

INSPECTION REPORT

BEDLINGTONSHIRE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Bedlington, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122360

Headteacher: Mr A D M Wright

Lead inspector: Mr P T Hill

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 3rd December 2004

Inspection number: 269157

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 13 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 893

School address: Palace Road
Bedlington
Northumberland

Postcode: NE22 7DS

Telephone number: 01670 822625

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of
governors: Mr P Ingham

Date of previous
inspection: 18th October 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bedlingtonshire Community High School is an average comprehensive school situated in Bedlington, Northumberland. There are 893 students aged 13 to 18 on roll. Students come from three feeder middle schools and a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Many students live in the immediate vicinity of the school or the surrounding area. The surrounding area has a significant amount of social and economic deprivation and many of the students' families live in stressful circumstances. The school admits a fully comprehensive intake with the vast majority of students being white British.

Fourteen per cent of the students are entitled to free school meals, which is in line with the national average. However, the school recognises this as a consequence of being a 13-18 school and the reluctance of some families to claim for this support. There are 117 students on the special educational needs register and 17 have a Statement of Special Educational Need. These figures are above the national averages. Attainment on entry to the school is below average.

The open access sixth form has grown in recent years and is the same size as most sixth forms nationally. The range of courses is extensive, leading to AS and A-level examinations and a number of accredited vocational courses.

The school has second phase Technology College status, gained the Investors in People award in 2003 for the third time and the Sportsmark award in 2004. It gained a School Achievement Award in 2001 and full Healthy Schools status in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
6642	Mr P T Hill	Lead inspector	Special educational needs
11358	Mrs V A Lamb	Lay inspector	
1622	Mrs L Aers	Team inspector	Media studies
34968	Ms J Griffiths	Team inspector	English
31550	Mrs S Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics
22083	Mrs K Hinton	Team inspector	Science
8070	Mr J Haves	Team inspector	Geography
10275	Mr J Cosgrove	Team inspector	History
16359	Mr J Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education
11765	Mr J McElwee	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
32333	Mr R Lilley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
28955	Mrs C Earlam	Team inspector	Art and design
16890	Mrs M Potter	Team inspector	Religious education, citizenship
8009	Mr J Forsyth	Team inspector	Music
8751	Mr J Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology Engineering
12825	Mr N Carr	Team inspector	Psychology

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	52

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good, effective school** providing a very inclusive and supportive environment for its students. **Good** leadership, together with good teaching and learning and very good relationships, has improved standards overall. Standards of work seen are now in line with the national average overall. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are good with some significant strengths, for example the excellent teamwork of the senior managers.
- This is a very inclusive school with a very good ethos.
- The school has established a very good climate for learning which is having a positive effect on raising attainment.
- The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning.
- The quality of lessons in Year 9 is not consistent, resulting in some unsatisfactory lessons.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Financial management and the use of available resources to improve standards are good.
- Accommodation in science is unsatisfactory.
- Although there is good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) as a subject, the use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Systems for supporting students with special educational needs are good but application is inconsistent in some departments the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	C	C	B	B

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is **good** throughout the school and the overall standards attained are **average**. However, standards were below average in the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, whereas overall standards attained in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above average. Compared with similar schools the GCSE performance was above average. The majority of students have levels of attainment which are below average when they enter the school in Year 9 and attain overall standards which are average by the end of Year 11. This represents good progress. Standards by the end of the sixth form are average overall.

Students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good**. The introduction of citizenship into the school has been very well planned and, as a result, provision is very good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and behave

