marking in history. Overall, marking is not frequent enough, nor does it provide enough quality guidance for pupils to enable them to understand how they can improve their work.

## Sixth form

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Almost all teaching is good or better and challenges students well; occasionally, students are not given a chance to take control of their own learning
- Students' very positive attitudes contribute well to their effective learning
- Marking does not always given enough guidance as to how students can improve the quality of their work

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons in Years 12 and 13

| Excellent | Very good | Good       | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 0 (0%)    | 7 (22.6%) | 21 (67.7%) | 3 (10%)      | 0 (0%)         | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%)    |

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

23. The sixth form provides a good environment where students have the opportunity to develop intellectually and to be prepared well for higher education courses or the world of work. Teaching and learning reflects and builds upon the strengths seen in Years 10 and 11. Teaching seen was good in English, mathematics, biology, ICT and physical education and very good in art and design, these being the focus subjects of the inspection. Teaching and learning were also good, overall, in the sampled subjects.
24. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge very effectively to set clear learning objectives in lessons; students are therefore well aware of what is expected of them. Effective planning, including starter activities, ensures the lessons are well paced and that time is used effectively to support learning. In the best lessons, students are thoroughly engaged in challenging activities that help them develop intellectually as well as personally. As a result, they sharpen their critical thinking skills and heighten their interest in the subject. In a very good quality BTEC physical education lesson, for example, students were fully involved in the analysis and evaluation of the performance of officials in 8 different sports. In some English lessons, however, the level of challenge is only satisfactory. Opportunities for students to be involved in independent learning are sometimes missed, when teachers lead the lessons too rigidly or use a narrow range of resources. This was seen, for example, in mathematics. Homework is used effectively to support students' learning and develop their research skills. Assessment is good, overall, and students know their targets grades. However, the quality of marking of students' work is inconsistent in telling them how they can improve.
25. Very good classroom relationships underpin the effectiveness of teaching in the sixth form. Where students are actively involved, they make very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Their contributions, including presentations, enliven lessons and they learn well. In a very good Year 13 psychology lesson, for example, there were small group presentations, learning was rigorous and students met the high expectations set by the teacher. From discussions with students, it is clear they feel the quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and that they are sufficiently challenged. They particularly appreciate the fact that teachers are available to provide additional help and advice when it is required.

### The curriculum

Opportunities for learning are good. These meet well the needs and aspirations of pupils. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good. Resources, including staffing and accommodation, to support the curriculum are satisfactory overall, and very good in physical education.



## **Main strengths**

- There is a commitment to providing pupils' and students' personal curriculum choices, and to parental involvement in this process
- Very good provision of extra-curricular activities broadens pupils' learning opportunities
- Vocational courses are well established and popular
- A flexible approach to timetabling allows additional subjects to be taught outside the normal working day
- ICT resources are very good and much improved since the previous inspection
- The specialist college status is resulting in great benefits throughout the school

## **Commentary**

26. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9. All pupils study either French or German from Years 7 to 9, with the subjects alternating in successive years. The time allocated to each subject is generally appropriate. The modular approach to the delivery of design and technology puts constraints on the depth of designing and making activities undertaken. It is, nevertheless, satisfactory because it enables pupils to experience working in a wide range of practical skill areas and materials. The ICT curriculum in Years 7 to 9, which is taught entirely through other subjects, is satisfactory although still in the early stages of development.
27. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a curriculum that ensures a good, balanced education for all, through its compulsory core and two options. All pupils take an examination course in physical education and one of the four design and technology options. An accredited ICT course is offered and, for those who do not opt for this, ICT is taught through other subjects. The school is committed to the development of vocational education, three subjects being included in the option blocks. The increasing involvement of parents is very effective in ensuring appropriate courses are chosen by pupils. As a result, the number choosing vocational subjects is growing. The partnership with the local college of further education extends vocational opportunities beyond school. A number of pupils study catering and hairdressing at the college, within the local Vocational Opportunities Programme. Out-of-school hours courses in ICT, Spanish, citizenship, and religious education broaden subject-based curriculum opportunities. Subject revision classes, including during school holidays, support pupils' learning further and help them prepare for examinations.
28. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs, who are withdrawn for specific programmes, make good progress in developing their basic literacy skills. This enables them to have greater access to the full curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can follow alternative courses in English, such as the Certificate of Achievement in English. This enables some pupils to take an examination course suited to their individual needs. The school has made progress in adapting the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of potentially disaffected pupils. The introduction of the college and work-based learning course has proved a positive experience for some. It allows these pupils opportunities to develop their learning and skills in a different environment and decreases the risk of exclusion for those few who find a full set of academic courses difficult to sustain. Pupils and parents are appreciative of these opportunities.
29. Provision for PSHE is good. Pupils follow a well-planned programme taught through a weekly lesson and the tutorial programme. Citizenship is part of this overall provision. A wide range of topics, covered across the years, ensures that statutory requirements are met. The Connexions service works closely with school staff to provide effective careers education guidance within the PSHE and citizenship programmes. A Connexions adviser visits tutor groups and holds individual interviews in Year 11, thus providing pupils with good opportunities to consider career options.

30. A very good programme of enrichment activities broadens pupils' learning experiences and supports their personal development and learning. These include activities weeks, field trips, visits abroad and work experience. Subject-based activities include 'fun with chemistry', geography field trips and battlefield visits. In art, opportunities offered include artist in residence workshops, and gallery and other visits. The recent production of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' provided a wide range of opportunities for pupils to perform as actors, dancers, musicians or singers, and to take part in production activities. However, overall, the amount of extra-curricular musical activity is less than might be expected for the size of the school. Participation in most activities is very good and pupils are appreciative of the wide range of activities on offer.
31. Sporting provision and pupils' participation in sports are excellent. All pupils receive two hours of quality physical education per week, which is above the government's target for the proportion of pupils participating in physical education. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, both recreational and competitive, broadens pupils' learning opportunities further. In the current year, forty-five per cent of boys and forty per cent of girls in Years 7 to 11 have regularly attended clubs. As a result of this, thirty-seven pupils have gone on to gain representative honours at district level in a range of sports and six at county level. School teams have experienced success in district championships, particularly in basketball, but also in netball, rugby, cricket and athletics. Year 10 boys have done well at national level competitions in basketball. As a result of the school being the hub school in a school sports coordinator partnership scheme, strong and effective curricular links have been developed with primary feeder schools as well as other secondary schools. The school has also become fully involved in the wider Physical Education School Sport and Club Links strategy (PESSCL) where pupils benefit from the work of outside specialist coaches.
32. The staffing of the main school curriculum is satisfactory. Most teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about the subjects that they are teaching. Long-term absence has had an impact on teaching quality, for example, in design and technology, as has the need to cover a long-term vacancy in art by a combination of temporary and non-specialist teachers. Teachers are given effective support by a strong team of technical, administrative and other support staff.
33. Effective planning over recent years has enabled the school to improve significantly the accommodation through effective use of its own and external funding. Access for wheelchair users has been provided to most areas of the school. More new teaching accommodation is nearing completion and plans for the refurbishment of three teaching blocks are well advanced to improve accommodation even further. Present accommodation in art is inadequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and the size of the teaching groups. A lack of suitable accommodation means it is not possible for all pupils to attend a daily collective act of worship. Sports college status has enabled the school to benefit from outstanding physical education facilities. This benefits pupils and the wider community during the day, in the evenings and at weekends.
34. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are very good for physical education, including a set of laptop computers for pupils to use. ICT provision in the school is very good overall but in art and design and music there are insufficient computers to support learning and it is difficult to work in network rooms with a full class in Years 7 to 9. The availability of books for pupils with special educational needs has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The library, including a careers section, is small but well used by pupils in lessons and during breaks. The school has been innovative in the development of its resource centre, which now provides high quality support for ICT, multimedia and reprographics.

## **Sixth form**

The curriculum meets the needs of students well and is well supported by good resources and staffing.

### **Main strengths**

- A wide variety of courses gives all students the opportunity to study at an appropriate level
- Very good enrichment opportunities are greatly appreciated by most students

### **Commentary**

35. As in the main school, the sixth form curriculum is demand led and provides a wide-ranging choice of courses to meet the needs of all students well. There are twenty subjects at AS and A-level, vocational courses in business studies, ICT, leisure and tourism, health and social care, and BTEC at two levels in sport. Vocational courses are popular with students and their parents and, as a result, a significant number takes at least one vocational course as a single award alongside their traditional GCE courses. A PSHE programme is linked to general studies and taken by all students. Vocational courses include good opportunities for work experience and visiting speakers regularly support work in school. The provision for religious education has improved since the last inspection; statutory requirements are now met. There are very good opportunities to take part in clubs and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and Young Enterprise events. Numerous visits are made, both home and abroad, and make a significant contribution to extending and enriching students' experiences. These include university visits, visiting the holocaust centre, field trips for geography and biology, theatre trips and a hospice visit. In Year 12, all students are given effective guidance on career progression and in Year 13 they are able to seek useful personal support when submitting university applications.
36. Students take good advantage of the excellent range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Forty per cent of male students and twenty-five per cent of female students in the sixth form regularly attend clubs. Sixth form female and male teams have done well at national level competitions in basketball. The unique sixth form girls' football academy, hosted by the school in partnership with a local professional football club, is particularly successful and is attracting significant support from other professional clubs and other groups outside the school.
37. The staffing for the sixth form curriculum is good. Teachers are well supported by technicians, for example in art and physical education. The accommodation for sixth form lessons is generally satisfactory, apart from in physical education, where it is outstanding, and in science, where it is good. In art and design, accommodation is limited and restricts the development of large-scale work and access for students outside timetabled lessons. The open-plan nature of ICT accommodation for the sixth form results in problems with acoustics. Resources to support learning in subjects are good and very good in physical education and ICT. The sixth form ICT study area is well equipped and consistently well used by students for independent learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school's provision for pupils and students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Pupils are given good support, guidance and advice. Their views are listened to well and acted upon.

