

INSPECTION REPORT

WILNECOTE HIGH SCHOOL

Wilnecote, Tamworth

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124420

Headteacher: Mr Phillip Prettyman

Lead inspector: Dr Pauline Buzzing OBE

Dates of inspection: February 7th-10th, 2005

Inspection number: 269007

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll; 1183

School address: Tinkers Green Road
Wilnecote
Tamworth
Staffordshire
Postcode: B77 5LF

Telephone number: 01827 475 111
Fax number: 01827 475 114

Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of Mr Terry Dix
governors:

Date of previous May 10-14 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wilnecote High School is a larger than average 11-18 mixed comprehensive school situated in the Wilnecote ward of Tamworth. The school is popular, and is regularly over-subscribed. Most of the pupils enter the school from two local primary schools, and data show that standards on entry are broadly average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are white; there are only small numbers of pupils of other heritage. No pupil in the school has English as an additional language. Census data show that in comparison with national averages, the Wilnecote ward has a lower proportion of adults with higher education, though economic factors, such as levels of employment, are average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is average, as is the figure for those who have Statements of Special Educational Need. The main categories are moderate and specific learning needs, and social and behavioural needs. Since the previous inspection, the school has become a specialist arts school. Relatively few pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times; this is not a significant factor in the school's work. In the recent past, there has been a relatively large turnover of staff, and the school has experienced some difficulties in recruitment; at the time of the inspection, four posts were filled on a temporary basis.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15849	P Buzzing	Lead inspector	
11575	C Fish	Lay inspector	
3174	W J Powell	Team inspector	Business education 16-18
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English 11-18
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-18
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science 11-16; chemistry 16 – 18
3555	C Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16
18638	C Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-18, citizenship 11-16
21975	A King	Team inspector	Modern languages 11-16
1769	M Holohan	Team inspector	Special educational needs, psychology 16-18
32178	J Shears	Team inspector	Geography 11-16
10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education 11-16; history 11-18
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16, business education 11-16, English as an additional language
3163	J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music 11-16
2941	A Henderson	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	17
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	28
WORK RELATED LEARNING	31
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	32
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	66

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The good teaching that the pupils receive ensures that they do better than would be expected from their standards at entry to the school; they learn well. Leadership is good at all levels, and the school offers good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The pupils leave school at the end of Year 11 with better results than would be expected, given their standards at entry: good teaching in the school results in good learning so that pupils achieve well.
- The school is well led at all levels; the experienced headteacher gives good leadership and is well supported by a strong senior management team.
- The school's specialist arts status has resulted in excellent links with the local community. Links with other schools and colleges at Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The personal development of the pupils is good; pupils' social development is very good.
- Assessment is not used consistently or rigorously enough to raise standards in some subjects.
- There are some inconsistencies in how well the school's systems and procedures operate across the school.
- Achievement in history and ICT is very good: it is excellent in drama. However, standards in design and technology should be better in Years 7 to 9.
- Governors and staff have a good picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The pastoral care of pupils is very good, and helps to promote good achievement.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, despite difficulties in recruitment and staffing. Teaching has improved significantly, and achievement is better. There has been good improvement on most of the key issues raised in 1999, although further work is needed on marking and assessment, and the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall. In the national tests, taken at the end of Year 9, analysis shows that results in 2004 are significantly better overall than they were in 2003, in English and mathematics in particular. The provisional data show that in comparison to similar schools, standards were well above average. Observed standards, with a different year group of pupils are now broadly average overall in Year 9. Achievement overall is good in

Years 7 to 11, and standards observed are above average in Year 11. However, results in history and ICT show that where there is good use of assessment, pupils do even better, and examination standards in these subjects are well above average. Standards in the sixth form in work seen are above average overall. Achievement at this stage is good, since students develop good learning skills from a modest base.

The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attitudes to work and school, behaviour and attendance are all good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good at all levels, and the good curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well. However, assessment could be used more consistently to raise standards further. The school provides a very good level of care to support the personal development of pupils, and good attention to giving them academic guidance. The partnership with parents is very good, and that with the community is outstanding. Links with other schools at sixth form level are excellent. The school's arts college status is having a very positive effect on its work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. Governance and management are good, as is leadership at all levels. The school does not meet fully the statutory requirements for collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils think that this is a very good school that supports them well. Parents also see it as a very good school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use assessment consistently and rigorously to raise standards in all subjects, building on the good practice that exists.
- Ensure that the school's systems and procedures operate consistently across the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WILNECOTE HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good, as is its cost effectiveness. Students achieve well because of a good curriculum and good teaching. The sixth form is well led.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards seen are above average and students develop good independent learning skills for sixth form study, enabling them to tackle their courses effectively and to achieve well.
- Achievement is excellent in drama and theatre studies and very good in history and ICT because assessment is used very effectively and students know exactly what to do to improve.
- Teaching is good and, together with the students' positive attitudes, enables good learning to take place. However, as in the main school, assessment is not used consistently or rigorously enough to raise standards in some subjects.
- Partnerships with other schools and colleges means that students have a very good range of opportunities to study different subjects and links are excellent.
- The school pays very close attention to the views of students, and they feel very well supported in their work.
- The sixth form has the same excellent links with the community as the main school.
- The sixth form is well led and is an integral, effective part of the school.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is satisfactory . Although teachers have good subject knowledge and students learn to become independent, more use needs to be made of assessment to support progress.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . The impact of good teaching is not yet fully seen because of earlier gaps in the students' mathematical education. Assessment could be better used.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . Good, and sometimes very good, teaching is based on a good knowledge of the students' target grades, ensuring challenge at all levels. However, work could be marked more frequently.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is very good . Very good achievement stems from very good teaching that uses assessment very well to guide the work that is set.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good . Very good teaching and positive attitudes, together with strong assessment, combine to produce very good achievement. Provision in psychology is satisfactory . Teaching is good, resulting in good achievement because of improved use of assessment under the new head of department.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in drama and theatre studies is excellent . Outstanding teaching and learning lead to excellent achievement. Assessment is particularly

strong in terms of meeting examination requirements.

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

Pastoral support is very good. However, in terms of academic support, such as assessment, this does vary between and within departments

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is good and management is satisfactory. The joint arrangements with other schools and colleges in the area work well, and result in a much greater variety of courses being available to the students. The head of sixth form provides good leadership, and there are satisfactory systems in place to monitor the work of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students regard this as a good sixth form. They value the time their teachers spend with them, giving advice and providing support. They enjoy taking an active part in the life of the school and make particularly strong contributions to the school's charity work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement in the main school is good in Years 7 to 11. Standards are above average in the current Year 9, and for the current Year 11. In the sixth form, standards seen are above average and achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching across the school means that achievement is good at all levels.
- Results in English and mathematics in the Year 9 tests in 2004 were significantly better than in earlier years.
- Achievement in history and ICT is very good because of very good teaching that uses assessment data particularly well.
- Pupils could do better in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall: it is excellent in drama, where standards are well above average.

Commentary

Main school

1. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Data show that this is true for all year groups currently in the school. In other subjects, entry standards are more variable but, again, they are broadly average overall.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003, the last year for which validated data are available

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.3 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.4 (34.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.7 (34.9)	33.5 (33.3)

There were 196 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The results in the table above are for 2003, the last year for which validated data are available, and show average performance in mathematics and science. The below average results in English showed a significant drop on earlier years, and the school put in place a range of measures to improve matters. The trend in the school's Year 9 results had been broadly in line with the national trend but, using the school's own figures, analysis shows that provisional results in 2004 indicate a significant increase overall, and in English and mathematics in particular. In these two subjects, the school exceeded its targets, but fell short in science. The school has analysed the reasons why this was so, relating it to very high demands on literacy in one of the science

papers, and has put in place measures that will address the problem. The provisional data for 2004 show that in comparison to similar schools, standards were well above average.

3. This means that the pupils did much better than one would expect from their Year 6 test scores in primary schools.

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	55 (43)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (91)	88 (89)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.5 (33.5)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 199 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, improvement in the school's results has been below the national trend, but the 2004 results represent a sharp increase in standards, which are now just above average. In comparison to all schools nationally, and to similar schools, the pupils did better than would be expected from the results of the tests that they took in Year 6.
5. In 2004, results were significantly above average in art, ICT and history. They were below average in English and English literature, and broadly average in other subjects. When individual pupils' results for 2004 are analysed more closely, they tended to do significantly better in geography and in ICT than in the other subjects that they took. They tended to do significantly less well in English, English literature, and in mathematics. The school has analysed the reasons for this and has taken action to improve the situation.
6. As part of its work to promote inclusion, the school carries out careful analyses of test and examination results by sex, ethnicity and other background factors. These show that middle attaining girls tend to underachieve at times, but this is not always so: for example, the below average results in English in 2004 show that whereas the girls' results were below average in English, those of the boys were lower: in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally, On the other hand, in science, whereas the girls' results were above average, those of the boys were well above average, so there is no consistent pattern to the performance of the two sexes. There are no significant differences by ethnicity or other measures of origin.
7. In work seen during the inspection, standards are now above average overall in Year 9. In English and science, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards seen in mathematics are above average. In other subjects, standards are judged to be well above average in drama, above average in ICT, history, art and design and religious education. Standards are average in other subjects, except for design and technology, where standards are below in some aspects of the subject: planning and assessment are not sufficiently systematic to enable the pupils to achieve satisfactorily. The school already has a development plan in place to improve achievement in this subject, and in English, and plans to spread more widely the good

assessment practices that have resulted in the rapid improvement in standards in the subjects where the pupils reach well above average standards.

8. The good standard of teaching observed during the inspection is the main reason for the good achievement that pupils make overall in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is very good in ICT, drama and history, again because of the way teachers make use of data to help them build on the pupils' learning, step by step, but with an element of challenge. Achievement is good in mathematics, German, art and design and religious education. In other subjects, it is satisfactory.
9. Overall, the work seen in Years 10 and 11 is of above average standard for the end of Year 11. Yet standards of work seen are well above average in ICT, drama, and history. These are subjects where pupils are clearly told the levels at which they are working; they receive good feedback on their work and understand clearly what they need to do to improve. Standards are above average in science, German, mathematics, art and design and religious education, and average in all other subjects. There is no subject in which standards are below average at this stage.
10. Achievement is good overall in the work seen in Years 10 and 11, again reflecting the good teaching that is seen on a wide front. Achievement is judged to be very good in ICT, drama and history, and good in science, religious education, German and art and design. In other subjects, achievement is satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to that of their peers.
11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good within the special needs department. Pupils achieve well against their identified targets and demonstrate equally good achievements in their development of literacy skills. This is a consequence of well planned support and effective teaching. When they are in mainstream lessons, across the school as a whole, their achievement is satisfactory. There are particular strengths in science and modern foreign languages, but in other subjects achievement is sometimes limited by a lack of effective planning for their needs. Pupils with hearing impairment achieve in line with other pupils; this reflects the good quality of the support they are given and the commitment of the school to their needs.
12. Standards of literacy are broadly average in Year 9 and Year 11. In both cases, there is a significant minority of pupils that does not have strong literacy skills. Where, teachers go out of their way to strengthen the literacy content of their work, mark carefully, and build things like subject-specific vocabulary, the pupils do well: this is particularly evident in history, for example. In Year 7, the pupils have a specific literacy lesson to help them build on the work they have done in their primary school literacy work, but the good practice is not always carried across the curriculum in all subjects and by all teachers. Standards of numeracy are average across the main school and provision is satisfactory, although opportunities are sometimes missed to develop numeracy skills in a range of subjects. The standards of ICT across the curriculum are now above average in Years 9 and 11, and most subjects provide good opportunities for the pupils to achieve well. In music, drama, art and design, dance and religious education, ICT is used particularly creatively, but mathematics, science and modern foreign languages have yet to get to grips with exploring the possibilities of how ICT can raise standards in these subjects.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	83.8 (87.1)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.7 (19.1)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	261.0 (231.6)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 61 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

13. Students entering the sixth form have a broadly average GCSE profile. However, they do not have the kind of independent learning skills that are required for AS and A-level work, though they do develop them during their time in Years 12 and 13. In the 2004 A-level examinations, the average point scores of all students were above average. Results at A-level were broadly average in mathematics and chemistry, above average in drama, history and psychology, and well above average in ICT and business studies. In English literature, they were below average. In the 2004 examinations, students did better in AS drama than in their other subjects, but less well in A-level German, and AS general studies, media studies, economics and business education, geography, English literature and technology.
14. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average overall in Years 12 and 13. Standards observed are average in English, mathematics, history, business studies and psychology, they are above average in chemistry and ICT, and well above average in drama. Achievement is good overall. In some subjects, such as psychology and history, even though standards are average, this is because the students' standards on entry to sixth form courses are below average in these subjects. In other subjects, such as ICT and chemistry, though students enter with average standards, the good achievement leads to above average standards. In all these cases, pupils achieve better standards than would be expected from their prior attainment. In drama, achievement is excellent, due to first rate teaching that uses a wide range of stimuli and elicits very high standards of performance from the students.
15. There are no taught courses in the key skills of communication, application of number, and ICT. Communication skills and those in application of number are broadly average, but opportunities are not always taken to develop these. There are good examples: in history, for example, sophisticated written tasks provide good opportunities for the development of communication, but in English literature, essay writing lacks analysis and lags behind other aspects of the work. In chemistry, application of number is developed well, but in most other subjects, there is no contribution to the development of pupils' mathematical skills. The pupils' competence in ICT is satisfactory. All students continue to practise a set of generic skills in the use of a computer and use a spreadsheet to analyse data and to produce graphs or to use word-processing effectively. Most students use the Internet for research, though the opportunities to use ICT are somewhat limited in subjects other than business studies. The school does not provide any non-examination instruction in ICT; a few students follow a key skills course, of which ICT is a part.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' and students' attitudes to school, and their behaviour in class and around school, are good. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is also good, as is their attendance. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils and students relate to, and support, each other very well.
- Very good attitudes to work in the sixth form promote good achievement
- A new way of reporting any bullying has been established in school.
- The cramped conditions in parts of the school are handled well by pupils and students.
- The school tries to engage all pupils in education so they attend well.
- The pupils' social development is very good.