well in lessons and around the school. Overall attendance figures are just below average but improving.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good education. Teaching is good throughout the school with a significant amount of very good and some excellent teaching. Only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen, mainly in Year 9 where, on occasions, inappropriate behaviour by students, who are not yet accustomed to the ways of the school, disrupts lessons. However, as a result of good teaching overall, supported by very good relationships and classroom and behaviour management, **learning is good** with students making **good progress**. The systems for, and quality of, assessment are good and an area which the school is developing well. The curriculum is **good** overall and is enriched through a good range of additional experiences and activities. Accommodation overall is **satisfactory** but for science is unsatisfactory. The use of ICT across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory** and needs development. The care, support and guidance of students are **good**, and significant and very positive factors in teaching. Partnership with parents is **good** and improving. Links with the community and other local schools are **very good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the school by the headteacher is **very good**. The teamwork between senior managers is **excellent** and a significant factor in the successful running of the school. Managers are very committed to ensuring that the school is highly inclusive and to raising standards for all students. Senior leaders are **very good** at inspiring and motivating staff and students. Governance is **good** with governors very committed to supporting and challenging the school's management. The governing body is knowledgeable and well informed and plays a full part in shaping the direction of the school. However, not all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school's links with parents are **good**. Overall, parents are supportive of the school and are satisfied with its work and are pleased with the recently improved performance and profile of the school. They have no significant overall concerns. Students like coming to school and enjoy lessons. The school council is a very effective and developing forum for students to make their views known. Students value it.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take steps to improve the consistency of learning for some groups in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the school-wide implementation of cross-curricular skills in ICT.
- Ensure that curriculum requirements are met with regard to work-related learning and religious education.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that requirements for collective worship are met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT BEDLINGTONSHIRE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

The sixth form is good and improving. Standards are average overall and above average in art and geography. Students are able to select their courses from a wide range on offer. Teaching is good, enabling students to learn successfully and achieve well. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and the sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers enable students to take significant responsibility for their own learning.
- Leadership and management are good in providing clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations.
- Teaching is good and therefore the majority of students achieve considerable success.
- Professional relationships between the teachers and students are very good.
- Support, advice and guidance for all students are very good.
- Links with other schools and colleges are good.

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	Good in English literature. A-level results in 2004 were average. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Students' very good attitudes help them to achieve well. Good in French. Standards are in line with national averages. Teaching and learning are both good and the subject is very well led and managed.
Mathematics	Good in mathematics. A-level examination results in 2004 were in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are both good and students have very good attitudes to their work.
Science	Good in biology. Students achieve well and attain average standards. Teaching is consistently good. Students are kept well informed about their progress.
Humanities	Good in geography. Students achieve very well because leadership is very good and management and teaching are good. Students' attitudes are very good. Good in psychology. Standards are average and achievement is good. Progress is very good. Teaching and learning are good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory in engineering. Standards are below average, but students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' attitudes are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in art. Standards are rising because of very good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students. Achievement is good and attainment above average. Good in media studies. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are average and achievement is good. Very good in physical education. Students achieve well and standards are in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management are very good.

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

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is very good. Students in the sixth form receive very good support, advice and guidance. Students clearly value the sixth form provision. They believe they were helped to transfer smoothly to post-16 courses and find staff friendly and easily accessible for advice, especially in relation to choice of subjects. They appreciate the emphasis in the sixth form on fulfilling their aspirations and the first-hand guidance they receive at university open days and specific projects organised by school. Arrangements for their welfare are an extension of the pastoral system in the main school and enable them to continue to form trusting relationships with staff, to whom they can turn for help when necessary. Staff with pastoral responsibilities monitor and support the progress of sixth form students very well, in partnership with their parents, colleagues in the main school and outside agencies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. It is led by a very well informed head of sixth form whose aim is to raise standards and students' aspirations. She keeps a close track of all students' progress, taking appropriate action if difficulties start to occur. An effective programme of workshops has been set up to help students plan for their future. Opportunities for students to work with younger students are well organised. The school provides a common room for students, which is a good area for them to meet and engage in discussion, but the head of sixth form is aware that there is a need for better facilities for individual study.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being a part of the sixth form and comment that courses suit their abilities, interest and career aspirations. Induction into the sixth form was considered to be very useful and informative. Students considered their tutors, teachers and the head of sixth form to be extremely supportive and totally trustworthy. They were encouraged by the fact that they were involved in a partnership with their teachers through the review process. All were aware of their target grades and the expectations their teachers had of them. Several students were involved in the mentoring scheme, assisting in lessons with students in the main school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students' achievement is **good** throughout the school and the overall standards attained are **average**. However, standards were below average in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in the overall standards attained in the 2003 GCSE examinations. However, 2004 tests in Year 9 and GCSE results at the end of Year 11 show a clear improvement, with overall grades much nearer to the national average. The majority of students have levels of attainment which are below average when they enter the school in Year 9 and attain standards which are average by the end of year 11. This represents good progress. Standards by the end of the sixth form are average overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well in almost all subjects.
- Inspection evidence shows that there is an upward trend in standards.
- Standards in history are well below average by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Standards in ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9 students' overall attainment as measured in National Curriculum tests for 2004 was in line with the average in English and mathematics and below average in science. There is clear improvement in attainment in Key Stage 3. Standards in ICT and physical education in Key Stage 3 are below average. However, students achieve well in all subjects, with the exception of religious education, which is not taught as a separate subject.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.5 (32.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.9 (34.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.2 (32.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 222 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. At the end of Key Stage 4, when compared with all schools nationally, students' attainment at GCSE/GNVQ in 2004 was below the national average for students gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and average for five or more passes at grades A*-G. As in Key Stage 3, inspection evidence clearly indicated an improvement in attainment, with standards being above average in mathematics, average in English and below average in science. Standards in music are above average and in history are well below average. In all other subjects in Key Stage 4 standards are in line with the national average.