### **Main strengths**

- Procedures to ensure that pupils learn in a safe and healthy environment, including child protection issues, are very good

- Clear support structures and effectively managed tutor teams make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and personal development
- Pupils are positive about the quality of support and guidance they receive from the school
- Very good arrangements exist to ensure that pupils' transition between stages of their education is smooth
- Pupils are given good opportunities to air their views and contribute to school decisions

### **Commentary**

38. Arrangements for child protection are very good; staff are aware of the procedures and all requirements are met. The school has good arrangements for security when pupils and staff are using the Internet. Risk assessments for health and safety are regular and thorough. Staff and prefects provide good supervision so that pupils can move safely around the school. This also encourages strong relationships between adults and pupils, and contributes to good behaviour around the school. The school has gained the 'Healthy School' award. It effectively monitors items on sale in the dining room and vending machines to ensure the provision of healthy alternatives.
39. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. In discussion and on questionnaires, most pupils say they feel safe and enjoy being at school and that staff are approachable; consequently, pupils feel that they get very good support when they have academic or personal problems. Pupils are very positive about the school and the ethos that it promotes. The very caring attitude of the school is shown by the modification to the timetable to ensure physical impairment is no barrier to academic and personal achievement. Parents also have positive views of the school and consider that their children are generally happy and confident.
40. The school has effective systems for providing pupils with appropriate advice and guidance. Heads of year and form tutors stay with their groups as they progress through the school and, as a result, build up a good understanding of the needs and achievements of the pupils in their care. They have access to a wealth of pupil information from the student tracking and assessment record. They use this data to monitor pupils' academic progress and their social development. This knowledge of pupils is used to good effect at the annual consultation day when tutors meet with parents and pupils, not only to discuss how their child is progressing within the school but also to agree academic and social targets for the school year. Targets for future attainment are based upon pupils' current levels of attainment. Annual reports enable parents and pupils to judge if targets are being met. Parents are encouraged to contact form tutors to discuss issues they wish to raise.
41. The learning support department has effective relationships with most outside professional agencies it works with – this enhances further the quality of support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews are effective and support pupils with a statement of their particular needs as they move through the school. Pupils' and parents' views are taken into account because they are involved in the setting and reviewing of their targets at annual reviews.
42. Very good links with the primary feeder schools ensure that pupils settle quickly into secondary school life. Teachers from the school visit local primary schools and Year 6 pupils are also invited to the school to take part in a primary project during the summer term, thus ensuring they become familiar with the school. Year 7 pupils, and those who arrive at the school at different times in the year, are positively supported so that they quickly settle in to the school. Clear guidance and advice are given to pupils and parents in Year 9 to help them make effective decisions about their subject options for Years 10 and 11, including guidance from careers staff and Connexions. Pupil data is used to good effect for Year 11 pupils as they are guided to decide what courses to study in the sixth form.

Each Year 11 pupil has a personal interview with the head of sixth form and receives advice as to the course which best meets their needs, whether in the school sixth form, other sixth forms or the local further education college.

43. The school council provides an effective forum for pupils to express their ideas. The school listens to their views and acts upon them. For example, picnic tables have been provided, there are clocks in classrooms and pupils select which charity events to support.

#### **Sixth form**

Students receive good support and guidance during Years 12 and 13. Their views are valued.

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

- Induction arrangements are good
- Students' progress through their courses is well monitored and good advice and support guide their decisions for the future

#### **Commentary**

44. Students are inducted into the sixth form well. At the start of Year 12, students participate in a day of team building courses at a residential centre, followed by an induction day enabling them to settle quickly and effectively. During this time, any course concerns are dealt with to ensure that students are happy with their choice of subjects. Students value these arrangements. Staff-student working relationships are very good; students feel as if they are working with the teachers and not just learning from them.
45. Procedures to monitor the progress of students throughout their sixth form career are good. The school checks on the progress of students twice a year and produces interim reports, which set targets. This means that they know how well they are doing and are clear about what they need to do to improve in their subjects. In Year 12, all students are given good guidance on career progression and, in Year 13, they are given good support when submitting university applications or for their chosen occupations if not applying for university. Students are appreciative of the guidance they receive and the opportunities they have to visit universities. Students believe the school council works really well because it involves them in contributing to school decision-making. The inspection team agrees.

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

The school has good links with parents and very good links with the wider community and other schools and colleges. Sporting links are outstanding.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good partnerships with parents keep them well informed and support pupils' learning
- The school receives very strong support from the parent teacher association
- Very good links with the local community help to broaden pupils' experiences
- Outstanding sporting links have been established with other schools and the community

### **Commentary**

46. Parents are happy with the school and the education and care it provides for their children. Good information is provided for parents on both general matters and their children's progress. Annual reports are well written and informative, clearly showing how well pupils are doing and how they can improve. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well presented and provide all the required information. A useful and informative handbook is provided for students in the sixth form. The school works well with parents to help pupils achieve well and to ensure that any pastoral problems are quickly dealt with. As parents are well informed, they are able to support their children as they move through the school and ensure they are making the progress expected of them. Where parents experience problems, the school is able to offer the opportunity for them to take part in parenting classes. Attendance at school performances and consultation meetings with teachers is high. Plans are now in place to enable parents and pupils to access the student tracking and assessment record via the Internet.
47. The school and its pupils benefit greatly from a very effective parent teacher association. This very well run organisation, closely supported by the headteacher and other staff, raises considerable amounts of money for the school. Association members provide useful practical support to the school by, for instance, assisting at school performances. They actively supported the school's specialist sports college bid with a substantial contribution.
48. Through its sports college status the school has established excellent sporting links with the local community. Many local sports clubs use the school's facilities and courses are provided in a range of sports through links with the local leisure services. The innovative girl's football academy has been established through the very good links with a local professional football club. The school's partnership with the local borough council in delivering high quality facilities and training in sport across the community is highly regarded by the Youth Sports Trust. Local commerce effectively supports both the school's fund raising efforts and pupils' learning through the Young Enterprise Scheme and work experience. Pupils have worked closely with the parish council and local businesses on a conservation scheme on local heathland. After the first year of pupils' involvement in a fire-safety awareness programme in conjunction with the county fire service, the local fire service has seen a dramatic drop in the number of hoax calls being made.
49. Sporting links with other schools are outstanding. The school has built strong links with eleven primary schools and four secondary schools. It is currently providing specialist sports training for teachers and sporting experiences such as the recently organised primary sports festivals in which over three hundred Year 5 and 6 pupils took part. Good partnerships with local colleges enable many trainee teachers to work successfully in the school. There are very good links with other secondary schools as well as a local further education college to offer work related learning opportunities. Close links, for example with the Connexions service, support pupils as they move into Years 10 and 11.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are good. The headteacher's excellent vision and sense of purpose has led to many significant improvements. Key staff lead well. Management is effective. Governance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has an outstandingly clear vision and leads the school very well
- The governors are very committed to the school and support the headteacher well
- The strategic plan is a helpful guide to improvement, well implemented by most departments
- The quality of monitoring and evaluation varies between departments

### **Commentary**

50. Throughout his many years of service, the headteacher's outstanding vision and high aspirations have been the foundation of the school's drive for improvement. It currently manifests itself most powerfully in the excellent leadership of the sports college specialism. This is playing a key role, not only in transforming the accommodation, facilities and sporting opportunities available to all of the school's pupils, but also in underpinning its rapidly growing reputation and contribution that it is making to the wider community. The headteacher is very effectively leading his colleagues towards improvement of teaching and the curriculum, which is reflected in improving results at GCSE and A-level. His contribution extends outside the school through, for example, involvement in local education authority development groups promoting a partnership approach to school improvement.
51. The headteacher is well supported by a capable and coherent senior leadership team that shares and effectively implements his vision. The development plan provides useful guidance for senior and middle managers on how the school needs to move forward. It is not yet ensuring however, that all subject departments focus with sufficient rigour on improving teaching and learning. Leadership is effective in improving the quality of learning opportunities in the school at an appropriately manageable pace, mainly by widening the range of vocational subjects. Subject leadership is good overall and best in physical education and citizenship, where it is very good. In several subjects however, while leadership is satisfactory, vision and energy in identifying and pursuing improved provision and achievement are not so strong. Leadership of the learning support department is good and enables an effective team of TAs to productively support pupils with special educational needs. The school is committed to ensuring all pupils, including those from ethnic minorities, those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve as well as they can.
52. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of management at all levels but these are not always applied rigorously. Although most heads of subject departments and faculties fulfil their management roles well, there is inconsistency between subjects in implementing school policies, for example in marking. Developments related to the school gaining sports college status have been managed particularly well. The school has an effective and well-established performance management process, which is soundly linked to the ongoing professional development of staff. This has been recognised by the school being awarded Investors in People status for a third time. Newly qualified teachers and experienced staff new to the school are supported well by an induction programme.
53. The school makes a good contribution to the initial training of teachers through two school-based training programmes for postgraduate students, and the graduate teacher scheme offered by a consortium of local secondary schools. The school has been successful in attracting and recruiting well-qualified teachers so that the majority of subjects are staffed by specialists. The designation of specialist status has attracted high quality applicants with

a range of specialisms. This is helping improve achievement in physical education and sport. Teacher and senior staff workloads are being significantly reduced by the effective deployment of support staff to undertake administrative duties such as managing assessment data and examination entries.

54. Governors have a range of expertise and insight that is of considerable value to the school. They play an effective role in determining the direction of the school and strongly support the aspirations of the headteacher and his colleagues. They are very supportive of the school's commitment to ensuring all pupils and students have equal and fair chances of success. Although governors tend to accept goals and plans without major amendments, they scrutinise these carefully and require the school's leaders to explain and justify their intentions fully. Their links with subject departments have been improved following criticism in the last inspection report. Governors ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements except in providing a daily act of worship for all pupils.
55. Along with the sports college developments and the positive attitudes of pupils and students, aids to achievement also include significant improvements in accommodation and ICT resources and the school's involvement in teacher training initiatives to improve the recruitment of staff.
56. Finances are well managed, with good links between the planned expenditure and school priorities. The school has been very successful, and continues to be so, in securing additional funding to support its developments. Every opportunity is taken to reduce expenditure through negotiation to achieve best value for money. Through its rigorous systems, the school is demonstrating, effectively, the implementation of best value principles.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |         |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income               | 4,232,070 | Balance from previous year          | 172,468 |
| Total expenditure          | 4,203,358 | Balance carried forward to the next | 102,180 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 3,595     |                                     |         |

**Sixth form**

The growing sixth form is led and managed well, with the full support of governors.