Commentary

16. Very good relationships develop across the whole school community and these successfully underpin the good ethos present in the school, making it a pleasant place in which to work and socialise. In and out of the classroom, the pupils support each other very well. They enjoy school, nearly every one says that this is a good place to be, they like what is offered to them outside lessons and, for the most part, find their learning to be fun and engaging. In most lessons, they display a readiness to work and in some instances do not want to stop; for example, in an excellent Year 7 lesson about Aboriginal art and a Year 11 history class about the Cuban missile crisis in the 1960's. Breaks during the day are generally relaxed and pleasant, with pupils enjoying the time together with their friends. Mutual respect and trust, positive features mentioned by many pupils, are well fostered through the newly introduced 'Wilnecote Way'.
17. The school takes the possibility of bullying very seriously and has set up a dedicated e-mail address for pupils to notify the school of any concerns. This, together with Year 10 mentors for Year 7 pupils, and an expectation that pupils will tell someone if they are bullied, has led to pupils and parents saying that it is handled well.
18. Although behaviour was raised as a concern by a number of pupils, that seen by inspectors was good. When pupils talk about unsatisfactory behaviour, the problems revolve around a small number of pupils, often in lessons where misbehaviour is not handled well. However, those pupils who experience considerable difficulty with their behaviour are supported well. The provision of a referral room in school is a useful system to remove the pupil from the situation and to identify if there is a real problem requiring more intervention. However, its use is not sufficiently well monitored to identify whether patterns are developing, such as overuse by a particular department. The pupils cope sensibly with the cramped corridors and narrow staircases when moving around school and behave calmly in the dining room at lunchtime.
19. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards learning. Their strong relationships with staff result in good behaviour. A significant feature of the provision is the school's success in ensuring that pupils who have had lengthy absences are successfully attending school. Pupils with hearing impairment and other physical difficulties are successfully integrated into the life of the school and have developed strong relationships with their fellow pupils.
20. Exclusion figures are about the same as for similar schools. The school offers very good support to pupils in danger of exclusion, especially through the social inclusion unit. Very good procedures are in place there to help those with fixed term exclusions

to return to school. The school works hard to ensure that suitable alternative arrangements are made for the small number of pupils excluded permanently.

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	1120	86	4
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	23	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Chinese	2	1	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0

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

21. Attendance is broadly in line with national figures. The school has worked hard in recent years to raise attendance and this has been achieved through first day calling and by asking parents not to take holidays in term time; the amount being taken is being monitored carefully. The school is well supported by the educational welfare officer. The provision of more vocationally orientated courses has helped to promote attendance amongst all pupils.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.8
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.

22. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory overall, but some subjects, such as religious education and the performing arts are contributing very well. Recent work on the tsunami and Year 7 religious education work on death offer very good examples of planned spiritual opportunities.
23. Moral development is good and is underlined through work on the 'Wilnecote Way' which sets out expectations for the school community based on mutual respect. Many subjects promote high expectations of work and behaviour in their daily work in the classroom, but do so in a way that promotes respect for each other.
24. Social development is very good and is very well developed, particularly through the performing arts subjects, where a sense of community is fostered by participation in productions, dramatic, dance and musical performances, sporting events and study visits abroad. Visual art promotes pupils' social development through good links with artists and residences. The school's status as a specialist school for the arts has helped these developments.
25. The pupils' cultural development is good, again through the performing arts subjects and the expressive arts course in Year 9 which looks at African culture through the disciplines of art, music and drama. Cultural understanding is also developed through study visits abroad and the school's longstanding links with a German school.

Sixth form

26. Many students are the first in their families to remain in education after 16 and to seek to move into higher education. They realise the value of education and this has a positive effect, seen in their very good attitudes to school and school life. In lessons they engage very well with the teacher and very much like the more relaxed relationship they have with them. Students involve themselves in activities outside the classroom, particularly enjoying sixth form social events.
27. Attendance is good because students are motivated to come to school, which maintains a close watch on attendance and steps in quickly if there are concerns. The course completion rate is high and most pupils stay on into Year 13 to complete their higher level studies.
28. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall in the sixth form as in the main school, and personal development is a strength. Good spiritual opportunities were seen in a sixth form lesson in physics, where the teacher referred to the magic of mathematics when deriving formulae to calculate the wavelength of light. Students are good role models for younger pupils. Although formalised roles of responsibility are not part of the school's culture, and both students and pupils feel they would be divisive, the school council, headed by two Year 12 students, is heavily involved in taking the lead in, for example, fund raising events for charity.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching, learning, and the curriculum are good. Many aspects of welfare and guidance, and of links with parents and with other schools and colleges, are very good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good in Years 10 and 11, whilst those in the sixth form are excellent.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good at all levels. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- More than two thirds of teaching in the lessons observed was good or better, leading to the pupils' good achievement.
- The quality of teaching has been significantly improved since the previous inspection, in order to raise achievement.
- Most lessons are well prepared, and teachers devise interesting, relevant activities that help pupils and students to learn well.
- Very good relationships mean that learning is productive and results in good achievement.
- Though satisfactory, assessment procedures are inconsistent within and between several subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 175 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (6.9%)	33 (18.9%)	72 (41.1%)	49 (28.0%)	8 (4.6%)	1 (0.6%)	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.

29. The quality of teaching has risen significantly since the previous inspection. This is especially evident in the proportion of good, very good and outstanding lessons. Whereas good, very good or excellent teaching accounted for nearly five lessons in every ten in 1999, this time it accounted for nearly seven in every ten. The amount of very good or excellent lessons was very small indeed last time, whereas now, one lesson in every four is in these categories.
30. Excellent lessons were observed in mathematics, ICT, art, history, music, modern foreign languages, dance and drama. Examples of very good teaching were observed in the majority of subjects.

Main school

31. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years of the main school. In subjects, teaching is very good in history across the main school, and in ICT in Years 10 and 11. This results in very good achievement. Teaching is good overall in mathematics and

science, in religious education, art and design, modern foreign languages and in ICT in Years 7 to 9. Teaching in other subjects is satisfactory.

32. There are plenty of examples of teaching that is very good, and which establishes a climate of high expectations, meeting the needs of all the pupils in the class, whilst offering challenging and imaginative tasks that involve them and build their confidence. Where all these elements are present, the teaching is often outstanding, since the vast majority of the pupils respond very positively to being involved. In the very best lessons, teachers plan very well to build the learning step by step, and introduce exciting tasks, as they often do in art and design, drama and expressive arts. No very good or excellent teaching was seen in English, science or design and technology in the main school, but examples of good teaching were seen in all these subjects.
33. In most lessons, teachers plan well and make good use of the time available. The activities they choose interest and involve the pupils, and relationships are particularly good. There is a high degree of mutual respect, and pupils were quick to praise their teachers for the support they give them. In some lessons, especially those in the performing and visual arts, higher attaining pupils are particularly well catered for, and the level of challenge is high. This is successful with pupils of all levels of attainment, where teachers use what they know about the levels the pupils are working at and are clear about where they need to go next. Where they share this information with the pupils through careful marking and explicit feedback, this makes all the difference between satisfactory lessons and those that are better than that.
34. The pupils learn well. Some lack confidence in their own ability and need the support and encouragement of their teachers to build high self-esteem. They co-operate well in lessons, support each other and contribute to the good climate for learning that exists in most lessons.
35. A small number of unsatisfactory lessons was observed; one lesson was poor. These were in a range of subjects, some of which also had very good or excellent lessons. The less than satisfactory lessons in the main school were all in Years 9 and 11, and mainly involved a lack of challenging activities that did not motivate the pupils. Where pupils were not engaged in the lessons, behaviour deteriorated, concentration suffered and the teachers did not manage the situation well, so that little progress was made during the lesson. The poor lesson had several of these features.
36. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is satisfactory but is still evolving. The best marking provides very good feedback and this practice needs to be shared more widely. Praise is extensively used to motivate but the pupils do need more detailed comments. Where this is so, as in the humanities subjects, and where it is linked to clear steps on how to improve, the pupils are aware of what they need to do. This is not yet established in all subject areas. Peer assessment and self evaluation are being introduced successfully in subjects such as music and the humanities, while in art and design ongoing negotiation of individual targets deepens their understanding and improves the quality of their work. Regular reports inform parents and pupils of progress and have contributed to the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
37. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good and are currently being improved. Detailed information of learning needs and literacy levels are available to all staff. Individual education plans are much improved since the previous inspection when they were subject to criticism. Targets for learning and behaviour are

precise and they contain useful teaching strategies to aid improvement. Both pupils and parents contribute to the development of targets.

Sixth form

38. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the sixth form. The highest percentage of teaching in the school that is good or better is in Years 12 or 13. This is particularly important in this school because although students enter the sixth form with results at GCSE that are broadly average, they do not have highly developed skills in independent learning, or in undertaking study at the depth or with the breadth that is required for AS and A-level work. Consequently, good teaching is an important feature in helping them to achieve well and to re-focus their work to a different kind of study. Students grow in confidence, therefore, and develop real enthusiasm for their work. In most schools, many of them would not have started sixth form courses; here, they are being taught to succeed in them.
39. Teaching and learning were judged to be satisfactory in English, good in chemistry, mathematics and psychology, very good in history and ICT, and excellent in drama. Examples of very good teaching were seen in the science subjects, in history, mathematics, music technology, the performing arts and sociology, and excellent lessons were observed in dance, in drama, and in German. Very detailed preparation and thorough planning were regularly seen, together with precise instructions and explanations given to students, who were well-motivated and worked with a high degree of independence and commitment.
40. Two unsatisfactory lessons were observed: the negative features were insufficient planning, and a choice of activities that left the pupils uninvolved or unchallenged so that they did not have to think.
41. Assessment in the sixth form is satisfactory but as in the main school, it is inconsistent. The thoroughness and constructiveness of the systems is satisfactory, with teachers being given much data to allow national and individual comparisons to be made. Not all teachers use these data regularly to assess value added and thus raise individuals' standards. More use needs to be made of prior attainment data at subject level. Systems are in place to chart each student's progress and effort, and the head of sixth form has a good overview.
42. Senior and middle managers and most subject teachers make satisfactory use of the available information to respond to the individual needs of students. In the best practice, in history, art and design and drama, for instance, this is done by regular comments in lessons and by written feedback linked to the examination criteria. Students are well supported in psychology receiving very detailed advice on examination requirements and on how they could individually respond in order to do better. Where explicit links are made, standards can be seen to be rising. Marking is usually thorough and linked to examination criteria but assessment is unsatisfactory in chemistry, while in English, not enough use is made of grades.
43. Across the range of subjects inspected in depth, the students' understanding of how they can improve is satisfactory. Most are aware of their current standard but not all know precisely what steps to take if they are to achieve a better result. They do receive regular advice and guidance on their work and positive comments are motivational but in some subjects they need to be more specifically linked to grade standards and potential outcomes.

The curriculum

The curriculum offered shows a good range of provision overall; enrichment is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has improved the curriculum since 1999, and it now meets statutory requirements at all levels.
- The school offers a good range of opportunities for pupils and students in the 14 to 19 age range, through its partnerships with other local schools and colleges.
- There are very good initiatives in hand to increase further the range of vocational opportunities available to pupils and students.
- The timetable has been used creatively to raise standards in science, but in several subjects, the opportunity to use grouping flexibly to enhance standards has not been taken.

Commentary

44. There has been significant improvement to the curriculum since the previous inspection. The areas of strength noted in 1999 have been maintained, whilst weaker areas have been improved. There are clear curriculum aims covering the academic and personal development of pupils and students of all ages. They are interpreted in the light of the broader school philosophy of meeting the needs of the pupils as individuals.
45. The time given to the curriculum, at 25 hours per week, is typical of schools of this type. The timetable is based on 25 one-hour lessons per week, which can sometimes result in occasional imbalance between subjects, particularly in the first three years.

Main school

46. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education in Years 7 to 11; this is an improvement on the position in 1999. In Years 7 to 9, the required curriculum is enhanced by discrete drama lessons, reflecting the school's specialist performing arts status. For a significant minority, this is extended by undertaking a GCSE course in expressive arts in Year 9. The time given to subjects at this level is broadly average, except that design and technology receives much more time than usual, whereas geography, history and religious education fare less well. This imbalance is not reflected in improved achievement for pupils in design and technology; at present, provision is unsatisfactory. In Year 7, pupils receive one lesson each week devoted to literacy or numeracy. The school is not making sufficient use of this valuable opportunity to regroup pupils, for example by sex or by prior attainment, from what is otherwise mixed ability grouping in all subjects. Design and technology, and physical education, work with slightly smaller groups than other subjects throughout Years 7 to 9. The school makes greater, and generally appropriate, use of setting pupils by ability in Years 8 and 9. Parents expressed some concern that the rate of progress in mathematics dipped somewhat in Year 7 because pupils are not grouped, even coarsely, by ability. There is justification for this. Similarly, the lack of grouping by ability in English in Years 7 and 8, and in the wide ability groups in Year 9, means that not all pupils progress as well as they could.

47. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 also meets statutory requirements. The school has taken advantage of the greater flexibility now available from Year 10 onwards. The time allocated to subjects in Years 10 and 11 is generally appropriate, although there is pressure caused by limited time for the core programmes in religious education, and in physical education. The timetabling of various groups simultaneously within the limited facilities further limits pupils' opportunities and achievement in physical education.
48. All pupils follow a core curriculum, plus options. They are prepared for the choices of learning styles open to them whilst they are still in Year 9, where time is devoted to giving them a taste of vocational and enterprise activities. The school has good coherence in its provision for 14 to 19 education. The school's commitment to the needs of individuals is seen in the option process; option blocks follow from pupils' choices, rather than vice versa. As a result, very few pupils cannot follow their chosen combinations of subjects. As well as a suitable range of single-option GCSE courses, the school offers a double-block option in health and social care. It provides a range of other learning pathways, designed to match the pupils' needs. The performing arts specialist status is reflected in courses in music, drama, and dance, as well as in art and design.
49. The NVQ courses that are offered in vocational areas with the local college are popular; demand outstrips the number of places available. Further developments are in train to increase, considerably, the vocational opportunities open to pupils at this and other schools in the area. A small group follows a two-year programme of important learning, social and personal skills leading to the ASDAN award, whilst yet another studies for a Level 1 course in Years 10 and 11 on skills for working life.
50. The school shows very good initiative in developing the curriculum, for example through its work in support of diversifying vocational education provision locally, and in its use of the timetable to tackle problems:

Example of outstanding practice

Ingenious use is made of timetabling to creatively tackle problems related to coursework.