3. In most subjects in Key Stage 4, with the exception of history where it is below average, students are achieving at least satisfactorily. Students achieve very well in music and citizenship, and well in English, mathematics, ICT, art, physical education and modern foreign languages.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	38.0 (42.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95.0 (96.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100.0 (99.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.8 (32.4)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 226 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. This is due to good teaching, especially when support is well used and the good whole school systems that are in place to record progress and set targets are well used. However, the use of support staff is not always well targeted by all departments, despite the structures for ensuring that support is carefully matched to students' needs. The school is aware of this situation and has plans to address it.
5. The trend in results at both key stages is now one of improvement. Inspection evidence clearly indicates that standards are improving, that appropriate targets are being set and that students are making good progress overall as they move through the school. The key skills of numeracy are developing satisfactorily and literacy across the curriculum is developing well in many subjects. Standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum are below average and provision in this area remains unsatisfactory, despite the recent improvements in provision for ICT as a subject.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	88.5 (86.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	18.5 (17.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	192.3 (179.2)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 73 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

6. In 2003, the school's results for AS, A2 and advanced vocational courses were below the national average. At A2, this was mainly due to a lower proportion of students attaining A-B grades than the national figure. The school was successful in ensuring that the great majority of students achieved at least a pass grade. The highest percentage of students obtaining higher grades was in business studies. Students taking physics and chemistry gained the highest percentage of A-B grades, alongside a single candidate in music. The attainment of boys and girls had a similar variation from the national average in 2003, except in mathematics, where female students attained more highly.
7. When national comparisons are available for 2004, sixth form results at the school are again likely to be below average.

8. The results have to be viewed in the context of an open access sixth form. Students are accepted who have below average GCSE grades. As most went on to attain a grade at A2, achievement in 2003 was satisfactory. On the work currently seen in lessons, students in English, mathematics, biology and engineering are achieving in line with their prior attainment. In French, geography, psychology, media studies, physical education and ICT they are making better progress than expected, so their achievement is good. In examples of work seen during the inspection in art, achievement is very good. Overall, in classes now taking place in the sixth form, standards are broadly in line with the national average and achievement is good.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school promotes very good relationships and has established very effective procedures to deal with harassment.
- Attendance is below that of other schools nationally although it is improving.
- There are very good opportunities for students to learn the responsibilities of living in a community.

Commentary

9. The school works hard to develop students' good attitudes to school. All staff have respectful and caring relationships with them and encourage students to get along well together. Relationships in lessons are good overall. Teachers encourage students to share their views and give them feedback and individual support that help build their confidence. Staff provide opportunities for students to help themselves and one another, showing them that they are valued and respected. Students generally respond sensibly to guidance and it is a credit to them that they conduct themselves in a calm and orderly manner in assemblies, at break and at lunchtime, even when not directly supervised by staff. A small minority of students, mainly in Year 9, behave in a way that disrupts their own and others' learning.
10. As a last resort, the school excludes students whose behaviour is seriously unacceptable. Permanent exclusions are low when compared with other schools, but the rate of fixed term exclusions is high. Since the last inspection the school has been working hard to try to reduce exclusions. The school is committed to helping students who have misbehaved to manage their own actions so that they are able to remain in school, without compromising the school's firm stance on ensuring safety and reinforcing good standards of personal conduct. Students say that they feel safe in school as there are few instances of bullying, and that staff respond effectively to them.
11. The school has developed very good procedures to monitor and promote good attendance and works hard to help students and their parents appreciate the opportunities available in school. The well-developed pastoral system ensures that

senior staff focus on attendance and work closely with external agencies to find ways of supporting students whose attendance gives serious cause for concern. The school has recently installed a computerised system to improve recording and monitoring of attendance. A home-school liaison officer has been appointed, to give practical support and guidance to students, and their families, with problems that affect their attendance. Students appreciate the awards given to groups and individuals with the highest attendance and many of those who require individual support try hard to improve. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and, although it is still below national averages, continues to show gradual improvement each year.