**Main strength**

- Leadership is effectively promoting the success and effectiveness of the sixth form

**Commentary**

57. Leadership is characterised by a strong commitment to ensure continued growth in the popularity and success of the sixth form. It has effectively secured better achievement and promoted a happy sixth form in which all students are welcome and do well. A determined and thoughtful approach has been very effective in building a well-balanced and committed team of tutors that is an important factor in the success of the sixth form. Development planning provides a general guide to further improvement, but does not provide sufficient information about who will be responsible for specific improvements and how success will be measured. The governors have ensured that the school now meets the legal requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form, which was a key issue at the last inspection. Management arrangements are good. Appropriate procedures support the day-to-day running and organisation of the sixth form. The financing of the sixth form is closely controlled. In spite of a number of students being taught in small groups, overall, the sixth form is cost effective.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

The overall effectiveness of work-related learning is good.

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

- The school offers a good variety of contexts for pupils and students to learn about and experience the wider world of work beyond school, including extended work experience and placements
- The leadership and management of work-related learning is effective in promoting good educational achievement in partnership with other agencies, schools and colleges
- Pupils' progress on external work-related courses is effectively monitored by regular visits of school staff to college courses and work placements
- The impact of work-related learning on pupils' achievement in their other subjects is not sufficiently evaluated

#### **Commentary**

58. Leadership of the school is highly committed to the national principles and practices of work-related learning and has ensured over recent years that these are securely embedded in the curriculum offered to pupils and sixth form students. Courses are well planned to meet the national guidance. Strong partnerships have been forged with variety of outside bodies including the Connexions service, the local Education Business Partnership, other secondary schools and a local further education college, to offer work-related learning opportunities.
59. For those pupils for whom an alternative curriculum is beneficial, the school provides an extended work experience programme. The Connexions service works closely with teachers, parents and pupils to ensure that pupils are placed on an appropriate course best fitted to their needs and aspirations. This process starts with options guidance in Year 9.
60. There is an extensive programme of work experience for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and good opportunities for work placements, shadowing and visits for sixth form students. The award of sports college status has been influential in enabling sixth form students to benefit from work experience at the county cricket club.
61. The progress that pupils and students make in their vocational educational courses is carefully monitored by school staff through regular visits to the college and by reports from the external providers of work placements. These systems work well and the school uses the information gathered to support individual pupils and students and also to plan improvements. Assessments are appropriately recorded and monitored so that the progress of individual pupils and students can be tracked and targets set. The school has, however, found no mechanism to measure the impact of its provision for work-related learning on improving pupil achievements in other subjects.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is satisfactory.

|                       | Year 9       | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Standards             | Average      | Average |
| Achievement           | Satisfactory | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Good    |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

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

- Pupils achieve well, particularly in Year 11, when teaching is good
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and most lessons are well planned
- A variety of questioning techniques used by teachers ensures pupils are involved in learning
- The quality of teaching and marking is too variable

#### **Commentary**

##### **Examination results**

62. In the end of Year 9 tests taken in 2004, results were below the national average when compared with all schools and similar schools. Results have varied from year to year. GCSE results in English language, in 2004, were broadly in line with the national average. English literature results were significantly below the national average, with a much smaller proportion of pupils gaining A and A\* grades than nationally. Girls performed better than boys.

##### **Standards and achievement**

63. When pupils enter the school their attainment is broadly in line with national standards. The overall standard of pupils' writing is average in Year 9. Higher-attaining pupils produce accurate, sustained writing whereas lower-attaining pupils show technical errors and weaker structure to their work because they have had fewer opportunities to develop their extended writing. However, in a Year 9 lesson, bottom set pupils made very good progress in writing descriptive text and analysing the differences between written and radio reports. Standards of reading are average. Pupils read aloud fluently. Standards of speaking and listening are also at a level expected for their age. Pupils are reluctant to share their views in a whole-class situation, whilst others respond enthusiastically. By Year 11, though overall standards of work seen are average, the standard of pupils' writing is above average. Higher-attaining pupils have made good progress in developing the structure and appropriateness of content of their writing. Lower-attaining pupils are developing a variety of writing styles and improving their paragraphing and spelling skills.

##### **Teaching and learning**

64. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons carefully and well with a brisk pace and good questioning techniques. In Year 11, the teacher used good questioning strategies in a lesson on pre-1914 poetry, to develop pupils' understanding of 'irony' and their confidence in answering examination questions. The effective use of directed

questions ensured all were involved in learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, producing a positive working atmosphere in lessons. However, the unsatisfactory attitudes of some pupils seen in a very small number of lessons meant they did not learn as well as they could have. The quality of marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Teachers' comments are sometimes too accepting of pupils' responses and do not challenge them to develop a deeper understanding of their work. A weekly creative writing club gives pupils the opportunity to express themselves imaginatively.

### **Leadership and management**

65. Leadership has worked on team building by holding weekly meetings and providing a regular bulletin for English staff. Planning of work has shown some improvement since the previous inspection, but inconsistent teaching and assessment procedures remain a management issue. The provision of and use of ICT has improved. It is part of the Year 7 curriculum, laptops are being used for project work and Year 10 posters integrate text and graphics. Poetry studied across all years reflects diverse cultures and the study of 'The Tempest' in Year 7 successfully tackles issues of prejudice and the outsider. Weekly library lessons in Years 7 to 9 focus on pupils' reading skills and develop their interest in wider reading.

### **Drama**

66. GCSE drama results in 2004 were below the national average, but the proportion of pupils gaining A and A\* grades was in line with the national average. Leadership has made significant progress in planning and evaluating the drama programme of study. The quality of teaching seen was good. Lessons were well structured and pupils showed good skills in movement and speech. Opportunities were lost, in teacher feedback on evaluation of performance, to focus on specific drama skills. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils with special educational needs were integrated sensitively, making very good progress in their technical use of sound and lighting during monologue presentations. Pupils enjoy the subject, respond well to instructions and work co-operatively.

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

67. Pupils have standards of literacy that are average. Departments display and use key words. Good writing support is given to pupils in Year 10 and 11 history assignments, and science teachers encourage pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through presentations. Pupils' literacy skills are promoted effectively in art through writing about their research, talking about each other's work and in evaluation. In physical education, pupils are routinely involved in discussing and analysing performance.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Either French or German are taught to pupils from Year 7 to 9, alternating from year to year.

Provision in modern foreign languages is satisfactory.

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

  

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning have improved through the application of more consistent strategies
- Pupils' good attitudes and productive working relationships result in a positive atmosphere in most lessons
- There is not enough monitoring to ensure consistency and sharing of good practice
- The number of pupils studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11 has declined

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

68. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were broadly in line with those reported nationally. A small number of pupils was entered for GCSE in 2004. Results attained in French were above the national average and in German were broadly average.

#### **Standards and achievement**

69. Improving standards in work seen are the result of good lesson planning and the establishment of effective working relationships between teachers and pupils. By the end of Year 9, pupils make satisfactory progress. In lessons, pupils spend a lot of time learning words and memorising phrases. By the time they are in Year 11, pupils make satisfactory progress in both French and German. Higher-attaining pupils write and speak short passages partly from memory and some are developing well the quality of their extended writing. However they are not able to adapt sentences and use them creatively. Many pupils lack the confidence to speak or write without prompts.

#### **Teaching and learning**

70. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and proficiency. Overall, lessons are well planned, effectively using elements from the national strategy for teaching. Where teaching is good, the target language is used as the main medium and, a variety of activities, encourages learning and motivates and enthuses pupils. In a good Year 10 lesson, for example, the teacher used whiteboard technology to give a variety of stimuli in an interesting and lively way. Teachers do not insist that pupils use the foreign language routinely to ask for things or apologise for being late. Pupils' attitudes are positive. They show a capacity to work hard but in some classes they are not fully engaged because they are not challenged enough. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to work as pairs or small groups in order to develop speaking skills as well as independent and collaborative learning. Pupils are told their National Curriculum levels and are reminded in lessons of what to do in order to improve. However, teachers' use of assessment and marking of pupils' written work varies and does not always give pupils clear guidance on how the work can be improved.

#### **Leadership and management**

71. Teachers operate as highly skilled individuals, but joint working arrangements are not developed well enough by leadership to take full advantage of their expertise. Monitoring is not rigorous enough to level out inconsistencies in teaching, assessment and marking across the department. As French and German are taught to alternate cohorts from Years 7 to 9, the time allocation is appropriate for the study of a single language. Planning is now supported by more adequate documentation and schemes of work. Textbook provision has improved in Years 7 to 9. The department has had some staffing difficulties, which have had an adverse effect on some classes in Years 7 to 9, but is now in a more stable position. There has been a decline in the number of pupils who study a language in Years 10 to 11 since the subject became an option. Good extra-curricular opportunities include Spanish

and GCSE revision lessons after school hours, a choice of trips to Germany and France and a well-established exchange with a school in Germany.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

|                       | Year 9       | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Standards             | Average      | Average |
| Achievement           | Satisfactory | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Good    |

|                                    |      |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership                         | Good |
| Management                         | Good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results are above average and have improved because the pupils are prepared well for examinations
- Strong leadership and effective management have minimised the effect of staff changes in recent years
- Some pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, do not achieve as well as they could because of variations in the quality of teaching

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

72. The Year 9 and GCSE results, in 2004, were above the national average when compared both with all schools and with similar schools. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Results have improved since the last inspection.

#### **Standards and achievement**

73. Pupils start in Year 7 with mathematical standards that are broadly average. In the work recorded in exercise books and in oral work in lessons, the overall standards continue to be average. Pupils make better progress in Years 10 and 11 where the teaching is most effective. Examination expertise within the staff and good planning ensure pupils achieve good results. Older pupils successfully investigate a problem and record their findings for their GCSE coursework. Pupils generally are best at using routine methods they have been taught. By Year 11, pupils achieve well in each of the areas of mathematics especially in algebra, geometry and statistics. They are comparatively weaker in using mental mathematics, explaining ideas or applying knowledge and skills from other areas of mathematics. For instance, pupils competently used trigonometry to find the side of a triangle, but were less secure when expected to apply algebraic techniques or discuss the accuracy of a solution.

#### **Teaching and learning**

74. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Lessons are usually well prepared. In the best teaching, lesson aims are clear and shared with pupils to help focus on what is to be learned. Overall, pupils behave well and are co-operative. Most of the teaching is mathematically accurate and methods are explained well, although teaching does not sufficiently insist on precise recording of solutions and often misses opportunities to improve literacy. Work is generally challenging enough and is pitched at an appropriate level for pupils in each of the different sets. Pupils are encouraged and helped individually, which usually reflects good pupil-teacher working relationships. Routine setting of homework reinforces learning from lessons. Teaching and revision are well organised to

prepare pupils for their examinations in both Years 9 and 11, with good opportunities for extra help in sessions after school.