In the science department, careful analysis of results showed that coursework was not contributing as it should to the pupils' GCSE grades. Getting pupils to complete coursework out of school was a time-consuming, and sometimes unproductive, exercise. The school therefore embarked upon a different route.

On five dates across Years 10 and 11, the normal timetable is suspended for one day. These occasions - "Catch-up Days" - are used by the science department to carry out experiments, and then to get the pupils to write them up and submit them, all in the same day. The programme has been successful. Careful monitoring of examination performance shows that the improved GCSE performance in the subject has reflected significantly improved coursework marks over the past three years.

Other subjects might be seen to be disadvantaged by this. The school reduces this risk by allocating slightly more than usual time to its options within the timetable. This approach to coursework is being looked at as a possible means of improving results in a small number of other subjects, perhaps on a relatively short-term basis.

51. Within the overall curriculum, personal, social and health education makes a good contribution towards developing pupils' well-being and maturity. In Years 7 to 9, drama covers topics such as bullying, prejudice and personal safety whilst aspects such as living in different cultures and countries are studied in religious education and geography. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a well structured modular programme taught by specialist teachers enhanced well with talks from outside speakers.
52. Staffing in the school is satisfactory overall. Recruitment has been extensive over the past two years, representing around one third of the teaching force, and the school has benefited from its specialist arts status in coping effectively with this. The school is fully staffed, with just two temporary appointments, and most teachers have appropriate qualifications that match the demands of the subjects they teach; the match in performing arts is a strength, but is a weakness in modern foreign languages. The match of support staff to the needs of the school is also satisfactory. Technical and learning support is good in performing arts, modern foreign languages, and design technology, but is insufficient in science and art. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support.
53. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. The school has benefited from a recent rebuilding programme which has included the refurbishment of the school hall, enhanced arts facilities and a new library which is shared with the community. The facilities for learning in modern foreign languages and music are good and other accommodation is at least satisfactory. Foyer, corridor and classroom displays create a stimulating learning environment. However, corridors and stairways are narrow and the dining room is too small to accommodate the number of pupils in the school. Some of the teaching rooms are too small for the class sizes thus restricting movement and limiting teaching and learning styles. Disabled access to the site is satisfactory but, for some rooms, difficult.
54. Resources are satisfactory and give adequate support to the delivery of the curriculum in the majority of subjects. The quality and range of resources are good in modern foreign languages and music and make a positive contribution to teaching and learning but provision is unsatisfactory in science. Many departments have difficulty gaining sufficient access to computers, making it difficult to support the pupils' use of ICT to support and develop their learning. Library facilities have improved since the previous inspection, providing pupils with access to a range of resources. However there is a shortfall in books available to support the curriculum.

Sixth form

55. The sixth form programme meets statutory requirements for religious education, although the range of experience offered could still be greater. Although the time per subject is slightly lower than average, the school offers a good range of options. These include AS, A-level, and AVCE courses leading to Level 3 qualifications, as well as Level 1 and Level 2 one-year courses in a range of vocational areas, for example leading to GNVQ. All advanced course students also follow a programme of general studies, personal, social and health education, and Compact activities. They have opportunities to undertake sporting and other exercise-related activities; few opt to do so. Apart from the students following the one year Level 1 and 2 courses, the school does not offer formal key skills programmes in the sixth form.
56. The range of options is wider than would be expected because the school is part of a consortium of 16-19 providers in the area, including two local colleges and other sixth forms. The subjects offered by this consortium are contained in a single option block, and the working week is structured so that students have two complete afternoons each week in the host centre.
57. The match of well-qualified teachers to the needs of the sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. The school offers a broad range of subjects in the sixth form using its own staffing together with the resources provided by the Tamworth consortium. The provision of technical and support staff to the needs of the school is satisfactory overall, and is strong in performing arts and modern foreign languages.
58. Sixth form accommodation is satisfactory overall. Students in the sixth form have their own social areas but, otherwise, use the same accommodation as pupils in the main school, with its benefits and restrictions. The school has benefited from a recent rebuilding programme which has included the refurbishment of the school hall, enhanced arts facilities and a new library which is shared with the community. The sixth form benefits from its own social area but lessons often have to take place in rooms that are not always available in departmental areas. Corridors and stairways are narrow and the dining room is too small.
59. The quality and quantity of resources to support students' learning is satisfactory but the lack of materials in the library to support the curriculum restricts students' opportunities to work independently.

Care, guidance and support

Very good procedures ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils and students. Very good support, advice and guidance are provided in the sixth form, and the support is good in the main school. Pupils' and students' views are actively sought by the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils and students have very good relationships with the adults in school.
- The school is a safe and caring environment in which to work and play.
- Very good support, advice and guidance are provided for the pupils' personal development.

- Academic support, advice and guidance based on assessment, though good, can be variable in the main school.
- Pupils and students play an important part in making decisions that affect them.

Commentary

60. Staff in school are very committed to doing their very best for the pupils. Most pupils say there are adults in school to whom they can turn for help and this mean they feel valued and safe. The very good personal support pupils receive is enhanced by a very strong pastoral system within each year group. Through twice weekly meetings, attended by a number of different agencies and school personnel, relevant information is exchanged, ways of offering high quality support are sought and targeted to any pupil who may need it. For those pupils with more complex difficulties and who cannot cope in the classroom, the social inclusion unit is a very effective way of providing support through well planned strategies and individual support to help them back into lessons and in some cases into school. Both parents and their children report that the transition from primary school is achieved smoothly because time is given to developing relationships with them through induction days and meetings.
61. The pupils' overall well-being is central to the work of the school. This is ensured through effective and systematic procedures for health and safety, risk assessment, and the testing of appliances and equipment. First aid is carried out efficiently and with sympathy and correctly recorded. Supervision during the school day is very good. Child protection procedures are thorough, with staff reminded regularly of the need for vigilance. Pupils looked after in the community are provided with Personal Education Plans and the school liaises very well with the appropriate social services personnel to ensure they are in no way disadvantaged.
62. Academic support and guidance are good overall. The 'Traffic Light' system of assessing effort in each subject is an effective way of pin pointing where there are problems and targeting support, sometimes through the recently appointed learning mentor, a provision which has enjoyed some success. However, the academic support provided for pupils within lessons and subjects is very variable, from very high quality individually targeted comments in subjects such as art and design, to very bland comments such as 'try harder' which do little to help pupils to improve. When asked, pupils say that the provision of suggestions on how to improve is very variable, and often depends upon the teacher. Careers advice, whilst in a stage of change and development, is seen by the pupils to be helpful and gives them the skills and understanding to make informed choices; the Connexions service makes a very positive contribution to this process.
63. The school council feels it has a strong voice in the school and that its views are taken very seriously. It has enjoyed success in the use of security cameras placed discreetly in toilets which have cut down on smoking and graffiti, as well as being involved recently in interviewing candidates for the post of deputy head teacher. It is a testament to the belief the school has in its councillors that they were able to ask the candidates to make them laugh. Further very good consultation of pupils takes place in some departments where, for example, their views on what they expect from marking and assessment are taken into account.

Sixth form

64. The very good attention to ensuring the health, safety and welfare in the main school continues to cover the students. The pastoral support they receive remains of a very high quality and the more relaxed relationships with staff and the more adult approach from the head and deputy head of the sixth form help students to get the most out of their time here. Whilst most students have transferred from the main school, those from elsewhere settle quickly. All agree that the taster days in Year 11 were helpful and for those who took part, that the residential trip in the spring term was a very good way of furthering very good relationships.
65. Academic support provided to students is said by them to be better than in the main school because the classes are smaller and there is more time for individuals. They also comment, however, that there is still variation between teachers in the quality of the support they receive. A tracking system helps to identify where support is needed and for action to be taken. Students feel well supported by the Connexions service because they are helpful and knowledgeable. They request interviews and access their support in and out of school. The advice given to them through Connexions and the careers department in Year 11 is seen as realistic, with very few concerns that they have made the wrong choices.
66. Although the school council currently has only two representatives from the sixth form, they see it as a very good way of involving themselves in the life and work of the school. They are particularly proud that the very successful fund raising events for charity are organised by them through the council generally with little help from school staff. Students are encouraged to discuss the quality of their lessons to ensure they are getting what they need from them.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is very good. Partnership with other schools is also very good: it is excellent for sixth form students. Partnership with the wider community is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a high regard for the school, and the school tries to involve them in its work.
- There are excellent links with the local community.
- Links with other schools are very good, and broaden the school curriculum, especially at sixth form level, where the links are excellent.
- Designation as a specialist arts school has significantly increased links in the creative and performing arts with schools and with the community.

Commentary

67. The parents spoken to during the inspection confirmed that parents are very supportive of the school. The analysis of the questionnaires and the meeting with parents show the school is very well regarded by the parents. They feel that their children are happy, well cared for and make good progress, both academically and personally. They particularly like the school's approachability, saying this is greatly enhanced by the very strong pastoral teams in each year group which very effectively promote very good relationships between parents and school. Inspectors agree with these views. Some parents feel they are not well informed about how their children are doing.

However, inspectors found that reports of good quality are provided during the year at appropriate times. They give sufficient detail about what has been covered and what the child needs to do to improve. Other information is clear, helpful and timely.

68. To improve parental involvement in their children's education, the school has devised a new consultative procedure for the parents of older pupils. This has raised the level of attendance at review evenings to nearly 100 per cent, with parents full of appreciation for the less time-consuming process. Attendance at consultation evenings for younger children is good as is that at review meetings with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parent governors play an important part in representing others; they seek to gauge the views of parents informally and to take these to the governing body. Formal surveys of parents' views have covered important areas such as the change to the school day and the introduction of a uniform. The specialist arts college status is very well supported by parents who willingly ferry pupils to where they need to go and involve themselves in practical activities such as painting scenery.
69. Community links were described as a particular strength in the previous report. Since then a number of developments have enhanced this aspect of the school's work. Designation as an specialist school for the arts has provided the impetus for a significant extension of opportunities in the performing and creative arts. Furthermore, the school site now accommodates a library serving both the school and the community. The appointment of a Community Director has led to increased opportunities in sports and recreation, and in community education in general, with extensive use of the school premises for adult education.
70. The school has made excellent progress towards the community elements of its specialist school plan. Its community plan for the performing arts was very ambitious and has been realised in some style. The shared partnership and reciprocal activities have enhanced learning for the students and many members of the local community. Community initiatives have become central to the curriculum and a force for raising standards. Links with other schools have been especially strong with joint concerts, dance and drama events as well as an impressive arts festival each year. Collaboration and successful partnership has led now to festival events being jointly organised and staged in other local schools. The role of Wilnecote in giving other schools confidence should not be underestimated. Staff across the borough benefit from continuous professional development in the arts and genuine opportunities to work together. They also have easy access and the use of Wilnecote's very good facilities. Music teachers visit the local primary schools on a regular basis, providing teaching as well as good opportunities for creative music-making, which are further enhanced by the availability of digital technology and the free loan of instruments.
71. Community use of the performing arts facilities is very high. The dance studio is a regional centre of excellence with an extensive range of programmes that encourage adults and boys to participate. Courses in music and the use of the recording studio are popular while the Youth Theatre group is developing a reputation for involvement and high quality work across the Midlands. The performing arts are strongly supported by very good work from the visual arts that collaborate on many activities. The extensive programme has created some local employment opportunities while business is involved either through sponsorship or as part of the well managed regular steering meetings. College links are also well developed and the school is an important centre for adult education. The success of the specialist school status is significant and there is little doubt that it has changed the perception of adults towards the school. It has raised the self-esteem of the local community and the standing of the school in the

eyes of the community it serves. At the same time it has helped improve standards and is very positively viewed by the pupils who talk of it with pride. Such a successful and profound impact owes much to the vision of the senior team and especially to the smaller management group. The leadership of the community development programme of the performing arts is energetic, excellent and exemplary. It is a model of very good practice.

72. The headteacher has been a major influence in the development of community links, clearly seeing the school as a community resource, and receiving very good support from the governing body. He has been instrumental in the establishment of a number of organisations to help extend the range of activities, and to monitor the quality of provision. These committees include representatives from the local council, from primary, special and secondary schools, the local college, and from a variety of other local groups. The school has become a focus for the community, and there is a particularly high take-up for activities in the performing arts, such as dance, music, and theatre. Each week, over two thousand people regularly take part in activities in the school. There is very good site access for those parts of the building used by members of the community.
73. The status of specialist arts college has also increased the school's links with primary, special, and secondary schools, and with the local further education college. For example, the art department has good links with primary schools, and there is also a very good range of musical and drama activities. Links with the core subjects are not so well developed.
74. The school is keen to extend its links with local business. There is very good support from the local community for the work experience programme in Year 11. All pupils benefit from a week's placement in early November, with a small number of pupils taking part in extended work experience opportunities. The school's involvement in the Young Enterprise scheme receives support from local business, particularly through the local Chamber of Commerce.
75. The school also recognises the importance of the principle of 'community' through the extensive efforts it makes on behalf of local, national, and international charities. For instance, there was a very good response from the school community to the recent appeal for victims of the tsunami. Altogether, the school has raised over £8,000 for charity during the past year.

Sixth form

76. The school is involved in regular and productive discussions with the local college and other secondary schools about the continued development of a co-ordinated curriculum from 14 to 19, and one that attempts to meet the demands of local employment opportunities. There is particularly good co-operation to broaden the sixth form curriculum, to include vocational courses, and to reduce unnecessary duplication of courses. Almost 200 students benefit from these consortium arrangements. Transport is provided between sites to enable students to partake fully in the wide range of options available in the schools and college.
77. Students in the school's sixth form have the opportunity to contribute to the local community through 'enrichment days'. These involve students in a number of activities such as shopping, gardening, and painting, and provide them with a clearer

understanding of the needs of the elderly and the infirm. Students in the sixth form also make a significant contribution to the school's fundraising for charity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership is good overall at all levels. Governance is also good. Statutory requirements are met, apart from that for collective worship. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are very active and form important links with the local community.
- The school is well led by an experienced headteacher, who provides clear direction for the school, focusing on raising achievement for all pupils. Subject leadership, and that of the senior management team, is good.
- A large financial deficit, incurred in 2001/2, is likely to be discharged in 2006. However, it has limited what could be achieved in some areas.
- Though the school has good systems and procedures that guide its work, there are some inconsistencies in how these are applied.

Commentary

Main school

78. **Governance** is good. The enthusiastic governing body reflects the local area well, and has worked conscientiously with the school through its development as a specialist school in the arts. Governors have taken on the running of the local leisure centre and they have integrated it with the school's arts centre, playing a major part in developing community provision which is excellent. Governors are supportive, but also challenge the school's thinking and are prepared to hold senior managers to account. Their own methods of finding out how well the school is working give them a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play an appropriate part in helping the school to set its priorities.
79. The governors discharge their responsibilities very well in ensuring that the school is inclusive. They receive reports on the school's analyses of how well pupils from different backgrounds are doing. They also make sure that the school's policies and procedures meet the latest requirements. The school has made satisfactory provision to ensure that it is accessible to those with physical or visual impairment. The funding deficit, caused largely by long term absence of senior staff, coupled with central funding cuts, has caused problems in funding levels. Managing the consequences of this has constrained some areas of planning and development. Thus, for example, achievement in some subjects is still affected by limited learning resources, inadequate accommodation, or a need to restructure staffing.
80. All statutory requirements are met, apart from the requirement to provide an act of collective worship, and there are no 'thought for the day' programmes in place. However, the good personal development of the pupils shows that achievement is not impaired by this non-compliance.

81. **Leadership** is good overall. The headteacher was responsible for steering the school through the process of achieving the status of a specialist school for the arts, and he has a clear vision of the school's future. The priorities for development that are most likely to bring about raised standards are clearly stated in the school's development plan. He is well supported by the other members of the senior management team, which contributes to the overall good leadership of the school, and which shares the headteacher's vision. Self-review has been an ongoing part of the school's annual cycle for some years now, so there is an emphasis on continual improvement. Despite some difficulties with recruitment, the school has maintained its determination to improve teaching and learning; this is clear from the significant improvements in teaching quality since the previous inspection.
82. Middle managers lead their subject areas well, on the whole. Leadership is good in science, modern foreign languages, religious education and music. No judgement could be made on leadership in business studies because of staff absence, but leadership in all other subjects is never less than satisfactory and some, for example in art, ICT and history, is very good. The leadership of drama is excellent, and innovative.
83. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good. During her limited time in post the newly appointed special needs coordinator has demonstrated that she has a clear vision for the development of the provision and is putting in place effective management systems to achieve these aims. The school benefits from a committed and effective group of support staff who also make a significant contribution to the work of the school. The school's general principles of inclusion drive the provision very well, and lead to the pupils having an effective degree of equality of opportunity.
84. The leadership of the specialist school programme is very good. The impact of the specialist status in the arts on the school and its community has been very good. It took time to finish the refurbishing and building that were necessary to provide high quality facilities for drama and music, for example, and to make dance an integral part of the school's life, but the opportunities for performance and aesthetic development have had a significant effect on the life of the school. The effect on participation and achievement has been significant. Parents speak very highly of the school's dramatic performances, and a concert that took place during the inspection was of excellent quality. Efficient use of specialist funding and sponsorship means on-site arts facilities are now very good. Thus there is an improved range and quality of provision both within and beyond the school day, in the curriculum at all levels, and in the community programme.
85. Joint sixth form examination courses operate as part of a consortium: outreach work with other secondary schools and with the local college of further education help the school to provide a wide range of options. Liaison work with primary schools has helped to raise standards in music by the end of Year 6.
86. **Management** is satisfactory. There is a well-established programme of monitoring the work of the school in all its aspects, including self-review. Senior and middle managers now monitor teaching: this was a key issue at the time of the previous inspection. However, though the systems are in place, there are some inconsistencies and, though management is rarely unsatisfactory, there are occasions when policies and procedures are not consistently implemented by all staff. Variability in assessment practices is one example. There are difficulties caused by the relatively large turnover in staff: a number of staff left when they reached retirement age, and young staff also

left to take up positions of responsibilities elsewhere. This year, for example, there are eleven newly qualified teachers in the school as well as several staff who are new to the school, but not to teaching. Though there is an induction programme for the newly qualified teachers, there is no system of induction for experienced staff. With so many new teachers, policies and procedures are not always rigorously applied. There are clear statements of what is expected of *all* staff and pupils, summed up in the booklet *The Wilnecote Way*.

87. However, the school's self-analysis for the inspection was largely an accurate one. In the few cases where inspectors and the school reached slightly different judgements, it was usually the school that had been the more critical.
88. This year, the school has effectively managed the integration of the provision for the needs of hearing impaired pupils into the life of the school. Though the unit is managed directly by the local authority, relationships are good, and systems are working well.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3687890	Balance from previous year	-97500
Total expenditure	3627860	Balance carried forward to the next	-37470
Expenditure per pupil	3160		

89. For some years, the school has been reducing a substantial deficit that occurred some three years ago as a result of long term staff absences due to illness, and to cuts in the school's funding. For the past two years, spending has been controlled carefully, so that the deficit should finally be removed at the end of the next financial year. This has, inevitably, imposed limits on the school's capacity to develop, but the school's main educational priorities have been funded appropriately, assisted by successful bids for funding from the specialist arts school programme. Overall, given the good achievement that is seen in most subjects at all levels in the school, the average academic standards of many pupils at entry, the school offers good value for money,

Sixth form

90. Governors have been supportive of the development of the consortium arrangements, and are keen to ensure that the sixth form is an integral and thriving part of the school.
91. The leadership of the sixth form is good overall. The head of sixth form knows the students and their backgrounds very well, and provides a good role model for staff and students. Curriculum leadership in the sixth form is good overall. It is excellent in drama, very good in ICT and history, good in chemistry and psychology and satisfactory in English and mathematics. Absence meant that no judgement could be made of leadership in business studies. The best subject leadership keeps a focus on the achievement of individuals at the heart of its work, and show a sense of purpose, vision, and commitment.
92. The same management systems that ensure that the main school runs satisfactorily also operate within the sixth form. Monitoring plays a satisfactory role in sixth form life.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work related learning is very good; statutory requirements are fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils benefit from an extensive range of work related activities.
- The school's vision of meeting local needs is being realised.
- Very good leadership is ensuring the success of work related learning.
- There are not enough explicit references to work related learning in lessons.

Commentary

93. The school is offering a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work and it meets all statutory requirements. Work experience provision in Year 11 is very good and the placements are highly valued by the pupils who understand how these complement their school studies, while preparing them for future employment. Preparation and debriefing for work experience is very good as is the feedback from employers who praise the energy, enthusiasm and initiative of the pupils. Employers regularly visit the school to inform the pupils of the opportunities and challenges of the world of work and to advise them on application forms, interview techniques and how to behave in the work place, while some act as business mentors and others offer master classes in such skills as marketing and running a business. This is reflected in the school's success in Young Enterprise.
94. Standards in vocational courses such as health and social care are above average, while the achievement of lower attaining pupils on the ASDAN and Skills for Working Life courses is very good, adding to their confidence and skill levels. The increased flexibility programme offers very good provision for a number of disaffected students using relevant college courses. Collaboration between the school and other educational institutions is very effective enabling detailed planning to be underway to develop a borough-wide vocational centre. Wilnecote has led this initiative and has a strong vision about the importance of educating its pupils for the local economy. To this end it has a wide range of networks and senior managers sit on numerous consultative groups ensuring the school and local community are well served. Pupils receive very good careers advice which is enhanced by the strong links with the Connexions service. Work related learning and enterprise education is further enhanced through experiences in subjects such as business education, art, drama and ICT, but there are not enough explicit references that link subject material and teaching method to the world of work. The opportunities created by the arts specialist school status in extra curricular activities and its teaching styles give the pupils many chances to develop responsibility, solve problems, show initiative and leadership and equip themselves successfully for employment in a rapidly changing world.
95. Leadership and management of work related learning are very good, built on a strong sense of vision and high energy across the senior management team. The school knows and understands the local context and is committed to serving its pupils by preparing them in the widest sense for the future. While not everything is yet in place, planning is positive and there is a high level of awareness and a strong sense of direction.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is improving. After a decline, the results in Year 9 national tests improved significantly in 2004. Pupils' achievement in Year 11 has improved to a satisfactory level following underachievement in their Year 9 national tests.
- The best teaching is purposeful, robust, and challenging. It results in good progress, especially from higher attaining pupils.
- After some instability the department comprises a full team of specialists.
- Assessment procedures require significant improvement.
- Expectations about the pupils' working attitudes are not consistently explicit.
- The arrangements for pupil grouping do not enable all pupils to make the best progress they can.

Commentary

96. Pupils enter the school with average standards. In recent national tests at the end of Year 9 results improved consistently until 2002. They reached and sustained above average levels. In 2003 – the latest year for which validated data are available – results fell significantly to a below average level. These pupils did not do as well as they should have. In 2004 the results in GCSE English and English literature at grades A*-C improved to a below average level, having been well below average in 2003. In each year, results were not as high as they should have been. Boys, in particular, did not do as well as they could have done. Lack of continuity in staffing has had a negative impact on results in recent years.
97. Standards in the current Years 9 and 11 are average. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to the pupils' standards on entering the school. Pupils are benefiting from improved staffing stability since September 2004. Pupils in the higher sets in Year 9 are making good progress. Teaching is well matched to their needs. Their extended writing shows good gains in accuracy, organisation and expression. They are laying good foundations for later progress at GCSE. In Year 11 a broadly similar rate of progress is apparent in higher sets.
98. However, during both Years 9 and 11, in groups where the range of ability is wider, the rate of progress is not so good. It is undermined by these groups' wide range of learning needs. In Year 11 course work reveals average standards. Pupils tend to do better in English literature than in English - where some find their standards lowered because of inaccuracies. Girls still appear to be doing better than boys and provide the majority of pupils in higher sets. Sound use of learning assistants helps pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school. There was no evidence of pupils applying numeracy skills in their work. ICT skills are average.
99. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory throughout the school. When lessons are good the teachers make learning outcomes very clear. The activities closely match those outcomes. Effective planning ensures a fast pace that increases challenge and purpose. High expectations make it clear to the pupils that they are required to work hard and they arrive at

the lesson ready to do so. Both during and at the close of lessons there are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on the links between what they are doing and what they are learning. When teaching is satisfactory these explicit expectations and procedures are less consistently apparent. Adequate progress is made but lessons do not always start briskly; the pace is slower; learning outcomes are not always clear or linked to activities; expectations about work attitudes and presentation in books are not consistently clear.

100. A similar unevenness is apparent in assessment. There are strengths in the accurate use of GCSE grades and – when used – National Curriculum levels. Good standardisation procedures secure this. In a Year 9 higher set there was evidence of very close monitoring of progress. But in general there are inconsistencies in the quality of feedback the pupils receive. Pupils are not always sure about which level or grade they are working at and aiming for. They are not always precise about what they are good at and what they need to improve. At this point, lessons and marking tend not to make enough explicit use of grade and level criteria, either to support learning or to focus the short and long term expectations of teachers and pupils.
101. Subject leadership is satisfactory. After a turbulent period regarding staffing the department comprises a team of specialists and provision is improving. The head of department's calm approach has helped to sustain stability. There is good cooperation in the production of schemes of work and these cover National Curriculum requirements and integrate suitably selected objectives from the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The entry rate at GCSE is above average for English and English literature. Management is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place. However, the use of assessment data to evaluate effectiveness, set targets, and track progress is not extensive or rigorous enough. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection with better standards emerging following a fall.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

102. Standards are broadly average in Year 9 and in Year 11, but there are some inconsistencies between subjects in the provision for literacy. During the inspection, inspectors observed some good questioning that elicited good oral answers, and some subjects, such as history, ICT and drama place good emphasis on key words for the subject. Overall, though marking is satisfactory, there are still examples of marking that is inconsistent and erratic, and this does not help pupils to understand what they must do to improve their written skills. Conversely, in subjects where the pupils do particularly well at GCSE – in history, for example – there is a very specific focus on improving writing skills, including extended writing and examination answers. The school is aware of this and intends to strengthen the role of literacy co-ordinator in a push to raise standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in modern foreign languages in the main school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in French and German have been below average in recent years, but work seen during the inspection suggests that standards are now rising.
- Teaching is good, offering plenty of challenge, resulting in good learning.
- Teaching is better in German than in French, because good assessment systems are well established and used very well to inform lesson planning.
- Work is not always well matched to the needs of pupils of different levels of prior attainment in the mixed ability classes in Years 10 and 11.
- Curriculum leadership is good, and has the capacity to improve standards.