75. Pupils do not learn enough in lessons where the management of their behaviour is weak. Too often disruptive social chat is allowed, restricting pupils' concentration and the quality of their learning. Overall, teaching methods tend to be narrow, with little use of practical work or planned discussion to support pupils' understanding. Teachers know there are weaknesses in the plenary part of lessons and there are appropriate plans to improve assessment through greater involvement of pupils. The quality in presentation of work is too variable, reflecting the changes of staff and the inconsistency in what is expected and how work is marked. Although currently being developed as an aid to class teaching, ICT is little used to help pupils learn mathematics. The planned curriculum coverage of ICT in Year 8 is neither integrated effectively into the mathematics scheme nor taught well enough.

### **Leadership and management**

76. Strong leadership in mathematics provides encouragement and support for a team that has had many recent staff changes. Leadership sets a good role model for staff and pupils in being ambitious for the subject and working hard to achieve success. Teachers are appropriately deployed according to their strengths and to avoid classes having a succession of less secure teaching. Expertise is used well to promote examination success. Planning and organisation are good, as seen in the programmes of work, in the arrangements for checking progress of classes and in the extensive data for tracking pupils' achievement. Although some of the same weaknesses in teaching remain since the last inspection, results have improved.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

77. Pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills across the curriculum and, in some subjects, their skills are developed well. For example, in geography pupils successfully apply numeracy skills to their map work and in history pupils interpret graphs effectively. In design and technology, teachers plan for the weighing and measuring needed for food technology and the pattern making used in textiles. Having been supported by staff training, provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory and pupils' competence with number is as expected for their age.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is satisfactory.

|                                    | Year 9       | Year 11      |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards                          | Average      | Average      |
| Achievement                        | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning              | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |              |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |              |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |              |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Where teaching has good pace and challenge, pupils respond positively and achieve well
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous
- The range of teaching and learning activities has been significantly increased but there is too little emphasis upon independent work
- The national strategy for science is having a positive impact

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

78. Results in the end of Year 9 tests were below average, in 2004, when compared both with all schools and similar schools. GCSE results in 2004 were in line with the national average and broadly in line with those in similar schools.

### **Standards and achievement**

79. Standards on entry to the school are average. By Year 9, most pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the different reactions of acids and the differences between animal and plant cells. They are generally competent in writing word equations. By Year 11, pupils' understanding of, for example, the equation relating electric current to the rate of flow of charge and their ability to calculate heats of reaction is also secure. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, have made sound progress.

### **Teaching and learning**

80. A significant core of teaching is good or very good. In these lessons, classroom management is effective and working relationships are good. There is good pace and challenge in the tasks set. Questioning is used effectively to gain ideas from pupils, to get them to evaluate experimental methods, and to explore their understanding of concepts, such as the use of the particle model to explain the expansion of solids. Pupils are actively involved and skills, such as making presentations and note making, are developed well. In these lessons, pupils respond well, make good progress and achieve well. The national strategy for science is improving the quality of teaching and learning but is not fully, or consistently, in place. Teachers do not always share learning outcomes with pupils and the range of starter activities, used to engage pupils' interest at the outset of lesson, is limited. Most lessons involve a variety of activity to sustain pupils' interest but activities used to conclude lessons are not as well developed and are sometimes rushed.
81. The use of ICT by pupils has increased, now that a new set of laptops has been acquired. Not enough work is open-ended and investigative, where pupils work more independently, identify the factor to investigate, choose suitable equipment and design the method. Inattention by some pupils for part of the time, background noise and lack of good time management by teachers, mean that achievement in some lessons is only satisfactory. Insufficient use is made of more open questioning and extended writing for pupils to explore ideas at greater length. Homework ideas have been incorporated into schemes of work, but the variety of activity is limited. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, poor behaviour was not always dealt with effectively. Teachers monitor pupils' progress thoroughly but prompt action is not always taken when potential underachievement is identified. Measures are being taken to share assessment criteria with pupils but these are not fully developed. Examples of good practice in marking were seen in pupils' books, with good quality feedback on how to improve, but this is inconsistent across the department. There are also variations in the marking system used.

### **Leadership and management**

82. Significant progress has been made in developing programmes of study on a lesson-by-lesson basis, these being most consistently detailed in Years 7 to 9. Though good progress has been made in building in a clear three-part structure for lessons, this is not yet complete for all units of work. Detailed curriculum planning helps to promote consistency in the quality of teaching but insufficient emphasis is placed upon rigorous monitoring of teaching, with feedback to staff, in order to promote higher standards and evaluate the work of the department. There have been significant staffing changes recently and new staff are making a positive contribution to developments in the department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school has chosen to teach ICT through the subjects of the curriculum. It is taught as a subject to pupils who choose the general national vocational (GNVQ) intermediate level course in Years 10 to 11.

Provision in ICT is satisfactory.

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

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Good         |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective learning results from well planned lessons and a strong emphasis on examination requirements in GNVQ lessons
- ICT resources are well above the national average
- Provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9 is well planned but the teaching is inconsistent
- The ICT examination course in Years 10 and 11 prepares pupils well for the world of work
- There is appropriate coverage of ICT skills in Years 10 and 11 but planning is not rigorous

### Commentary

#### Examination Results

83. The results of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2004 were below the national average. In 2004, results in GNVQ ICT were above the national average.

#### Standards and achievement

84. Standards on entry are average. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils access software confidently and move information from one application to another. Lower-attaining pupils, however, are dependent on teachers for guidance and sometimes struggle to cope with formulae and the interrogation of databases. Standards seen in Year 11 GNVQ lessons are above course expectations and pupils achieve well. They produce good work on designing spreadsheets and professional documentation such as menus and business cards. In other subjects in Years 10 and 11, pupils not taking the examination course, about fifty per cent, have many opportunities to develop their competencies in the use and application of ICT. In mathematics, pupils produce good quality data handling coursework and, in science and design and technology, pupils use specific programmes effectively to support coursework. In timetabled units within the PSHE course, pupils' competencies in the use and application of ICT, using a wide range of programs, are secure.

#### Teaching and learning

85. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 varies. Teachers in some subject areas are very confident in their teaching and use of computers while in other subjects, they are not sufficiently well trained in ICT teaching skills. In a Year 9 PSHE lesson, good guidance enabled pupils to access software to produce web pages successfully. The class was managed well and higher-attaining pupils were involved effectively in supporting their peers. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, there was a good focus on assessment with appropriate reference to National Curriculum levels and how these could be gained. In some lessons

observed, basic approaches to ICT classroom management were not used, for instance, turning screens off for whole-class teaching or ensuring that the class was well briefed before embarking on individual work. In another Year 8 mathematics lesson, all pupils, including those who had difficulty performing simple additions, were given the same task. As a result, the progress of some pupils was limited to how quickly the teacher could get around the class while very competent users quickly finished their work.

86. In Years 10 and 11, pupils following the examination course are well supported in their individual work and work well independently. Good teaching engages pupils through the use of the interactive whiteboard. Questioning is good and pupils are very well focused on examination requirements. In one Year 10 lesson observed, there was a very good focus on literacy and formal language in preparing a restaurant menu. Assessment is thorough and pupils know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teaching and learning in GNVQ lessons are good. For non-examination pupils, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, teaching successfully enabled pupils to work in small groups to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on diet. In a Year 10 science lesson, ICT was used more to enliven the delivery of the lesson rather than to support pupils' learning. Nevertheless, pupils were developing their competencies in the use of the interactive whiteboard and were familiar with the process of 'dragging' labels across the board when working on a diagram of sound waves.

#### **Leadership and management**

87. The Year 7 to 9 curriculum has been planned well with aspects carefully allocated to appropriate subject departments to teach. The strategy is in its early stages of development. In Years 10 and 11, coverage of the national curriculum requirements is less well planned, relying on plans put in place by previous leadership. In Years 10 and 11, coverage of the National Curriculum requirements is less well planned. There is a reliance on the above average amount of ICT use leading to coverage of the curriculum through osmosis rather than systematic mapping. However, more formalised planning for a programme to enable all pupils to develop further their skills and competencies is now in place. Subjects will shortly become responsible for teaching particular units of this new course. Teaching is monitored and supported but the monitoring of pupils' actual ICT competencies lacks rigour. School and departmental leadership share a clear philosophy for the model adopted and a large amount of financial investment and staff training has taken place leading to confident use amongst many staff.

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

88. The use of ICT across the curriculum is widespread and has improved since the last inspection. Resources have improved significantly, the number of computers in the school being well above the national average for secondary schools. There has been good planning for departmental approaches to ICT use in Years 7 to 9 though this is less precise in Years 10 and 11. ICT is used particularly well in physical education, design and technology and geography. It is not used well enough in music, religious education and mathematics. The school has its own intranet, which includes broad coverage as well as department specific coverage. Pupils' skill levels are average.

### **HUMANITIES**

#### **Geography**

Provision in geography is satisfactory.

|             | Year 9       | Year 11      |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards   | Average      | Average      |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

|                                    |              |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Teaching and learning              | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |              |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |              |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |              |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Coursework in the present Year 11 is of an above average standard
- Pupils are not always given enough guidance to help them know what they need to do to improve their work
- Dedicated accommodation and good quality display enhances the quality of the learning environment

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

89. In 2004, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average and similar to those achieved in previous years. Results, in 2004, at GCSE were significantly below the national average and declined since the previous year.

#### **Standards and achievement**

90. Attainment on entry is broadly similar to that seen nationally. Work seen in lessons, along with a scrutiny of pupils' books, indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress by Year 9. Higher-attaining Year 9 pupils have a detailed understanding of plate tectonics and explain how this impacts on human activities and lower-attaining pupils confidently describe the effects of earthquakes. By Year 11, pupils have developed a secure grasp of different eco-systems and how tourism can damage the environment along with the conflict this causes. Coursework completed by Year 11 pupils is well presented and pupils use a good range of statistical techniques to analyse data.

#### **Teaching and learning**

91. A three-part lesson structure is often used well. In lessons where the aims are broken down for pupils into learning outcomes, they are well aware of what is expected of them and are focused on their learning as a result. All pupils complete an assessment task twice a term which is marked in detail and provided with an National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. However, targets for improvement are too general and lack the subject detail necessary to help pupils improve their work. There is a good use of enquiry and investigative work in lessons but this does not always meet the individual needs of every pupil. However, TAs are used well to support pupils with special educational needs. In some lessons, a high level of chatter affected the quality of learning.