Commentary

103. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have been consistently below average. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results in both French and German were below average, although there was a perceptible improvement on the 2003 results, with standards moving closer to the national average than they have been in previous years. The pupils did, broadly, as well in their languages as they did in their other subjects.
104. In work seen during the inspection standards are higher. In Year 9, in both French and German, they are average. The pupils understand and use the languages they learn with increasing confidence. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress because they are well supported by the teachers and their particular needs are understood. In Year 11, standards continue to be average in French, and are above average in German. The pupils are challenged well in lessons, often making very good progress, and this is one reason why standards observed during the inspection are higher than those achieved in recent GCSE examinations.
105. Most pupils understand spoken French or German well because nearly all teachers speak the foreign language consistently in lessons. The pupils' reading and speaking skills are broadly average, and lower attainers have a sound understanding of simple written French and German, and speak simply and largely accurately, with support. The pupils gain in confidence and fluency in their writing as they move up the school, and develop an increasing knowledge of basic grammar. These standards represent satisfactory achievement by Year 9, and good achievement overall by Year 11, although achievement in French remains satisfactory, reflecting differences in the quality of teaching and assessment in the two languages.
106. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In German, the teachers have been using assessment effectively as a tool to help them plan lessons and raise the pupils' achievement for longer than in French, and so the teaching in German is often very good, offering high levels of challenge, and resulting in very good learning, particularly in the development of extended speaking and writing. The teachers have a good command of both languages, and work as a committed team, keen to innovate. They plan their lessons very effectively ensuring that the pupils are motivated and well involved, and encourage them to move quite rapidly from learning new language to using it effectively. The climate for learning is very good, with very good relationships, so that the pupils learn well, often very well. At all levels in the main school, there are some lessons where the pace is not brisk enough, and so the pupils have time to engage in off-task chatter; often time runs out before the lesson objectives have been fully met.
107. Very few pupils opt to study a foreign language after Year 9, which results in classes in Years 10 and 11 made up of pupils from a very wide range of prior attainment. The pupils in the upper and middle ability ranges in these classes are sometimes not challenged consistently enough, with differing work matched to their own particular needs, and consequently there are missed opportunities to develop higher skills which would enable them to reach the higher GCSE grades. Aspects of literacy, and occasionally, numeracy are developed effectively in many of the linguistic activities the pupils undertake. The pupils do not have regular planned opportunities to improve their ICT skills.
108. Assessment is used very well in German to track progress and take action to help pupils improve, but it has yet to be fully established across the department as a whole. Some exemplary marking practice was seen, particularly in German, with very full comment designed to encourage pupils to reflect on their mistakes and to improve the quality of their work. There is also some unsatisfactory marking which is not careful enough and offers little advice to help the pupils improve their work.
109. Curriculum leadership is good, and has the capacity to be even better, once there has been time for new management systems to have had their full effect. There is a clear sense of strategic direction which is shared with the whole team, and a commitment to improving

standards. The consistency of good and very good teaching observed during this inspection, and the willingness of the teachers to innovate and to discuss and share their teaching ideas, indicate that the department now has the capacity to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with a slow, but positive response to all issues raised.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to support pupils' understanding of mathematics and help them prepare for external examinations.
- Teachers enjoy positive relationships with their pupils and give their time freely outside lessons to support those who have difficulties.
- Department documentation, including schemes of work, is incomplete and department practices, including the use of assessment and ICT, are inconsistent.
- In too many lessons, there is insufficient account taken of the spread of ability to cater specifically for individual needs and to challenge the most able.

Commentary

110. In the 2003 Year 9 national tests in mathematics, results were in line with national averages and below similar schools based on the pupils' prior attainment in the Year 6 national tests. The unvalidated 2004 results were similar to those in 2003 but better when compared with pupils' prior attainment. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards in Year 9 are now above the national average as a result of improved teaching and the introduction of schemes of work. For these pupils, standards on entry to the school were in line with national averages and achievement is good.
111. Pupils in Year 9 have a good knowledge of straight line graphs and solve simple linear equations. Higher attaining pupils can use straight line graphs to solve simultaneous equations and make good use of Pythagoras' theorem to calculate lengths of right angled triangles.
112. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, results were in line with national averages and in line with similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment in the Year 9 national tests. Pupils did not do so well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 11 are now above the national average as a result of improved teaching and a greater focus on coursework. On the basis of pupils' prior attainment in Year 9, this represents sound achievement.
113. Pupils in Year 11 draw a range of statistical representations including cumulative frequency graphs and stem and leaf diagrams. Higher attaining pupils solve quadratics by completing the square and they use the sine and cosine rules to solve triangles. There is little difference between the performance of girls and boys although girls are less confident in their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported so that standards and achievement are similar to those of other pupils.
114. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lesson planning is well considered. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their exposition is clear and confident.

Teachers enjoy positive relationships with pupils. They give their time freely to support pupils outside lessons. Behaviour is well managed. However, there is insufficient evidence of catering for the spread of ability, especially in Year 7, where pupils are taught in mixed ability classes. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged with more demanding work. Marking is regular but inconsistent across the department in terms of providing useful feedback on how to improve. Pupils know their target grades but are less sure how to achieve them.

115. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. They arrive punctually to lessons and remain engaged in their work although they sometimes find it difficult to concentrate for the whole sixty minutes. Pupils are enthusiastic and, when given the opportunity, work well with one another.
116. The curriculum in mathematics is broad with a good balance across all of the attainment targets including using and applying mathematics. There is an appropriate emphasis given to the National Strategy but work in Year 7 does not build sufficiently well upon the work in the primary school. The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory. There was no evidence of ICT seen in the pupils' work sample and too little emphasis given to ICT in the classroom. A few pupils confirmed that they use ICT for research and revision purposes but the use of ICT and the Internet is underdeveloped. The provision for literacy is satisfactory.
117. The department is fully staffed, but staff development is limited. Rooms provide a welcoming atmosphere with interesting and informative displays of pupil work. The department is suitably resourced in terms of equipment and textbooks but the library does not have a sufficient range of mathematics books.
118. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and improving. In a short period of time, the head of department, has demonstrated her commitment to improvement and her determination to effect change. Management is unsatisfactory although the head of department has a very good awareness of the areas which need improving including writing schemes of work for Years 10 and 11, updating department documentation, implementing consistent procedures and ensuring that good practice is shared by all staff.
119. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained in the national tests and have improved at GCSE. The provision of textbooks is better and the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has decreased. Inconsistent assessment practices and the use of ICT remain areas for further development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

120. The provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory although there were many instances of missed opportunities to develop and apply pupils' mathematical skills in other curriculum areas. The school has a numeracy policy and has undertaken an audit to find out where mathematics is used in other subject areas. Number work is used in business education for calculating cash flow and percentages as well as profit and loss. Algebraic skills are also used in business education and ICT for spreadsheet formulae. Spatial awareness is used well across the curriculum including weighing and measuring in technology, distance and scale in geography, and perspective and proportion in art. Graphs are used in languages, geography and science.

SCIENCE

Overall provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership of the department creates a sense of purpose and enjoyment.
- The standard of teaching is good overall, leading to good achievement by pupils.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly.
- The quality of resources is unsatisfactory.
- In spite of improvements, there is insufficient use of computers to enhance learning.

Commentary

121. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were average, but well below those of pupils in similar schools. This is the latest year for which validated data are available. In the provisional analyses of the 2004 tests, overall results declined, but were above those in similar schools. There are no consistent differences in the performance of boys and girls, and pupils' achievements in Years 7 to 9 are generally satisfactory. Nevertheless, there has been a reduction in the average points score in each of the last two years. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards were well above those which pupils gained in the national tests. The school's analysis of the disappointing results points to unexpectedly high demands on literacy in one of the science papers, and has addressed the problem.
122. GCSE results in 2004 were above average, and higher than in the previous year, with an increasing number of A*/A grades. Almost all pupils gained a pass grade. There has been an upward trend in results at GCSE level in the last three years. Although boys' results were higher than those of girls in the 2003 GCSE examination, there are no consistent differences in the standards of boys and girls in national tests.
123. In work seen during the inspection, standards were average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11. Pupils' standards, therefore, improve as they move through the school. This is the result of a good response by pupils to the work set in class. They work particularly well in groups when undertaking practical tasks. The department makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' number skills, for instance in calculating speed and pressure. However, pupils' relatively weak literacy skills have been identified as a reason for the decline in test scores in Year 9. There is inconsistency by teachers in the use of the department's computer room to enhance learning opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support, and make satisfactory progress.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a good command of their subject, and their planning of the content of lessons provides good progression in the work. There is good control of the laboratory, and effective liaison with the technicians and support assistants. However, teachers do not always give sufficient consideration to the methods they use to develop pupils' grasp of scientific principles, particularly with younger pupils. Teachers often talk for too long, and do not use sufficient praise to encourage pupils. Homework is set regularly, but the quality of homework tasks often lacks challenge for higher attaining pupils. Moreover, the use of the department's

policy for assessment is inconsistent, including the marking and grading of pupils' work. Some marking is exemplary, so that many pupils develop good habits of presentation; however, irregular marking leads to a casual approach by a significant minority of pupils.

125. The curriculum leadership of the department is good. The planning and organisation are effective, and policies are in place. Teaching and non-teaching staff work together well as a team. The monitoring of data is good, and management overall is satisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work; consequently, the good and very good teaching skills seen in many lessons are not replicated consistently across the department. There is also insufficient monitoring of pupils' work across the department by the head and deputy head of department in order to ensure consistently high standards of work.
126. Since the previous inspection, results have improved significantly in Year 11. They also improved in Year 9, but there has been a decline in the last two years. Teaching has improved, but some weaknesses and inconsistencies remain, in spite of a number of initiatives. The department has made satisfactory progress. More consistency in the application of department policies is required to bring about sustained improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall, very good in Years 10-11, and pupils achieve high standards in examinations.
- The leadership of ICT is very good and has led to a big improvement in provision since the previous inspection.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped in some areas.

Commentary

127. Standards in the teachers' own assessments of standards for Year 9 in 2004 were average. This is an improvement on the previous inspection and an improving trend. Standards are now above average for both boys and girls in Year 9. Pupils are particularly skilled in the use of office software and use a spreadsheet creatively, for example, in planning a school production. Pupils come into the school with broadly average knowledge and understanding in ICT so achievement is good. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve well.
128. Standards in the GCSE examination in 2004 were well above average and pupils did better in the ICT examination than they did in other subjects. Boys and girls achieved similar results. Standards are much higher than at the time of the previous inspection and an improvement on 2003. Current standards, in work seen, are well above average in Year 11. Achievement is very good, since pupils began the course with average standards in ICT. Standards in the use of English are average overall; in most cases, the ICT teaching helps pupils to improve their writing so that they can communicate their system analyses very well. Mathematical understanding is promoted well in all years through business calculations and data handling. Standards for pupils not taking the GCSE are average and achievement is satisfactory.
129. Teaching and learning are good and, in Years 10 and 11, they are very good and sometimes excellent. All lessons are well planned to a common framework, making good use of online resources and, if available, an electronic display. The best teaching is lively and fully involves the pupils in assessing and planning their own work. This was seen to great effect in an excellent Year 10 GCSE lesson: work was very well marked and fed back to the pupils. Pupils were able to decide how to proceed because there were very good models to work towards. There was even a whole class system of recording progress, agreed by the pupils. This is highly motivating for pupils who respond with respect and dedication. Teachers nearly always have high expectations and establish good relationships.
130. In weaker lessons, the teachers are less confident and do not make enough use of prepared resources to help pupils who are working at different levels. They provide limited visual input and do not check or feed back enough to pupils on their progress. This lessens the achievement of all pupils but particularly those who are not so keen to learn. The computer rooms are small and few have more than 20 computers so that in nearly all lessons pupils have to share. This is fine when teachers want to pair weaker pupils with higher achievers but not so good when individual learning is important. Teaching on the non-GCSE course is more variable and satisfactory overall. Teaching and resources have been focussed on the GCSE classes and staff absences have resulted in a variable experience for these youngsters. The programme of study is not responsive enough to individual needs although the online resources provide a

measure of self-assessment. Nevertheless, relationships are good and learning is never less than satisfactory.

131. The leadership of ICT is very good. The head of faculty is very knowledgeable, dynamic and experienced and works well with the head of ICT who is equally committed and enthusiastic. They set very high standards for achievement and enrichment. Day to day management and teamwork is very good. Both have very clear priorities: the analysis of data, for example, has enabled the department to target particular groups, improve the teaching and develop resources to good purpose. Re-writing the programmes of study for Years 7 to 9 and re-organising the setting arrangements have helped to improve provision and consequently achievement and behaviour. This has helped to offset the problems caused by the staff absences that affected the progress of some classes. Whilst these priorities have paid off with a very good rise in standards in tests and exams, the whole school ICT curriculum is less well developed.
132. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. All the issues have been addressed and improved including planning: standards have improved dramatically in Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11; assessment is now good overall and very good in GCSE; the curriculum now meets statutory requirements. Pupils enjoy ICT and remark on the accessibility of computers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

133. Nearly all departments have access either to their own suite of computers or to computers nearby but only a few, namely art, music, dance, drama and religious education, really make regular and creative use of these opportunities. The mathematics, science and modern languages departments have fought shy of the planning and logistics needed to enrich and enhance teaching and learning through the use of ICT. Provision in these subjects is unsatisfactory. In other departments it is keen individuals who use the computer suites regularly. The school has a large network of computers and the extensive resources are accessible in most areas of school and also from outside. For those pupils with good Internet connections at home, direct access to their own file areas is available and also to a commercial GCSE revision site. These are powerful resources, recently introduced, with a potential to revolutionise teaching and learning.
134. The pupils' competence in ICT across the curriculum is above average. All pupils develop a set of generic skills in the use of a computer so that searching for resources on the Internet, analysing the data, cutting and pasting to produce a variety of documents and saving and printing the results, becomes almost second nature. Pupils become particularly skilled in the use of business and office software and electronic mail but are also becoming competent in other tools such as a paint program and presentation software. Some higher attaining or interested pupils edit digital video or design web pages. Video resources are well used in the expressive arts and in physical education.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Warm, supportive relationships and mutual respect encourage pupils to learn.
- Pupils respond well to question and answer work in class.
- There are too few fieldwork opportunities in Years 7 to 9.
- There needs to be a greater range of extended writing tasks.

Commentary

135. Since the previous inspection GCSE results have been improving. In 2004 they were above average and the best ever. Pupils do better in geography than in their other subjects.
136. Standards are broadly average when pupils start in Year 7. In work seen and in the national teacher assessments they are average in Year 9, which represents satisfactory achievement. The pupils understand a range of geographical terms and respond enthusiastically to question and answer work expressing ideas and confirming their factual knowledge. Pupils who select geography as an option subject are broadly average at the start of the course and, the current Year 11 reach average GCSE standards so that achievement is satisfactory. Standards are not as high as the 2004 results, and this reflects some staffing difficulties during the current Year 11's course.
137. The pupils have a sound factual base, understand geographical principles and link cause and effect when considering how physical processes such as earthquakes impact on man. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the higher attainers, make satisfactory progress as the teachers are keen to include everyone in the full range of learning. Geography supports literacy by its use of key words, and numeracy by the use of graphs and simple calculations. The subject contributes to ICT through encouraging word processing, the use of the Internet for research and by its teaching methods.
138. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, warm personal relationships and high levels of support foster a climate that gives the pupils the confidence to answer questions and fully engage in the lessons. In a very good lesson on rivers, the pace, high expectation and challenge provided led to very effective learning. Practical geographical experiences are absent as no fieldwork opportunities are available and this detracts from learning.
139. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are also satisfactory, and the high level of care and the good subject knowledge that teachers have shines through. Pupils have been well supported in their GCSE preparation and especially in their coursework in recent years. In all years there is an over dependence on worksheets and not enough variety of written tasks to extend the higher attainers, while boys are more actively involved in oral work when compared to girls. All pupils develop their awareness of social, cultural and moral issues while citizenship is promoted in teaching and by good display. Marking is inconsistent, reflecting past changes in teaching staff, but pupils are offered good advice on how to improve, especially at GCSE. Encouraging steps are being taken to get pupils to evaluate their own work and improve it against the national criteria. Behaviour is good and the pupils are attentive, energetic and enjoy geography.

140. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and, after a period of change, a mutually supportive team is being established. Management is satisfactory with appropriate action plans, policies and schemes of work in place. More opportunities need to be taken for teachers to watch each other teach and to share good practice. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection and there is the potential for further progress.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving because the teaching lays the foundations of GCSE work very early.
- Assessment is a strength of the department – pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Teaching is very good and makes pupils think for themselves.

Commentary

141. Results in the GCSE examination were well above average in 2004. This represents a significant improvement from 2003.
142. Pupils enter the school with below average standards in history. By Year 9, pupils have developed a broad range of history skills and their standards are above average overall. Teachers place a very clear emphasis on enabling pupils to analyse a wide range of historical sources and this means that standards in this area rise very quickly from the beginning of Year 7 and eventually prove a very good foundation for GCSE work. Standards in this area, therefore, are well above average. Standards in Year 11 mirror the most recent examination results and are well above average. This is because teachers focus very effectively on helping pupils to know what they have done well and what they need to do in order to achieve a better grade. Standards in writing are above average and most pupils write with increasing confidence. Pupils make good use of ICT to enhance their work.
143. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well in all years. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 because teachers lay the foundations for the development of a very good range of skills. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good because teaching enables pupils to build on very good existing skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding very effectively.
144. Teaching and learning are very good with some excellent features. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to improve their work. This means that pupils feel confident about what they are doing and large numbers of them opt for the subject at GCSE. Lessons are very challenging and pupils are expected to think for themselves. This means that they are very enthusiastic about their work and arrive at their lessons with very positive attitudes. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their work and pupils are keen to participate and do their best.

145. Curriculum leadership is very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for the department and has very clear strategies with which to achieve his aims. Teachers work very well together, sharing good practice with each other and with their humanities colleagues. All issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed very effectively and improvement has been very good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE standards are rising because the teaching focuses effectively on helping pupils to understand what they need to do in order to achieve the higher grades.
- Assessment is a key strength of the department.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve well in a supportive environment.
- Time allocated in Years 10 and 11 to those pupils not taking GCSE is still below recommendations.

Commentary

146. Results in the 2004 full course GCSE examination were above average for A*-C grades, and well above average for A* and A grades. This represents a significant improvement since 2003.

147. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils who arrive at the school with below average levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. Pupils have developed their knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and of some of the other faiths represented in Britain today. They are beginning to use specialist vocabulary and are developing a good understanding of why some questions are difficult to answer. Year 9 pupils, for example, have recently looked at the question of suffering in the context of the Boxing Day Tsunami. All pupils move beyond the externals of religion to probe deeper questions of morality and meaning. Writing standards are above average and throughout each year group there are examples of sensitive and thoughtful writing on a range of religious and ethical issues. Pupils make good use of ICT to word process their work or to research topics on the internet.

148. Standards seen in Year 11 in the GCSE group are above average overall. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils, and particularly for the higher attainers, because they build so effectively on existing skills and knowledge. Pupils in both Years 10 and 11 form their own ideas on a wide range of ethical and religious issues and can apply their understanding to current situations such as the care of the environment or fair trade. It is not possible to judge the standards of those pupils who do not opt to take religious education as a GCSE subject, because none of these lessons could be observed during the week of the inspection.

149. Teaching and learning are good overall with some very good features. A particular strength is the assessment of pupils' work because it enables pupils to know exactly what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. Complex material is introduced with care and made accessible to all pupils so that they make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of difficult topics such as the

symbolism of Holy Communion. Preparation for GCSE work is very effective so that pupils understand what they need to do to achieve the higher grades. The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and thoughtful so that pupils have time to reflect and think about their answers in a supportive and tolerant environment. This means that sensitive topics, such as death, are dealt with very effectively. Although most pupils are very keen to answer questions and participate actively and enthusiastically, there is scope for teachers to help their quieter classmates to show more confidence in discussions.

150. Curriculum leadership is good. The head of department has a clear commitment to raising standards and understands what she needs to do in order to achieve this. She provides effective guidance to non-specialists and works very well with colleagues in the humanities area. All issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed well.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in resistant materials and they are average and improving in graphics in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards are below average in Year 9 and achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because of inadequate planning and assessment.
- Low expectations, lack of challenge and inconsistencies in teaching and learning lead to the underachievement of some average and higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

151. Results in the GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were broadly average and have improved on the below average results in 2003. There are variations across the material areas with resistant materials well above average, graphics average and below average standards in electronics and food. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work reflect these inconsistencies. Teachers' assessments in 2004 indicate below average standards in Year 9.

152. Pupils enter Year 7 with variable skills, knowledge and understanding in this curriculum area but standards are broadly average. The opportunities provided for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to use a variety of materials, and to access a range of tools and equipment means pupils select and work competently with tools and produce satisfactory and, in some cases good, practical outcomes. However, planning and assessment do not provide adequate coverage of the design process, give depth of knowledge and understanding or enable pupils to build on their learning from one unit to the next. This means that overall achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below and, in some cases, well below, what is expected in Year 9.

153. Standards in Year 11 are average. For this group of pupils, achievement is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Pupils develop a better understanding of the design and make processes and acquire a greater depth of knowledge about the material area

they have chosen to study. Pupils respond well to being given the element of choice, and they develop some imaginative products, particularly in resistant materials. Pupils' use of technical and extended language is weak and this affects the standard of the analytical and evaluative writing in coursework.

154. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Individual lessons are effectively planned, providing a clear framework for the activities to be undertaken. These are shared with pupils so they understand what tasks are to be completed during the lesson. However, the purpose for the lesson and the skills to be learned are not consistently shared with pupils so in some lessons pupils are not clear why they are doing the activity. Teachers give good individual support to pupils to help them make satisfactory progress and in some cases good progress. However, the pace and activities lack sufficient challenge for some average and the majority of higher attaining pupils to reach their full potential. The development of technical and extended language, and the promotion of listening skills, is inconsistent across the department.
155. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department is aware of the issues within the department and the better provision in Years 10 and 11 reflect his experience and expertise. However, management is unsatisfactory as the strategies to improve provision and to eliminate inconsistent practice within the department are not yet in place.
156. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory as insufficient progress has been made to improve the quality of provision in order to raise standards and achievement in all material areas.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus subjects were art and design and music. Work in drama was also sampled.

157. GCSE results in drama in 2004 were well above average. In a Year 11 lesson standards were well above average and the teaching and achievement very good. The pupils' positive attitudes were aptly demonstrated by the spontaneous applause they gave each group's performance. In Year 9 the drama lesson observed was part of an innovative GCSE expressive arts course aimed at these younger pupils. Standards are well above average, achievement is very good, and the pupils are clearly responding to the challenge of the course. The teaching on the course is excellent. The leadership of drama is excellent and innovative. Pupils enjoy a rich diet of extra curricular opportunities. In addition, significant sections of the drama course make a major contribution to the pupils' personal, social and health education. Year 10 GCSE pupils effectively deepened their understanding of compulsive eating disorders through their careful construction of tableaux and sound collage.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in the visual art element of the expressive arts GCSE course in Year 9 is excellent.

- Gifted and talented older pupils' work needs to develop more individuality to attain the highest grades.
- Highly effective assessment systems give pupils very good understanding about how to improve.
- Many lessons provide pupils with good opportunities for personal development.
- Very good curriculum leadership is generating improvement in standards in all years.

Commentary

158. Pupils' standards on entry are average. Recent assessments at Year 9 have shown average attainment, but current standards are above that level. Pupils on the pilot GCSE expressive arts course in Year 9, for example, produce standards of work which are excellent for their age. Overall, pupils' standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils use their sketchbooks very effectively from Year 7 onwards. They write good commentaries on their learning because effective assessment techniques enable them to do so. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
159. GCSE results were well above average in 2004, with average numbers at the highest grades and very few below C grade. Pupils generally did better in art and design than in their other subjects. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average in two and three-dimensional work and in analytical annotation. Although much work, especially girls' work, is potentially of A* standard, it is too similar to that of other pupils, lacking sufficient individuality. These very high attaining pupils need to make independent decisions about their work from early in Year 10. Low and middle attaining pupils are achieving well, with technical skills in painting, drawing and ceramics better than expected. Many who might otherwise attain C or D grades are stretched effectively to grades B or C. Achievement is good overall in Years 10 and 11.
160. Teaching and learning are good. Some lessons seen were very good or excellent. The new team is developing commendable consistency in areas such as assessment, where all aspects are very strong. The assessment practices in the art department provide a very good model for the school. In addition to the effective teaching of skills, many lessons include very good teaching in the spiritual and cultural dimensions of pupils' lives. Young pupils learn well how to explore the symbolism of art work, for instance, and to talk and write about this. Learning in the Year 9 GCSE groups is exceptional. Pupils enjoy art and design because they are very interested and engaged in learning, so want to do well. Their personal development in understanding learning is unusually strong because staff teach them how to assess their own work and to offer useful, sensitive critique to their peers about theirs.
161. Art is very well led. Links between the arts are very strong and recent curriculum innovations have been very effective in raising standards. This applies particularly to younger, higher attaining pupils and those most motivated by the arts areas of the curriculum. Recent staffing changes have been effectively managed to create a well balanced team with complementary skills. Improvement since the last report has been good. Although standards at Year 9 fell in the interim, they are now higher again. ICT resources are somewhat better, but provision still does not enable all staff to use computers properly with younger pupils. Significant improvement in curriculum provision and developments through the school's specialist school status have improved provision for visual art overall.

Music

The provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum leadership in the department is good.
- The extra and extended curricular activities offered in music are very good.
- Instrumental and vocal tuition is free to pupils in the school.

- The number of boys opting for music courses and participating in musical activities is greater than is usually seen.
- There is a need to ensure consistency in teaching and learning in order to raise standards further.

Commentary

162. In the GCSE examinations standards have been rising in the past few years. In 2004 more than average numbers of pupils took the subject and results were broadly average. Teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2004 were far too high as standards seen during the inspection suggest a more average profile. Pupils enter the school with standards that are now broadly average and this represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9.
163. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average in Years 9 and 11, representing satisfactory achievement, given the standards of the pupils when they entered the course. In a Year 9 lesson, effective teaching enabled pupils to enhance their performances of 'Ode to Joy by adding expression, using tempo differences, phrasing and dynamics. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils showed good appraisal skills when discussing their variation compositions and justifying the levels given. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils showed satisfactory knowledge of compositional techniques when composing their terminal tasks. Many pupils were able to show good understanding of inversion and sequence when developing their melodic writing. In a Year 10 lesson. Pupils were able to notate two bar melodies successfully from aural dictation and recognize cadences.
164. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory and the department needs to ensure consistency in its provision in order to raise standards further. In the best lessons teaching was enthusiastic, stimulating and challenging. There are high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Lessons are very well planned, have good pace and use starter activities effectively. Good use is made of assessment to inform planning and help pupils to set targets so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is very good subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. However, in the least effective lessons, there is a lack of challenge and pace. Tasks are not varied and last too long so that pupils lose interest and motivation. Pupils are often given work which does not directly link to developing their performing, composing or appraising skills. Work is not matched closely to pupils' abilities. Little use is made of assessment to help pupils understand how they can improve and progress. Pupils' attitudes in music are generally good and often very good.
165. Curriculum leadership is good. The newly appointed head of department has a vision for raising standards and good progress has been made in addressing issues of inconsistency within the department. The departmental handbook and schemes of work are comprehensive and set out a clear agenda for improvement. A strength of the department is its extra and extended curricular work, which is very well supported by both boys and girls. There are regular opportunities to perform both in concerts and events both within and outside school. There is a wide and varied range of activities on offer, both at lunchtime and after school. There is an annual production which is taken to the German partner school every two years. The department works with feeder primary and infant schools and this is having a positive effect on raising standards. There are good community links which enhance the school's reputation locally. The

curriculum in Year 9 is greatly enriched by a GCSE one year expressive arts course and pupils achieve high standards in these lessons.

166. Accommodation and resources are good although one teaching room is cramped. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with standards rising, the school has achieved specialist performing arts status, and there is very good provision for extra and extended curricular work with a range of music courses available. The head of department is well placed to take the department forward.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education was inspected in depth. Work in dance was also sampled.

167. Following the school's successful bid for specialist arts status, dance has been introduced for boys and girls in Years 7 to 9, and as a popular GCSE course. One GCSE lesson in dance was sampled in which Year 11 girls showed high levels of commitment and motivation. Their standards were above average, and they were achieving very well in response to very good teaching.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are improving, are above average and represent good achievement for the pupils concerned.
- New assessment procedures are well devised, but require more careful moderation.
- Good extra-curricular provision is helping to raise standards.

Commentary

168. In 2004, results GCSE results showed an improvement on the 2003 results, with 70 per cent of candidates achieving the higher A*-C grades. The course is popular, especially with boys, and for many their results in physical education were higher than in their other GCSE subjects.

169. When pupils join the school in Year 7 they have a wide range of capability and experience in physical education; overall their standards are broadly average. Throughout Years 7 to 9 all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. They make steady progress because effective teaching stimulates their positive attitudes towards the subject. By Year 9, the overall standards of both boys and girls are broadly average. Teachers' own assessments in 2004 suggest that standards are much lower than average, particularly for girls; inspection evidence does not support this and there is need for further moderation of their assessments.