#### **Leadership and management**

92. Geography is a popular subject, the proportion of pupils opting to take the subject in Year 10 being well above national averages. Leadership and management have analysed the reasons for the decline in GCSE results and identified the limited amount of curriculum time last year as having a significant impact. This has been rectified for the present Years 10 and 11. Though teachers work well together as a team, management does not consistently evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching. Good programmes of study effectively focus on the integration of ICT into the curriculum. Provision for fieldwork is good for older pupils, with residential trips being organised to the Lake District and Ireland to broaden their learning. There are, though, fewer opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to take part in fieldwork activities. The department is well resourced and accommodation has improved. Display in the specialist rooms is good as it provides a stimulating environment to support learning.

## History

Provision in history is good.

|                       | Year 9  | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards             | Average | Average |
| Achievement           | Good    | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Good    | Good    |

  

|                                    |      |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership                         | Good |
| Management                         | Good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well planned lessons provide effective opportunities for all pupils to achieve well
- While the response of most pupils contributes well to their achievement, that of a few is unsatisfactory
- Good leadership and management provides a sense of purpose and direction for the subject

### Commentary

#### Examination results

93. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were similar to those reported nationally. In GCSE, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was much lower than it had been in previous years. The department has analysed the reasons for this and, as with geography, has identified the reduction in teaching hours as an important factor. This has been rectified for the current Years 10 and 11.

#### Standards and achievement

94. Standards on entry to Year 7 are below average. In Year 9, in work on the suffragettes, most pupils interpret well historical sources and other forms of evidence, such as graphs, when forming conclusions about their aims and methods. They make links between the events that they study, such as identifying the role played by women in the First World War as an important factor in changing attitudes. By the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding, although still average, are more secure and higher-attaining pupils are approaching above average standards. In competently written essays, most show that they understand why the Second World War broke out. They treat sources, such as cartoons, with appropriate caution.

#### Teaching and learning

95. In most lessons, starter activities are used well to focus pupils' minds and build upon previous learning. Most lessons include good opportunities for using and improving literacy skills, for example in Years 10 and 11, through guidance on how to write good essays. Work focuses well on improving skills in analysing historical evidence. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress, which they use well to provide individual support and plan group work that supports lower attaining pupils, while giving the most able opportunities to reach higher levels. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils respond satisfactorily, but the attitudes of a small number, who work with reluctance and sometimes disrupt the work of others, are unsatisfactory. The response of pupils in Years 10 and 11 supports their achievement very well. They are attentive in whole-class sessions and concentrate well on their own work. In many lessons, they show clear enjoyment and commitment to doing well. Although teachers generally manage less motivated pupils well, they sometimes accept too much talking and inattention, which reduces pace and achievement. Conversely, in keeping

pupils under control, teachers occasionally set written tasks, neglecting opportunities to let pupils deepen their understanding and practise speaking skills by discussing points that interest them. Although marking is generally helpful, especially in Years 10 and 11, teachers do not always ensure that pupils complete their work.

### **Leadership and management**

96. The department is well organised on a day-to-day basis. Management has improved procedures for monitoring teaching and analysing results so that these are now good. However it does not always ensure that all pupils have an equal share of the well-planned ICT activities because this is left to individual teachers to organise. A very effective contribution is made to initial teacher training, with student teachers expressing a high regard for the guidance and support that they receive. Leadership is characterised by high enthusiasm for the subject and aspirations for the success of the department and provides a very good role model for other staff. It has been successful in maintaining effective teaching and learning and good achievement.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is good.

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

  

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Good         |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' good subject knowledge has a positive impact on achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Most pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well although some in Years 9 and 10 do not always behave as well as they could
- Good assessment procedures ensure pupils know how well they are doing
- Management does not fully evaluate the quality of teaching
- The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped

### **Commentary**

#### **Results**

97. In 2004, results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were similar to the national average. In 2004, results in the GCSE full course were above the national average. Half of those entered for the short course gained an A\* to C grade.

#### **Standards and achievement**

98. Standards on entry are as expected for pupils' ages. By Year 9, pupils have made the connection between religious customs and beliefs and how lifestyle is affected by different religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In Year 11, pupils have a good understanding of monotheism and relate this to Christianity and Judaism. They have developed good knowledge about the sanctity of life and understand the key arguments surrounding this issue from a Christian perspective. They discuss sensitive issues in an open and mature manner. Indicative of their good achievement is pupils' good ability to discuss sensitive issues in an open and mature manner. For example, they know the differences between natural and moral evil and discuss how Judaism regards disasters as

having a positive outcome. Pupils recognise how religions promote racial harmony and how they are similar in their approach to moral issues.

### Teaching and learning

99. Teachers plan lessons with a focus on key words and how these are important to religions. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and they do this well. In most lessons, pupils have good attitudes to learning and work well independently. When correctly steered by teachers, they work productively in groups. However, in a Year 9 lower ability set, pupils lacked the required self-discipline to work effectively in groups and the teacher did not effectively manage their behaviour. Those with special educational needs are given appropriate support in most lessons from TAs. Teachers make good use of a range of good quality textbooks and pupils respond well to the tasks in these. Regular marking helps motivate pupils and teachers' comments are helpful because pupils are told how to improve. End of unit assessments give pupils a good understanding of how well they have achieved. Religious artefacts and classroom displays help pupils learn about customs and beliefs. Teachers prepare good quality worksheets and are adept at capturing pupils' imagination. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the teacher successfully used a role-play exercise to promote discussion about the social and moral implications of abortion. ICT is not used frequently enough to support and improve learning.

### Leadership and management

100. In the absence of a subject leader, the department is well managed but there is not enough monitoring of teaching and learning. All teachers have contributed to developing the new schemes of work for the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The Christmas and Easter whole-school services enrich the quality of the curriculum. The main teaching room provides a good focus for the subject but other lessons are taught in a number of non-specialist rooms that do not have the same stimulus for learning about religion.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Design and technology includes courses in food, textiles, resistant materials, graphics and systems and control.

Provision in design and technology is good.

|                       | Year 9  | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards             | Average | Average |
| Achievement           | Good    | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Good    | Good    |

  

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Good         |
| Management                         | Good         |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement and have resulted in consistently high standards in textiles
- The positive attitudes and behaviour of most pupils enables them to make good progress in lessons
- Leadership and management have coped effectively with significant staffing difficulties
- Very limited storage has the potential to cause health and safety risks

## **Commentary**

101. In 2004, results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. Overall GCSE results, for the four design and technology subjects taken, in 2004, were broadly in line with national average. Results for food and graphics have been below the national average for the past four years. Resistant materials results improved, in 2004, to be above the national average. Results in textiles remained well above the national average.

### **Standards and achievement**

102. Pupils start design and technology in Year 7 with below average skills. During Years 7 to 9, they follow a modular course that includes food, textiles, resistant materials, graphics and systems and control. By the end of Year 9, they have made good progress in developing their skills in designing and have had good opportunities to make items in a variety of materials. In Year 11, pupils produce good quality work in their design folders. The work of higher-attaining pupils is well above average in terms of both content and presentation. Pupils use computer-generated graphics extensively in the presentation of their work but the standard of drawing and sketching is lower. Pupils enjoy practical work and make good quality products when realising their design ideas.

### **Teaching and learning**

103. Most teachers have well-established routines and high expectations of both performance and behaviour. As a result, most pupils concentrate, are attentive and develop well their knowledge, understanding and skills. A strength of most teaching is the teachers' technical expertise, for example, in textiles, and their ability to share this through effective demonstrations and individual support during the lessons. Most work is well structured to support and guide pupils through the stages of designing and making, although learning outcomes are not always challenging enough. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils worked independently and creatively when modelling containers for their electronic circuits as part of their systems and control work. Marking is generally good and, in Years 10 and 11, assessment is used well to support and motivate pupils. Both oral and written comments are used effectively in informing pupils about what they need to do to improve their work.

### **Leadership and management**

104. Leadership and management have successfully minimised the effect of staffing changes and difficulties, particularly the impact on pupils and the constraints it continues to place on the delivery of the curriculum. The lack of storage space, particularly in the resistant materials workshops, has led to cramped teaching areas, with potential health and safety issues.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is good.

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

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Good         |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching by the permanent teachers in the department is consistently good and results in good achievement by pupils
- The quality of pupils' skills in research and development is a strength of the department's work
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and most behave well in lessons
- There is not enough use of ICT in Years 7 to 9 to develop pupils' practical work in lessons

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

105. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, show standards are broadly in line with those reported nationally. Over recent years, GCSE results have improved with the proportion of A\* to C grades broadly in line with the national average in 2004.

#### **Standards and achievement**

106. In Year 7, most pupils enter the school with below average attainment. They make brisk progress in improving their practical skills, and knowledge and understanding about the work of other artists and cultural traditions. By Year 9, pupils use their sketchbooks well for experimentation, observational studies, visual and written research into artists' work and in planning their work. As a result, these are consistently lively documents irrespective of the differing skills levels of the pupils. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and practical art skills using ICT in lessons because of difficulties in accessing computers for a whole class.
107. Current Year 11 pupils make good progress in developing both their practical art skills and knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists. They produce very imaginative and lively sketchbooks containing ideas for their practical work, strong visual research and annotated drawings and media experimentations. They link their research into art history effectively and present their ideas attractively. Pupils' observational drawing skills are satisfactory in Year 11 but many are more confident in drawing from secondary resource materials. The department is aware of this and has modified teaching approaches in Year 10 to emphasise the focus on observational drawing skills; current standards of these pupils are therefore higher. Many use ICT confidently for research about artists and art movements, both contemporary and from the past. A number use computer software well to manipulate images captured using a scanner or digital camera in order to create new expressive ideas.

#### **Teaching and learning**

108. Teaching provided by permanent specialist staff is consistently good. However, in some Years 7 to 9 lessons, taught by temporary and non-specialist teachers in general classrooms, teaching and learning are only satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and organised with a variety of teaching methods. Sometimes, planning is not always sufficiently well modified to meet the needs of pupils of widely differing abilities. Lessons start well with activities and learning outcomes clearly explained so that expectations are clearly understood by pupils. Good teaching resources are well organised to support learning. Individual pupils receive effective support in lessons through knowledgeable, helpful feedback and guidance. In a few lessons, good quality support from TAs helps pupils with special educational needs. In some lessons the challenging behaviour of a few pupils restricts sustained concentration and gains in skills and knowledge so that achievement is only satisfactory. Effective lessons end with a review of work in which both teacher and pupils reflect on progress made and to which many contribute their ideas and opinions.