170. Standards in core physical education in Year 11 are also broadly average. Good attendance and participation rates by both boys and girls support their progress and provide continuity in their learning and, as a result, their achievement is satisfactory. At this stage, good opportunities are provided for pupils to coach, referee and perform in a variety of activities, leading to accreditation through the Junior Sports Leaders Award

(JSLA) scheme as part of the school's modular studies provision. Standards in current GCSE physical education are above average in the theoretical elements of the course, and in some of the practical work, for example, in badminton. Whilst a majority of pupils show good commitment to their GCSE studies, a number of boys in Year 11 showed a lack of maturity and their below average standards in basketball reflected considerable underachievement.

171. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school. The GCSE theory course is well taught. Teachers are knowledgeable, hardworking, enthusiastic, and relate well to their pupils. As a result, boys and girls are keen to learn. In the better lessons, teachers plan work well, share clear learning objectives so that pupils understand what they are learning and why and regularly question them to check their understanding. This was illustrated clearly in successful lessons where Year 9 girls made good progress in improving their technique in the breaststroke, and in Year 11 GCSE badminton where boys swiftly improved their skills in preparation for practical assessment; pupils of all abilities learned quickly and achieved well in these lessons because the pace was purposeful and challenging tasks extended them fully. Not all lessons are as effective: on occasion work planned does not provide sufficiently for the needs of pupils with different levels of attainment and capability. In an unsuccessful Year 11 GCSE basketball lesson, the uncooperative behaviour of a significant number of boys resulted in unsatisfactory learning and progress, despite the considerable efforts of the teacher concerned.
172. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. The interim arrangement for shared leadership of the subject has been effective: good progress has been made in revising schemes of work, assessment procedures, and subject action planning. Sportsmark has been achieved. The department works well together and appropriate day-to-day routines are in place. However, at present, time allocated for the various units of work in Years 7 to 9 vary widely from activity to activity, and between boys and girls; timetabling arrangements for core physical education in Years 10 and 11 affect the breadth of opportunity for pupil choice and specialisation because not all specialist staff and facilities are included; arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning by senior management are good, but are not yet established within the department. As at the last inspection, the lack of a suitable teaching space for gymnastics and dance is a barrier to development.
173. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in National Curriculum activities are similar, and there has been improvement in GCSE results. Both core physical education and GCSE work have been enhanced by the good extra-curricular opportunities provided through the strong commitment of the department, and these are helping to raise standards.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies GCSE was sampled.

174. The GCSE A*-C results were average in 2004, with pupils' grades matching those in their other subjects. Numbers taking the course fell significantly in 2004 because pupils had to choose between ICT and business studies GCSE. Now they can do both and numbers for business studies have risen again.
175. Two out of the four Year 11 groups were seen and one of the Year 10 groups. Standards of work seen are above average in Year 10, with predominantly abler girls in

the group. Standards of work differ considerably between Year 11 groups, but predictions are above average for their final results. One group seen was average, the other well above average. Both were achieving well in the lessons seen. Most Year 11 pupils did relatively poorly in their mock examination papers in December. Several did much less well than their predictions indicate they should. The department has responded to this well, giving significantly more examination paper practice, particularly as homework, to improve pupils' written answering techniques. Many of these questions are very well marked, and although department practice is not yet consistent, assessments give most pupils very good understanding about what to include in subsequent exercises to improve their achievement.

176. Teaching seen was good. One lesson was very good. The teaching team has been unsettled recently because of absences, reallocation of roles and new recruitment. Pupils' work records indicate recent inconsistencies, for example in assessment. The best practice is very good and senior staff recognise the need to implement this across all teachers and to monitor its effectiveness. Active learning methods seen in lessons are very effective. These engage all pupils well through direct experience, for instance of simulating a production line. Expectations in lessons seen are high. Teachers set ambitious workloads in lessons and ensure that the volume of work achieved is good. The best practice shows learning objectives clearly set and well explained, with clear identification of how assessment will be made on final outcomes. Sometimes these are less clear, so pupils are less certain how to proceed. Pupils respond well to teaching, keen to cooperate with others, sharing workload well in groups and using their ICT skills effectively. They enjoy good relationships with staff which lead to productive, independent learning by Year 11.
177. In the absence of the head of department, two senior members of staff share responsibility for the subject. Both recognise that their other whole-school commitments make this situation untenable long-term and it will cease shortly. The new team needs to stabilise, with some training needed to implement best practice consistently across all the department's work. The GCSE examination is an unusual one and does not fully exploit the strengths of the whole faculty, which comprises ICT and business studies. Changes are being considered, but decisions postponed until the full team is back in post.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled. Teaching and standards could not be judged as no lessons took place during the week of the inspection; however, planning was scrutinised and was judged to be good.

Citizenship

The provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons can be lively and relevant but teaching is inconsistent and assessment is not used to motivate pupils or improve their achievement.

Commentary

178. Standards are average in Year 9. Pupils in have sound understanding of voting systems, legal rights and responsibilities and business practices. They learn to find information from different sources, for example using ICT, and learn how they can influence aspects of society and the environment. The most able pupils know how to present their opinions effectively and influence people. Pupils are generally confident and boys and girls respond well to each other. Achievement is satisfactory.
179. This knowledge and understanding has not progressed adequately by Year 11 where standards are below what is expected. Discussion is sometimes of a limited or poor quality: not listening effectively to each other or the teacher. In one Year 10 lesson pupils had only basic knowledge of the legal system and concepts of justices. Where teaching was better, for example in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were able to develop a better understanding of human rights abuses in different countries through researching the Amnesty International website. Achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory.
180. Teaching is satisfactory although, during the inspection, it ranged from very good to unsatisfactory and provides an unsatisfactory experience overall for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons there was a well-planned structure with good opportunities for discussion and reflection and lively practical activities. In a very good lesson with Year 8, pupils had prepared speeches canvassing the class members' votes on why they should be awarded a chocolate egg. Although the teacher chose the candidates somewhat randomly, the best candidate won round his classmates with an amusing egg-shaped poem. As the lesson progressed the pupils were drawn into the murky world of minority governments, single transferable votes, tactical voting and vote rigging! Not all teachers have either the skill or the imagination to provide such a positive experience. Less confident teachers have problems with discipline or with the usefulness of the material and fail to involve and motivate pupils. Underlying this is the lack of consistent assessment procedures that would give pupils a clear idea of what they are learning and targets for improvement. There is a rudimentary marking and recording scheme in Years 7 and 8 but this is not consistently applied or understood. As a result, pupils lack a clear progression in learning from Year 7 to 11.
181. The curriculum leadership of citizenship is satisfactory. The programme of study covers all the aspects required by the National Curriculum and in the main provides a useful tool for planning lessons. Citizenship is taught as a subject in Year 8 for an hour each week and in Years 10 and 11 on a rotation that includes personal and social education and ICT. The subject is otherwise 'tracked' through subjects such as religious education and the humanities but because of the lack of consistent assessment and recording this provides a variable experience. The main limitation to the programme is in the training and deployment of teachers, which has been exacerbated by staff absences, and has resulted in the problems described above.
182. To improve achievement the school needs to employ the best practices in teaching and provide systematic assessment and recording of progress from Year 7 to 11.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003, (the latest year for which national comparisons are available).

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	7	50.0	75.3	0	15.4	15.0	25.7
English literature	6	83.3	86.2	16.7	17.4	28.3	29.7
Technology	6	16.7	72.6	0	13.9	3.3	24.3
General studies	46	18.3	73.6	22.2	16.9	8.5	25.5
History	9	66.7	82.2	0	20.8	22.2	29.2
MA	6	50.0	59.9	0	14.1	16.7	20.5
Music	12	50.0	79.8	8.3	16.9	15.0	27.5
Other social studies	7	42.9	67.8	0	15.1	12.9	23.2
Sociology	12	50.0	72.1	0	19.6	13.3	25.9

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	7	100	98.3	42.9	50.2	88.6	87.1
Biology	7	100	96.6	14.3	40.0	71.4	78.9
Business studies	11	100	98.9	63.6	39.4	92.7	81.8
Chemistry	8	100	97.7	50	50	80	85.7
Dance	6	100	98.9	33.3	42.6	83.3	84.3
Drama	10	100	99.6	30.3	42.8	90	85.1
English literature	12	100	99.4	8.3	44.9	75	85.5
Design and technology	7	100	97.8	14.3	35.0	57.1	77.9
History	18	100	99.0	44.4	45.6	86.7	85.1
ICT	7	100	96.3	57.1	25.7	88.6	71.1
Mathematics	7	100	96.8	57.1	56.6	85.7	89.5
Other social studies	10	90.0	97.4	50	42.5	82	81.6

Sociology	22	90.9	98.5	27.3	45.3	70.0	84.6
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Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	6	100	93.5	50.0	24.9	83.3	70.0

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject was English literature. Lessons in French and German were also sampled.

183. In a Year 13 French lesson, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, mainly because effective use was not made of the time available. Standards observed were below average in the lesson, although achievement, based on progress made since the beginning of the course, was satisfactory. In contrast, time was used very productively in an outstanding Year 12 German lesson; standards were average, but teaching and learning were excellent, and achievement over time was good. In both subjects, the number of students taking examinations in 2004 was too small to allow reliable statistical comparison with national data.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' have good subject knowledge, and coverage of course requirements is comprehensive.
- Students have good attitudes, responding well to their teachers' encouragement.
- Students make good progress in independent learning.
- There needs to be better use made of assessment to support progress and learning.
- There needs to be a sharper focus on improving students' writing skills at this level.

Commentary

184. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are broadly average for the course. Results were below average in the 2004 A-level examination, as they were in the previous two years. In the 2004 AS examination, standards were below average, although comparisons require caution given the very low number of candidates. During recent years, students have tended not to do as well in English literature as in their other subjects. Nevertheless, recruitment is rising, with more than twenty students in the current Year 12 group. The rate of course completion is high.

185. Standards in Year 13 are broadly average. Students' oral contributions demonstrated standards higher than those seen in the 2004 AS examination. Students initiate perceptive comments about representations in plots, provide different interpretations stimulated by each writer's choice of language, and show extremely secure knowledge of contextual influences. Their AS results did not reflect these qualities because their essay writing, especially for examinations, lags behind their understanding of texts.

186. Some work of A grade standard was apparent: technically accurate, it included analytical focus on the impact of language, and a sharp awareness of contemporary influences. Other students' work relies too much on narrative or description rather than analysis; does not include enough comments on language (and those included are too imprecise); and is inaccurate. Similar features are apparent in the work of Year 12 students. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, with some good features. Students develop a purposeful approach to study and in developing independent learning. There was no evidence of students using skills associated with application of number, but ICT skills, especially for research, are average.
187. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of texts and of syllabus requirements. Work is graded accurately, though not frequently enough. The teachers' positive attitudes have a positive effect on students, who take their work seriously, and clearly want to do well. Students discuss challenging material enthusiastically, such as Annie Proulx's novel *Postcards* or the poetry of Dickinson and Blake. Students express enjoyment for literature they may otherwise have not encountered. Their additional research is well supported by the teachers' guidance on a range of background material, including computer-based sources. Questioning techniques are good, and students take the opportunity to participate in discussions. Lesson planning is satisfactory, but both medium and short term planning do not focus sufficiently on the improvement of writing conventions that these students require at this level if they are to secure better examination grades.
188. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory, as is its management. Teachers share a vision of helping the students improve their knowledge and understanding. Their enjoyment of the subject impacts well on the students. The number of teachers teaching the course has been deliberately increased to broaden professional development and expertise. Some innovative teaching developments were observed. However, the use of assessment data to evaluate effectiveness, set targets, and track progress is not extensive or rigorous enough. Given some lack of continuity in staffing, progress has been broadly satisfactory since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to support students understanding of mathematics and help them prepare for their examinations.
- Teachers enjoy positive and supportive relationships with their students and give their time freely outside lessons to support those who have difficulties.
- The department's documentation, including schemes of work, is incomplete and department practices, including the use of assessment and ICT, are inconsistent.
- In some lessons, there is insufficient account taken of the spread of ability to cater specifically for individual needs.

Commentary

189. The curriculum in the sixth form offers options in pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics, as well as in further mathematics, which is offered outside the normal timetable. In the 2004 examinations, the AS and A-level results were average, and

students tended to do as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. On the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE, their achievement was satisfactory. Recruitment is improving and retention rates are similar to other schools.

190. In work seen, standards in Years 12 and 13 are average, representing satisfactory achievement in relation to their average standards at entry to the sixth form. Students in Year 13 can determine roots using the Newton Raphson method, and find the sum to infinity of a geometric progression. They can calculate the mean and variance of a distribution in statistics and make use of vectors and trigonometry to resolve forces in mechanics. Standards in ICT within the department are below average, and students have too few opportunities to use ICT within or outside their mathematics lessons. Enrichment opportunities to research mathematics or make use of revision programmes are under utilised. Standards of literacy are average.
191. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good overall. The impact of this is not yet fully evident in achievement given earlier gaps in students' work. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their exposition is clear and confident. They enjoy positive and supportive relationships with students. Students confirm that teachers are approachable and readily available to support them outside of lessons. However, marking is irregular and teachers do not monitor students' work to check they are making the expected progress. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They enjoy positive and supportive relationships with the teacher and with one another. Students engage well with the lesson, and persevere with the subject.
192. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and improving. In a short period of time since her appointment, the head of department has demonstrated a commitment to improvement, and her determination to effect change. Management is currently unsatisfactory, although the head of department has a very good awareness of the areas which need improvement. These include writing schemes of work for Years 12 and 13, implementing consistent assessment procedures, so that work is better matched to the range of students in the groups. The department is also ensuring better access to ICT and acting upon inconsistencies to ensure that good practice, in terms of teaching and learning, is shared by all staff. The department is suitably staffed and resourced, but the library has too few mathematics books.
193. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and the provision of textbooks is better. Inconsistent assessment practices and the use of ICT remain weaknesses.

SCIENCE

The focus subject was chemistry, but work was also sampled in biology and physics.