109. In Years 10 and 11, teaching methods are adapted appropriately to offer greater independence and responsibility to pupils. Most respond to the challenge well showing positive attitudes, behaviour and motivation. Teaching is well structured to meet the needs of the GCSE examinations, pupil progress is monitored regularly and constructive feedback given to help ensure coverage of the assessment objectives. Work is marked regularly using National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades so that pupils know their rate of progress. However, the quality of written marking is inconsistent in clearly outlining how pupils can improve.

**Leadership and management**

110. Subject leadership is now shared on a part-time basis, an innovation from the start of the current academic year. A good, shared vision for improving the subject is demonstrated by the improvement in examination results. This is despite staffing difficulties over recent years, which have required the deployment of temporary and non-specialist teachers. These difficulties are now resolved with a specialist teacher appointed for the coming academic year. A sound development plan covers essential areas for improvement but with targets that lack sufficient rigour. Day-to-day issues are managed soundly but specific areas of responsibility are not delegated. Resources are generally adequate, with the exception of ICT.

## Music

The overall provision in music is satisfactory.

|                       | Year 9       | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Standards             | Average      | Average |
| Achievement           | Satisfactory | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Good    |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good sense of rhythm contributes positively to their practical skills
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their practical skills effectively to demonstrate different styles of music
- There is not enough use of ICT to support pupils' composing skills
- The subject improvement plan is brief and has a narrow vision for the future developments of the subject

### Commentary

#### Examination results

111. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, indicated that standards are in line with the national average. The results in the 2004 GCSE examination were significantly below average. Boys' achievement was better than girls. Results in recent years have also been below average.

#### Standards and achievement

112. Pupils' good performing skills are contributing well to their musical and creative development and were most noticeable in their medieval compositions. Here, they successfully composed melodies in the appropriate style using the scale modes of the period and incorporating well-known tunes of the genre. Pupils have a sound understanding of the construction of primary chords. This, together with their knowledge of the main elements of music, is also assisting and supporting the development of their musical skills.
113. Leadership has a fully inclusive approach for pupils who want to follow the GCSE music course. A higher than average proportion of pupils choose to study music so that standards at the start of Year 10 are lower than is usual for a GCSE course. However, with the benefit of good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to the subject, pupils are making good progress. A notable strength is pupils' performing skills. The majority are instrumentalists and perform with confidence. Although creative skills are developing these are not as well developed as performances. Compositions show a sense of structure with supporting accompaniments that fit harmonically with the melody. These melodies, however, tend to be ordinary, lacking in creative development and excitement.

#### Teaching and learning

114. Teachers are good musicians and use their practical skills effectively to demonstrate different styles of music. For example, in a Year 8 topic, composing fanfares for special occasions, pupils responded with enthusiasm when the teacher demonstrated how to use basic primary chords to compose a fanfare. As a result, pupils settled quickly to the work, composing fanfares that showed development and a good understanding of the style. A positive feature of teaching is the planning of lessons and starter activities. These quickly engage pupils' interest preparing them for the main focus of the lesson and contribute

positively to their learning. However, in Years 7 to 9, pupils often start tasks not always fully understanding what they should be doing, which then slows the pace of the lesson. In Years 10 and 11, though, teachers ensure, through effective questioning, that pupils fully understand what is expected of them. Teachers manage pupils well, allowing lessons to proceed with pace and a minimum of interruptions. During lessons, teachers move around the class well, helping pupils and advising them on how to improve their work. Although there is a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest, there are occasions when the content of the activity does not take into consideration the needs of the musically talented pupils. Consequently, they are not always challenged enough, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Learning is less effective when pupils are left too long on practical tasks before teacher intervention to assess progress.

### **Leadership and management**

115. The subject is gaining in popularity and the number of pupils receiving instrumental lessons has doubled over recent years. Colleagues are supported well through sharing and discussing effective classroom practice. The shared planning of new topics is contributing to a varied curriculum. The subject development plan is for only one year and does not show a clear vision for the future developments. Although there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their acting and singing skills in the high quality annual productions, additional activities to support pupils' instrumental development are limited. The insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' composing skills is a contributory reason as to why compositions are not as well developed in Year 11, as is performance. Although pupils use electronic keyboards for their creative work not all have facilities for recording their work.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is very good.

|                                    | Year 9        | Year 11       |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 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 the last inspection | Excellent     |               |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures that pupils acquire new skills and knowledge and achieve very well
- Leadership and management provide a very good focus for provision
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent and enhances pupils' learning opportunities
- Accommodation, including a 'state-of-the-art' synthetic pitch, is excellent and enables a wide range of activities to be taught throughout the year
- Marking of written work does not always give clear guidance on how to improve

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

116. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2004, indicated that standards are above the national average. GCSE results in 2004 were broadly average. They have been improving for the last four years. Boys performed better than girls. These results represent particularly good achievement because a significantly larger proportion of the year group gained them than is the case nationally. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs

did well as all pupils entered gained an A\* to G grade. However, the proportion of A\* and A grades was below average. Results in GCSE dance in 2004, for the first cohort to take the examination, were well below average.

### **Standards and achievement**

117. Standards on entry to the school are below average. By Year 9, pupils have made very good progress and higher-attaining pupils are reaching standards in some activities that are well above average. In a Year 9 trampolining lesson, for example, pupils had very good knowledge of techniques and performed their routines with control. They also used their knowledge to evaluate their own performance and that of others. The quality of pupils' evaluative skills was enhanced because pupils used digital video cameras to produce a short film of their routine and then used computers to edit it, adding comments and music.
118. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils take an accredited course. They continue to develop their skills and techniques very well. Pupils in Year 11 have above average football skills and use their good knowledge of how to set up skills practices to analyse successfully the performance of others. Standards of performance and choreography skills in Year 11 girls' dance are well above average. In theory lessons, pupils have good knowledge of subject vocabulary, particularly that related to anatomy and physiology. Across all years, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles and procedures for preparation for physical exercise, often leading warm-up activities themselves. Pupils with educational needs achieve as well as their peers.

### **Teaching and learning**

119. The quality of teaching is very good, overall, with some excellent features. As a result, pupils learn well, developing and applying their skills successfully, both as individuals and in teams. Teachers plan very well structured and paced lessons, with tasks that are appropriate to the needs of all pupils. In an excellent dance lesson, the teacher's expert knowledge and very enthusiastic approach ensured that the girls performed to the very best of their ability. The tasks provided them with a high level of challenge, enabling them to achieve extremely well. In most lessons, pupils respond very well to the very high expectations set by teachers. Their very good, often excellent, attitudes and behaviour result in a very productive atmosphere in lessons and very good working relationships between pupils and teachers as well as among pupils themselves. Many pupils say that physical education is their favourite subject and, as a result, they enjoy the lessons and work hard physically. In some lessons, teachers make excellent use of National Curriculum levels to let pupils know how well they are doing. However, although marking of written work is regular, comments made by teachers are not always constructive. Regular testing keeps staff and pupils well informed about attainment and progress. Physical education technicians provide very good support for pupils and teachers, especially in the use of ICT.

### **Leadership and management**

120. Leadership has clear ambitions to improve GCSE standards further, raise pupils' achievement and broaden further the curriculum through offering a wider range of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11. There is a very good understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses because teachers work together very effectively. Since the last inspection, the school has gained sports college status, with the resulting improvements in facilities and numbers of specialist staff. Staffing is now excellent and allows the curriculum to be very well matched to the needs of all pupils. The most recently opened accommodation is of outstanding quality and provides pupils with excellent opportunity to participate in a very wide range of sports, both in normal lessons and as part of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer throughout the year. The department is developing extremely effective links with other schools and the community, including the local council. Teachers and pupils in feeder primary schools are provided with

excellent support, which is improving the quality of teaching, learning and attainment prior to entry to Thurstable.

#### **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

121. GNVQ ICT was inspected and is reported elsewhere. Two Year 10 lessons were sampled in leisure and tourism. Very good teaching in both lessons enabled pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding very well. Pupils worked hard throughout and there were very good teacher-pupil working relationships. One lesson was sampled in health and social care. A well-planned lesson involved pupils in independent learning to develop their knowledge and understanding of how self-esteem can affect growth and development.

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

Provision for pupils personal, social and health education is good. Citizenship is a strong element in the programme all pupils experience. Topics, such as sex education and drugs awareness, are taught each year using appropriate materials with a focus appropriate to the pupils' ages. An analysis of a sample of pupils' work shows good teaching and learning.

## Citizenship

Provision in Citizenship is good.

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

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership                         | Very good      |
| Management                         | Good           |
| Progress since the last inspection | Not applicable |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good quality teaching
- Very good management has ensured the teaching of citizenship is well organised
- There are good assessment arrangements
- Not all pupils have access to citizenship activities of comparable high quality

### Commentary

122. At the time citizenship was introduced, the school was one of the five schools that took part in the production of a training course used by professionals in education. Citizenship is taught in designated lessons in Years 7 to 11 as part of the PSHE programme as well as being taught through other subjects.

### Standards and achievement

123. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of the society in which they live. The variety of tasks that pupils undertake helps them think and develop their skills well. In Year 8, for example, pupils discuss the reasons why young people commit crimes and, in Year 9, they develop well their knowledge and understanding of human rights, using ICT effectively to present the results of their work. In a Year 9 English lesson, where pupils put MacBeth on trial and formed a tribunal with defence and prosecution, achievement was also good. By the end of Year 11, pupils understand how to make choices as a consumer and to identify the different characteristics of radio reports. Pupils discuss issues well, listening well to others and putting forward their own ideas with confidence and commitment.

### Teaching and learning

124. Overall, teaching is good. Clear learning outcomes are shared with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Pupils of all abilities learn well as they are encouraged to think, reflect and discuss the issues they are presented with. Teachers use a variety of stimulating approaches so that lessons have good pace and pupils make good progress. In a good Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils were skilfully guided when asked to prepare a radio news broadcast as part of their work on understanding different aspects of the media. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups and, overall, their attitude to the subject is positive, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' work is marked well and each unit of work has both pupil self-assessment and a National Curriculum level.

### Leadership and management

125. Leadership has a very clear vision for the subject's further development. Good progress has been made with teaching the requirements of citizenship through the PSHE programme and through other subjects. Work is well planned for each lesson to ensure all aspects of the subject are covered. However, monitoring has not been rigorous enough to ensure that all teaching is of a sufficiently high quality, particularly in discrete lessons. Curricular

opportunities have been extended by the introduction of a pilot GCSE citizenship course after school.

126. The school effectively promotes participation in citizenship with numerous opportunities for pupils to assume responsibility both in the school and in the community. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities, for example the Duke of Edinburgh and the Junior Sports Leaders Award courses, fundraising work and the school council, develop pupils' participation and responsible actions as citizens. The subject was not included in the last inspection.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six 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. It is not possible to compare results nationally in all the sampled subjects because low numbers of students took the examinations. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

### *Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses*

| Subject                | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                        |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| Art and Design         | 2              | 100.0                | 98.3    | 100.0                | 50.2    | 120.0               | 87.1    |
| Biology                | 5              | 100.0                | 96.6    | 20.0                 | 40.0    | 64.0                | 79.3    |
| Business Studies       | 2              | 50.0                 | 91.6    | 0.0                  | 24.1    | 30.0                | 67.9    |
| Communication Studies  | 6              | 100.0                | 99.2    | 50.0                 | 40.4    | 90.0                | 83.5    |
| Drama                  | 3              | 100.0                | 99.6    | 33.3                 | 36.4    | 80.0                | 85.1    |
| English Language       | 9              | 88.9                 | 99.2    | 33.3                 | 36.4    | 66.7                | 81.1    |
| English Literature     | 4              | 100.0                | 99.4    | 0.0                  | 44.9    | 70.0                | 85.5    |
| Design and Technology  | 1              | 100.0                | 97.8    | 0.0                  | 35.0    | 80.0                | 77.9    |
| General Studies        | 30             | 93.3                 | 94.9    | 26.7                 | 30.5    | 70.0                | 72.9    |
| Geography              | 5              | 80.0                 | 98.8    | 20.0                 | 46.4    | 68.0                | 85.2    |
| History                | 12             | 100.0                | 99.0    | 41.7                 | 45.6    | 78.3                | 85.1    |
| Information Technology | 3              | 100.0                | 96.3    | 66.7                 | 25.7    | 93.3                | 71.1    |
| Leisure and Recreation | 3              | 100.0                | 90.7    | 0.0                  | 18.3    | 53.3                | 64.6    |
| Mathematics            | 5              | 100.0                | 96.8    | 20.0                 | 56.6    | 80.0                | 89.5    |
| Other Social Studies   | 8              | 75.0                 | 97.4    | 12.5                 | 42.5    | 42.5                | 81.6    |
| Physics                | 5              | 100.0                | 96.7    | 40.0                 | 45.3    | 84.0                | 82.6    |
| Religious Studies      | 7              | 100.0                | 99.1    | 14.3                 | 49.5    | 77.1                | 87.4    |
| Sports/PE Studies      | 3              | 100.0                | 97.8    | 33.3                 | 30.9    | 66.7                | 75.4    |
| Travel and Tourism     | 2              | 100.0                | 90.1    | 0.0                  | 19.6    | 60.0                | 64.9    |

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English language. Two English literature lessons were sampled. A Year 12 lesson about two Toni Morrison novels was good. As a result of good questioning by the teacher, students developed good understanding of the texts. A Year 12 lesson on poetry was very good. The teacher modelled annotation very effectively and students worked very well, in pairs, showing very good understanding of poetic devices.

Two lessons were sampled in modern foreign languages. In the Year 13 French lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were good. Students coped well with a lesson conducted entirely in French. With the help of the teacher and the French language assistant they extracted information from a letter and prepared their response to defend their points of view. Standards of spoken and written French at this stage in the course are average. In the Year 12 German lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were good. The students benefited from one-to-one tuition with help from both the teacher and the German language assistant. Students were completing work on complex topics in preparation for their oral practice, retrieving information from material that they had researched on the Internet.

### **English language**

Provision in English language is good.

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
|                                    | Year 13       |
| Standards                          | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory  |
| Management                         | Satisfactory  |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory  |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive
- Strong working relationships between students and teachers make for a positive and productive atmosphere in lessons
- Students are not given enough opportunity to work independently

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

127. Students enter the sixth from with standards below the national average. A-level results have varied year on year.

#### **Standards and achievement**

128. The variety of written and oral tasks set for students leads to good achievement. By Year 13, students speak thoughtfully about a range of writing using good technical vocabulary and reasoned arguments. They are engaged and motivated when talking about poetry, for example, the poems of Simon Armitage. Written work is quite fluent and well structured, showing good progress over time. However, some extended writing lacks maturity because students have not been provided with enough support to help them improve.

#### **Teaching and learning**

129. Teachers prepare lessons carefully, using relevant, topical materials and textbooks. Lessons contain a variety of activities to assist students in their learning. A text marking activity, for example, gave students an opportunity to work effectively in pairs, skimming material for relevant details, synthesising information and then presenting it to the class. Students' learning is enhanced by the clear links made between the assignments undertaken and the examination requirements. In a lesson on spoken English, students worked very co-operatively in pairs and discussed their findings, showing a good understanding of key concepts and technical language. Students are enthusiastic and committed to the course. This is reflected in their very good attitudes in lessons and the resulting strong working relationships they have with their teachers. This enhances further

the quality of their learning. Some lessons, however, tend to be quite heavily teacher led and, as a result, opportunities for students to comment in depth and develop further their critical skills are limited.

#### **Leadership and management**

130. Although individual lessons were well taught, management has not ensured that good practice has been sufficiently shared in order to raise standards. Marking strategies, whilst good, vary considerably from teacher to teacher. An analysis of student's folders shows there has been improvement in the quality of work since last year.

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

131. Across the range of subjects, students show average standards of literacy overall. Art shows good use of annotation and well-structured extended writing. Speaking and listening in media studies are fluent and students are self-assured. They use some good technical language and listen to each other well. However, some extended writing in English lacks maturity because of a lack of structured and more explicit support. Not enough work has yet been done to co-ordinate approaches to literacy across the sixth form.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
|                       | Year 13 |
| Standards             | Average |
| Achievement           | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Good    |

  

|                                    |      |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership                         | Good |
| Management                         | Good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good |

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

- Good teaching and learning results in good achievement by students
- Students are keen and work hard, and numbers taking the subject have increased
- Enthusiastic teaching is based on good mathematical knowledge and experience
- Students have limited opportunity to develop study skills or to extend their mathematical thinking because teaching styles involve mainly explanations and practice

#### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

132. Although numbers were small, the students entered for A level in the last two years have all gained pass grades. Take up of the subject has increased in recent years, with no apparent difference in popularity or success between male and female students.

#### **Standards and achievement**

133. A major strength is the attitude of the students. They concentrate and cheerfully work hard in lessons in response to very supportive teaching. The abilities of the students starting A level vary from year to year, but overall they are below those usually found. Year 12 students, for example, tackling some difficult integration problems, met with varied success in both understanding the process and dealing with some difficult algebra. When faced with needing trigonometry for harder methods of integration, Year 13 students show a good recall of previously learned facts and sound skills in manipulating identities. Higher-attaining students show they can look for neat methods, as in choosing which trigonometric ratio to

use, but generally students are less strong at seeking alternative methods to solve problems and in discussing these.

### **Teaching and learning**

134. Teaching is enthusiastic and relations between students and teachers are very good. Explanations are mathematically rigorous, reflecting the expertise and experience of the teachers. Lessons are well prepared and make effective use homework. Much of the teachers' board work is carefully presented and this helps students to record their work accurately and to understand the methods. However, there is limited demand for students to make use of resources beyond the textbooks, to discuss mathematics or to read around the subject. This means that students are less experienced in looking for alternative, neater methods, and do not have enough opportunity to develop study skills. Homework routinely follows lessons and students make sensible use of textbook answers and feedback from their teachers.

### **Leadership and management**

135. Leadership has contributed to making mathematics more popular. The organisation of the work on different modules is effective and is coupled with useful past-paper question practice. A positive working ethos has been generated around the A-level mathematics groups. High reliance is placed on the textbook as the resource for each module, with little enhancement through the use of other resources, especially ICT. The availability of experienced teachers has contributed well to the improving provision of mathematics in the sixth form.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

136. Sixth form students use their mathematical skills effectively to support their work in other subjects. In science subjects, students are helpfully provided with skills sheets to support calculation work. In A-level biology, students competently apply advanced statistical techniques. In vocational courses, students cope well with the mathematical demands, although little of this is specifically planned. Overall, students' competency in mathematics across the sixth form curriculum is secure.

## **SCIENCE**

Biology was the focus subject in the inspection but chemistry and physics were also sampled. In a good Year 12 chemistry lesson, students learned successfully about the Born Haber cycle. The lesson was well structured and students were actively involved. However, the worksheet provided limited the potential for students to work independently. Results in physics, in 2004, were above the national average. In the Year 13 physics lesson sampled, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Teaching made good use of a model to show atomic forces but not enough use of questioning to test students' ideas

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is good.

|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
|                       | Year 13 |
| Standards             | Average |
| Achievement           | Good    |
| Teaching and learning | Good    |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Good         |
| Management                         | Good         |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching results in students learning and achieving well
- An increasing variety of teaching activities are being used to promote effective learning
- The good progress made in lessons is not always reflected in the students' results in module tests
- Good leadership and management is focused upon raising standards further

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

137. Though results were below average in 2004, they showed an improvement over the previous year when they were well below.

#### **Standards and achievement**

138. Students enter the sixth form having followed combined science at GCSE, with generally below average attainment. In Year 13, students make good progress and are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the syllabus requirements. They have, for example, a secure understanding of the different stages of the biochemical pathways of respiration and photosynthesis. In one particularly effective lesson, students showed a secure understanding of the structure and functions of the liver.

#### **Teaching and learning**

139. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and explanation is clear and well structured. Questioning is used effectively to check students' understanding. Students' grasp of concepts is developed well through a variety of methods, including use of past questions, practical work, fieldwork, modelling and model-making, Internet research, student presentations, essays, problems and mind-mapping. Good use is made of interesting resources, which relate principles of biology to applications and contexts, for example diarrhoea in the third world and the use of enzymes in the food industry. ICT is used increasingly but the present resources available restrict this. The national strategy for science is having a positive affect, for example, teachers explaining learning outcomes to the students and structuring lessons with a variety of tasks. Students' attitudes are very good. As a result, they respond well, make good progress in lessons and achieve well. However, this is not always reflected in the results obtained in module tests because there are not enough consolidation activities during the course. The department has also identified the need to work more with students on examination technique. Homework is set regularly and teachers make useful comments on how to improve, as well as providing students with mark schemes for past questions. There is inconsistency in the quality of marking because not all teachers are marking work using examination grades.