194. In biology, results at A-level are normally above average, and in 2003 they were very high, with a large proportion of A and B grades. However, the overall quality of results dropped to average in 2004; students' achievements were satisfactory. In the last three years, all students entered for the A-level examinations have gained a pass grade. Teaching is good, and students particularly enjoy practical work.
195. In physics, take-up has been rather low in recent years, and numbers are too small to allow reliable comparisons with national examination data. The overall quality of results improved in 2004, and students' achievements were good in relation to their prior

attainments. In a very good Year 12 lesson, students enjoyed the challenge of deriving the formula to enable them to calculate the wavelength of light from a laser.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is good; the course is well organised.
- Students enjoy their work, and their numbers are increasing.
- Teaching is good; there are good practical opportunities.
- Assessments of students' standards are not regular enough.
- The quality of resources is unsatisfactory

Commentary

196. Students starting the AS course in Year 12 have a wide range of prior attainment in GCSE science. Their overall standards in chemistry are average. Male students gained a higher proportion of A and B grades. In 2004, results were average, with a lower number of A and B grades than usual; achievement was satisfactory. The results in the 2003 A-level examinations were well above average, representing good achievement. In the last three years, all students entered for the A-level examination gained at least a grade E. At AS level, results are less consistent.
197. In work seen during the inspection, standards of work in Year 13 are above average. Students are very involved in their work, their level of concentration is very high, and they enjoy the challenge of practical investigations. Students collaborate effectively, and make a very good contribution to lessons. Their relationships with teachers are very sound, and they are confident to ask questions when having difficulty. Written work in folders is well organised. The number of students taking the subject is increasing, there is a good balance of male and female students in Year 12, and the rate of retention is good.
198. The quality of teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good. Teachers have a good command of the subject, and lessons are well prepared. There are regular opportunities for students to undertake practical work; they also enjoy theory lessons. There is a wide range of ability in all classes. Teachers know students' target grades, and ensure that the highest attainers are challenged in class. The students' response is very good as a result, and occasionally excellent. There is regular use of calculations, making a good contribution to improving students' application of number. Students' communication skills are improved through demonstrating model answers to their peers. However, there is insufficient use of computers to widen opportunities for learning. The assessment of students' work is not undertaken frequently enough in order to monitor their standards, and to quickly identify any under-performance.
199. Curriculum leadership in chemistry is good. The organisation of teaching groups is thorough, and there is good teamwork. However, the scheme of work provides insufficient lesson-by-lesson guidance for teachers. Data available in the school, such as measures of the value-added at AS and A-level, are not at present fully utilised, for example, to provide annual comparisons of performance in the subject. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The quality of resources such as burettes is unsatisfactory for A-level studies.
200. It is impossible to comment on improvement since the previous inspection because of a lack of detail about A-level chemistry in the previous report. However, overall there are clear signs of rising standards in both Years 12 and 13.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in A-level ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and produce very good achievement.
- Assessment is very well used to raise standards; students know where they stand.

- The leadership of ICT is very good.

Commentary

201. Results in the 2004 examination, when seven students were entered, were well above average for both boys and girls. In 2003, 15 students achieved above average results. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection. Numbers of students in AS Level results have been too small for a national comparison but they generally do well; in 2003 standards were above average. Retention on both courses is very good and the A-level ICT course is becoming very popular.
202. Current standards are above average. This represents very good achievement since students entered the course with below average standards, based on their GCSE results. Male and female students achieve equally well at both levels. Skills in communication and application of number are average on entry, although the teaching ensures that all students achieve the standards required in both these areas by the end of the course.
203. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan lessons very well, continually adapting their strategies and approach to meet the needs of the students and overcome any shortcomings in the accommodation. The key to the successful teaching is the very thorough assessment and feedback that fully involves the students. Students know in advance what they will be learning and are kept up to date with their progress so that they can plan their work and continually improve it. One teacher even employs a chart with 'smiley' faces to show the progress that they are making and all teachers enjoy very good relationships with the students. Some students enter the course without a GCSE in ICT and teachers work hard to ensure that they develop the necessary skills as early as possible.
204. The leadership of the course is very good. The school offers A-level, with an emphasis on business practice, which meets the needs of a wide range of students very well. Some of the students are doing science, others the arts or business, and the destination of students after the course will range from work or apprenticeships to higher education and the professions. Continual evaluation of the course and the performance data of past and present students enable the leader to fine-tune the provision. For example, students with weaker communications skills are helped both to improve their written English, and their speaking and listening skills. Good models and examples are used for students to work towards and to practise. The day to day management of the resources and timetable is very good and the leader ensures very good teamwork.
205. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved and the popularity of the course has increased.

HUMANITIES

The focus subjects were history and psychology. Work was also sampled in sociology and geography.

206. One lesson of sociology was observed during the inspection. The teaching was very good and provided students with good levels of challenge, and very good levels of support. Although standards were below average, as were the examination results for 2004, this represented very good achievement in the context of students' prior

attainments. A particular strength of the teaching was the way in which complex concepts were made accessible to students so that, by the end of the lesson, they had made clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of theories about gender inequalities in the workplace.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising because of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students.
- Teaching is very good and strong assessment provision enables students to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- The history curriculum is imaginative and is taught by enthusiasts. Students react to this very positively.

Commentary

207. In 2004, the overall results were above average, an improvement on the 2003 picture. Students across the ability range tend to do better than expected given their earlier GCSE performances. In general, results have been below average in the context of A or B grades, but just above average in terms of grades A to E. Retention rates are good.
208. The standards of those students who are currently studying history are broadly average, representing very good achievement in the context of their below average prior attainment; several had not studied the subject at GCSE. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of historical evidence to produce well-balanced arguments. Most students write well. Higher attaining students make use of a wide variety of supporting evidence showing wider reading beyond the textbook. Their written work is sophisticated, with very well reasoned conclusions. Students make good use of ICT to word process their work and to research the Internet. There was no evidence of application of number in the work seen.
209. Teaching and learning are very good, and mirror the situation found in the main school. Assessment is a strength and students understand clearly what they need to do in order to improve their work. Lessons focus very effectively on the 'big question' so that the students understand very clearly how to organise their knowledge most effectively. This was evident, for example, in a lesson on Catherine the Great, where the main focus was on deciding whether she was truly enlightened. By the end of the lesson, all students were able to make informed judgments on a variety of her policies. Teachers are clearly enthusiastic about their subject and students are very positive about their history lessons. Teachers make use of a wide range of activities, styles and tasks to motivate and engage their students so that they gain in confidence and take risks with their answers even when dealing with difficult topics. Occasionally, teachers need more strategies to engage the whole class in discussion.
210. Curriculum leadership is very good. The head of department has a clear vision of how to raise standards, and understands what he needs to do in order to achieve this goal. Teachers work very well together as a team and students benefit from their different strengths. The history curriculum is very broad and balanced, introducing students to

topics they have never studied before such as Jacobean England and Catherine the Great. All issues raised in the previous inspection have been very effectively addressed. Improvement has been good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent staff changes have improved the quality of teaching, which is now good.
- Recent management changes now provide a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- Year 12 groups are too large and this restricts the teaching styles that can be used.

Commentary

211. The open access nature of recruiting for psychology results in Year 12 groups where the standards on entry are below average. It also means that results can change markedly from year to year, depending on the character of the intake. In 2004, results at A-level were above average. Middle attainers did better than expected from their GCSE grades; others performed as expected. A significant number of students only wish to undertake psychology to AS level. The retention rate of those students committed to the A-level course is high.
212. Standards of work seen are average for Year 13, representing good achievement. Work shows a developing knowledge of the main schools of psychological thought, and an emerging use of a specialist vocabulary. However, the size of the Year 12 group, combined with standards of literacy and numeracy that are below average, result in students being too dependent on the teacher. The much smaller groups in Year 13 show more evidence of independent research, practical work, and extended pieces of writing, which closely reflects the wider range of teaching styles used. Satisfactory use is made of ICT with some good usage in Year 13. Computers are used for presentation of work and some elements of independent research.
213. Recent changes in staffing have markedly improved the quality of teaching and learning. These are now good, with examples of very good teaching being seen during the inspection. Psychology is delivered with enthusiasm and with high expectations of students. In Year 13, practical and discussion work forms an important element of the provision, but such approaches are limited in Year 12 by the large size of the group. Assessment of students' work has markedly improved and now provides clear guidance as to how they can improve.
214. The newly appointed psychology co-ordinator has not had sufficient time to implement her planned changes. However, there is evidence of good leadership and a clear vision of how the subject will develop. The co-coordinator is aware of the need to further develop the range and number of resources to further encourage student's independent learning. The shared energy and commitment of the co-ordinator and staff is reflected in the number of students expressing an interest in pursuing psychology in university. Psychology was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Work in A-level product design was sampled.

215. Standards are below average. However, because teaching and learning are good, students achieve well compared to their earlier GCSE results. Students have positive attitudes to their work, and a desire to do well that creates a productive learning atmosphere.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject was drama and theatre studies. Work in dance, music, music technology, and performing arts was also sampled.

216. In dance, one lesson in Year 12 was seen in which both male and female students showed very high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for their work as they rehearsed their small group motifs based around Akram Khan's Rush. Standards were above average, and students made excellent progress in response to knowledgeable and challenging teaching of the highest order. Initial A-level results for dance in 2004 were average, and all students successfully completed the course.

217. Only small numbers follow music courses to A-level so that comparisons with national averages are statistically unreliable. One Year 13 lesson was sampled during the inspection and standards seen were average and teaching was very good with a very clear understanding of coursework performing requirements.

218. During the inspection one Year 12 music technology lesson was sampled. Very good teaching meant that students were quickly discussing problems of score writing and were transferring their Cubase scores into Sibelius software improving their scores and sequences in the process.

219. One Year 13 performing arts lesson was sampled, where very good teaching was reflected in above average performance skills and students were working to capacity preparing their improvised scenes.

Drama and theatre studies

Provision for drama and theatre studies is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching and leadership inspire students, leading to excellent achievement.
- Excellent use of assessment raises expectations and results in excellent learning.
- The students develop excellent attitudes to drama and to the arts in general.

Commentary

220. Students start the course with average standards. Results in the A-level examinations in 2004 were above average; they were below average in 2003 and well above average in 2002. Results in the 2004 AS examination were well above average. Students usually do better than expected given their GCSE performances. During

recent years students, have tended to do better in drama than in most of their other subjects. Retention rates are very good.

221. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are well above average. In Year 13 they are close to a very high standard. Students improve considerably in confidence. They develop into mature performers and critics. They evaluate their own and each other's work objectively, technically and constructively. They perform at a very high standard. They enhance performance by a very good knowledge of stagecraft, and a strong grasp of dramatic theory and contemporary influences on the texts they study. Standards of characterisation are high, enhanced through a powerful range of projection, intonation and gesture. A striking feature in both year groups is the students' use of physicality to convey - with a high degree of conviction - a range of contexts and scenes.
222. Achievement is excellent. Through taking the course the students are coming to value and revel in the arts in a broader sense. They discuss other media, such as genres of art with relish, linking them to their dramatic work. Relationships and teamwork are excellent. Written work shows a degree of variability in attainment. Higher attainers tend to reach high standards across all assessment criteria and produce evaluations with a higher degree of written accuracy. There was no evidence of application of number observed, but ICT standards are above average.
223. Teaching and learning are excellent. The teaching, with outstanding expertise, inspires students so they always aspire to do their very best. At the same time, it enables them to be confident and independent. Lessons demonstrate coaching of the highest order. Through demonstration, the teaching empowers and enables the students to explore and realise their own interpretations. All practical work saw students trying to perfect their efforts; continuous improvement underpinned every lesson. In addition, lessons included a wide range of excellent class management. Tasks were related to clear outcomes that all students understood. During lessons there were many opportunities to draw links between tasks and outcomes so ensuring very effective learning to occur. The supremely confident charring style of teaching when questioning results in students spontaneously developing each other's suggestions. Excellent use of a wide range of stimuli deepens the students' responses. But amid this considerable creativity, examination demands are not overlooked. Students know how well they are doing, the grades they can reach and how to reach them. Recently improved results emerged from a close analysis of information, especially on theoretical papers, and amending teaching to ensure the students are well prepared for those topics.
224. The quality of leadership is excellent, as is its management. Since the previous inspection there has been very good improvement, including the provision of specialist accommodation, which lifts the students' performance when they are timetabled in the room. Rightly, there are plans to include more teachers on the course. Students enjoy a rich vein of extra curricular activities. They assist in drama classes with younger pupils. Their ambassadorial role could be extended further in this specialist performing arts school.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Work in physical education, and in vocational leisure and recreation, was sampled.

225. Two lessons of physical education were seen, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. In both lessons, standards were average; students were actively engaged with their work, and their achievement was good in response to good, confident teaching. Previous A-

level results in 2003 and 2004 were broadly average, with all students successfully completing their courses.

226. One Year 12 lesson of the AVCE in leisure and recreation was seen. Students achieved well because the good teaching provided a wide range of learning styles that captured the students' interests well. Expectations were very good, and the progress that students were making was checked at frequent intervals. In recent years, examination entries have varied, with no students entered in 2004; results in 2003 were average.

BUSINESS

The A-level course in economics and business, and the AVCE in retail distribution, were sampled.

227. In 2003, the school provided the country's only entry for the AVCE in retail and distribution. All gained a pass award, and half of the students gained grades A or B. There was no entry in 2004. In the Year 13 lesson seen, achievement was good because the good teaching involved the students well in a good range of activities. The pace of learning, and participation by students, were promoted by the use of individual whiteboards. The students have below average standards of oral competence; written work is of a higher quality.

228. Since the previous inspection, A-level results in business studies have risen; they were well above average in 2004, with students tending to do better than expected on the basis of their GCSE profiles. Scrutiny of work, and observations in lessons, suggest that standards in Year 13 are now average. However, achievement is good in relation to the below average standards at the start of the course for the students concerned. Oral competence is lower than written work would suggest. Numeracy standards are above average, and ICT skills are average. In the Year 13 lesson seen, good teaching was based on a clear picture of how well the students should be doing; assessment was well used at all stages of the lesson. As a result, achievement was good, and the students made good progress in understanding investment appraisal, although lower attainers were sometimes too dependent on the teacher.

229. In a Year 12 lesson, students made insufficient progress because of the narrow range of teaching styles used; they had too few opportunities to take an active part in learning. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was on maternity leave, and temporary leadership arrangements were in place. It is therefore impossible to judge leadership. However, good progress has been made since the previous inspection, with rising standards and generally good achievement as hallmarks.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No work was seen in this curriculum area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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