#### **Leadership and management**

140. Targets have been identified for the department to raise standards further, for example, in more effective monitoring of teaching and learning and in further training for teachers to make the most effective use of new technology. Detailed programmes of work provide good guidance for all staff. Sports college status is having a positive impact, with the very recent provision of a sports science laboratory and its ICT facilities.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The focus of the inspection was on the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) in ICT.

Provision in AVCE ICT is good.

|  |         |
|--|---------|
|  | Year 13 |
|--|---------|

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Good          |
| Management                         | Good          |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of good quality teaching and the guidance they receive
- Teaching is clearly focused on examination requirements, preparing students well for assessments
- The new course has been well planned and successfully introduced
- The vocational and real world focus of the course is not embedded sufficiently well

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

141. The AVCE in ICT is a newly introduced course and students have not been examined. In 2004, three students took and passed GCE A-level in ICT.

#### **Standards and achievement**

142. Students begin the AVCE course with varied previous experience of ICT with some students who have and others who have not followed an examination course in Year 11. By Year 13, differences are no longer apparent and students are out-performing their predicted attainment in the unit assessments taken throughout the course. Students write clearly about the most appropriate hardware and software for a business in a given scenario. They get prices from the Internet and take these into account when making recommendations. They devise, plan, set up and test web sites for a range of users, such as local primary schools or departments within Thurstable. In doing this, they liaise effectively with their clients and pay good attention to what would make the web site more user friendly for their intended audience.

#### **Teaching and learning**

143. An analysis of students' work confirms their view that they are well supported through detailed feedback. Work is marked regularly with written comments, which add to the constructive oral advice in lessons. Students are therefore very clear about how they are doing and how they can improve. A particularly good feature of the consistently good lessons observed was the frequently used technique of displaying students' work through the data projector. The class then engaged in positive criticism so that the student could take on board constructive suggestions for improvement. As everyone took a turn in this very supportive environment there was no embarrassment. A further outcome of this technique is that students' different skills and expertise are highlighted and valued. As a result, students are enabled to seek support from one another during their project work and continue to make progress when the teacher is occupied giving attention to another student. This leads to students achieving well. Relationships are productive but some teachers find the giving of clear explanations easier than others. Students work through a series of tasks set by the examination board so that their work is very clearly focused on the assessment criteria. Teachers use the grade descriptors well in order to set appropriate work.

#### **Leadership and management**

144. The AVCE course has been successfully introduced. It is in its second year and is proving to be much more popular than its predecessor, building well on the earlier GNVQ course. The open plan nature of accommodation makes teaching difficult but plans are in place to

improve the situation. Some AVCE lessons are taught on older computers, which lack the range of programs needed. The breadth of vocational experiences is restricted because of the school's rural setting, with few ICT-related businesses in the area. Nevertheless, not enough use is made of the opportunities that do exist to root the subject firmly in a vocational and real world context.

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

145. Students' use of computers across the sixth form is variable. In physical education, PowerPoint presentations are used frequently and there are good opportunities for computer aided design work in technology. Humanities subjects use the Internet for research. Students have a dedicated set of computers for sixth form use, which are used extensively. The competence of students in the use of ICT is in line with sixth forms nationally.

#### **HUMANITIES**

146. There was no focus subject in humanities during the inspection. Geography, history and psychology were sampled. Results, in 2004, were well below the national average in geography and broadly in line in history. In a good Year 12 geography lesson, well-structured questioning drew effectively on students' own experience and knowledge. Good use of ICT and a range of activities enabled students to develop their knowledge and understanding of de-industrialisation in the United Kingdom and northwest Europe. In a good Year 13 history lesson, students studied the changing relationship between the monarch and parliament at the time of Henry VIII's reformation. Information was presented to the students in a stimulating way and they were given tasks that effectively improved their capability to analyse relevant sources and form valid conclusions. A Year 13 psychology lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good, as was students' achievement. They were fully involved throughout, both on individual tasks as well as small group work activities.

#### **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

147. There was no focus subject in this area. Design and technology was sampled. In an effective Year 12 design and technology lesson, all students were very engaged in producing their practical work, with a variety of materials being used. Written feedback from the teacher was being used well by students to improve the quality of their work, for example, by use of computer aided design programmes.

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

The focus of the inspection was art and design. A good Year 13 lesson was sampled in media studies in which students learned about the effect of colour in a fictional film narrative. The teacher's good use of technical language and subject knowledge helped the students to understand key concepts. A Year 13 lesson was sampled in music in which students were practising for the performance element of the examination. During this lesson students developed confidence in performing for an audience. Standards were, however, below the level expected. Teaching and learning were satisfactory.

#### **Art and design**

Art and design and photography courses are timetabled together, some being team-taught. Provision in art and design is good.

|                       | Year 13       |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Standards             | Above average |
| Achievement           | Very good     |
| Teaching and learning | Very good     |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Good         |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well because the quality of teaching and learning are very good
- Students have positive attitudes towards their work, they work independently and develop their own style
- Good shared leadership provides a good focus and direction for the subject
- Accommodation for the sixth form is limited and restricts the development of large-scale work and access outside of timetabled lessons

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

148. There were only two entries for the 2004 A-level examinations. Both candidates achieved A grades.

#### **Standards and achievement**

149. Currently, all students of art and design are female. They are confident in their ability to recognise and use the expressive potential of a range of materials and processes, including ICT. Students use sketchbooks extensively, both for research and to develop their own individual styles. They make strong connections between their own work and that of a wide range of artists and designers, past and present. Using suitable technical and critical vocabulary, they confidently discuss the work of contemporary artists such as Cindy Sherman, Orlan and Dan Eldon. For some, observational drawing lacks the sophistication expected at this level. The mixed gender photography group achieves very well, acquiring new skills in digital and conventional black and white photography. They use accurately technical terms such as 'solarization', 'cropping', 'scanning', 'layering' and work well independently in the dark room. Their research work shows good use of annotation.

#### **Teaching and learning**

150. Lessons are very well planned, enabling students to learn different skills including screen-printing, sculpture and the manipulation of images using ICT. Teachers encourage students to develop their own individual style. Progress is greatly helped by positive, ongoing verbal feedback and intervention by the teacher. As a result, students reflect critically on their own work. They know their target grades and understand how to improve their work. Students have very positive attitudes to work and are well motivated, which results in very good working relationships in lessons. Teachers encourage students to work in the department during their private study time. However, the small sixth form art studio, to which a few students are able to gain access during this time, restricts the use of materials and the scale in which students can work.

#### **Leadership and management**

151. After an unsettled period, a recent development has resulted in the department now being led and managed by way of a job-share. Leadership has a clear understanding of the key areas for improvement and an action plan is being developed. A team of enthusiastic teachers meet on a weekly basis and work well together, offering a variety of different skills and expertise. Teaching remains very effective, and the use of ICT has improved. Art and photography courses are becoming more popular. Displays of work in some public areas of the school promote students' achievements well. Timetabling some lessons as single periods restricts the development of students' work. Students' learning is enriched by artists-in-residence and field trips, but there is currently no programme of gallery and museum visits to broaden students' knowledge and technical ability.

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

The focus of the inspection was on physical education. One lesson was sampled in the physical education BTEC course that is offered in Years 12 and 13. Teaching and learning were very good, resulting in students achieving very well. In the units of work covered so far, all students have satisfied the course expectations and two-thirds of them have gained merit or distinction grades.

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is good.

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
|                                    | Year 13   |
| Standards                          | Average   |
| Achievement                        | Good      |
| Teaching and learning              | Good      |
| Leadership                         | Very good |
| Management                         | Very good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Very good |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good knowledge and ensure that students achieve well
- Students' very good attitudes result in a very productive and purposeful atmosphere in lessons
- The curriculum offers students the opportunity to study other physical education courses that are suitable to their needs
- Students are not given enough opportunity to work independently

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

152. Results in 2004 were average as all students gained an A to E grade, continuing the trend of the previous two years.

#### **Standards and achievement**

153. Students are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the syllabus requirements. Teachers' assessments show all are currently working towards a pass grade. A third of the small group are working above their predicted grade, based on prior attainment. An analysis of students' folders shows higher-attaining students have a very good understanding of sports' psychology and an excellent understanding of the history of sport. In the former, they make good use of subject specific vocabulary when justifying their opinions about the theories of anxiety and how they affect performance. Students are competent in the use of ICT to support their learning, which contributes well to the overall quality of their achievement in the subject.

#### **Teaching and learning**

154. Lessons are very well planned and structured, starting with lively tasks that engage students and consolidate prior learning. Teachers' enthusiasm, their own very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and their very high expectations of what can be achieved keeps students interested and on task. Working relationships are very strong with students and teachers showing mutual respect for one another. As a result, there is a very positive atmosphere for learning in lessons. Teachers and students make very good use ICT to prepare slide presentations that focus students' learning. However, although this ensures that students gain good knowledge, teachers do not consistently enable students to extend their understanding, as tasks do not always expect them to work independently.

In a lesson focused on how anxiety affects performance in sport, however, the teacher made very good use of technology for this purpose. Some of the class wore heart rate monitors so that they could monitor their own anxiety in different tasks during the lesson, thus extending students' understanding in a practical way.

#### **Leadership and management**

155. The course is now well established and becoming more popular, numbers having increased in Year 12 this year. Leadership and management provide a clear focus and direction for the subject whilst, at the same time, broadening the range of courses available to students in order to provide better for their different needs. The girls' football academy, for example, is an area of best practice providing the opportunity to pursue a 'gifted and talented' route with a mix of academic study leading to varied future options.

#### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

156. General studies is a popular choice by students in both Years 12 and 13. A varied and interesting programme is provided and students achieve well. Results in general studies, in 2004, were broadly in line with the national average. No lessons were observed in this subject during the inspection.
157. One Year 12 personal and social development lesson was observed. The whole year group was together for a mock election activity. All the student speakers had prepared themselves very well having chosen relevant political themes. This lesson was effective in raising awareness of the importance of the electoral process.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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