12. Students' personal development is good. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility for themselves, for others and for school improvements. Although only a small number of students have formal responsibilities and work alongside staff to achieve them, all students can contribute ideas through the school council. They have a good range of rewards to aim for and take part in many promotions throughout the school year.
13. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well in several subjects, with citizenship and history making particularly strong contributions by raising awareness of the moral, social and cultural responsibilities of life within communities. Weekly assemblies make a good contribution towards all aspects of personal development, focusing positively on the success and image of the school. This promotes ambition and high aspirations amongst students. Assemblies carry powerful messages that enable students to reflect on concepts, values and beliefs and the impact they may have on the lives of themselves and others.

Sixth form

14. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to their work. They are satisfied that they are treated as responsible adults and challenged to do their best. They feel that life in the sixth form has met their expectations. They value the greater responsibility that they are given for their own work and independence although they feel that they lack appropriate facilities for personal study in school. They choose to wear uniform as they feel it gives them a sense of identity within the wider school.
15. Sixth form students have many opportunities to further their own personal development through projects that also help students in the main school. For instance, several students have trained to work as personal supporters for younger students in a variety of situations. Students are actively involved in new developments through the school council and are confident in expressing their views. They run special events such as an annual ball as well as taking part in projects and trips that support their own personal skills and enhance the learning opportunities provided by school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	9.5

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1

National data	7.2
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National data	1.1
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The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	883	157	3
White – any other White background	3		
Mixed – White and Asian	4		
Chinese	2		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' own skills in their subject are good and a strength in the main school and sixth form.
- A good variety of strategies is used to engage students.
- In most cases, tasks are well matched to students' abilities, so that students learn well at their own level.
- The use of homework is satisfactory overall but there is some inconsistency.
- In the sixth form, students know how to improve their work, but this is not always the case in the main school.

Commentary

16. The quality of teaching is good overall. Some outstanding teaching was observed in some subjects, in particular German, mathematics and music. The good teaching across the school leads to good learning and good achievement in most subjects. Exceptions to this were in a small number of lessons in Year 9, where a lack of structure resulted in disruptive behaviour and unsatisfactory learning.
17. Teachers have good subject knowledge. For example, in citizenship, staff are well informed on up-to-date issues and they enable students to extend their knowledge on a range of topics. Teachers have good knowledge of examination requirements. They are skilled in their own area and make good demonstrations of specific techniques, for example in music, art and physical education throughout all years, and design and technology in Year 9. In mathematics, teachers model solutions very well, taking students through the process.
18. Lessons are planned well, and in the majority of cases, tasks are well matched to the ability of students, who are challenged at their own level. A good variety of strategies is used to engage students and extend their learning. This happened particularly successfully where activities were set up in paired or group situations. Many departments prepare resources very well to support the teaching and the activities. This was impressive in modern foreign languages. However, ICT is used as a resource only irregularly.
19. A strong feature of teaching is the use of questioning to help students develop their own thinking, for example in English, mathematics and physical education. This is pleasing, as questioning has been a focus of the school's professional development.
20. The school introduced a new homework policy called 'extended learning' with the aim of making homework more meaningful for the majority of students. This has not been successful and, as a result, the use of homework is inconsistent at present, which parents have also noted. The policy has already been reviewed by governors and is due to be changed.

21. Assessment of students work is satisfactory. The school also has an effective assessment policy, in order to ensure that students are well informed on how to improve their work. This is evident in some subjects, particularly in art. In physical education, students are encouraged to assess their own progress and set targets to improve performance. In English, good assessment arrangements are developing, which track students' progress. However, both within and between departments, marking is inconsistent, and written feedback does not always give suggestions for improvement that are specific and helpful to students.

Sixth form

22. The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good. Teachers use a variety of resources to stimulate thinking and debate. As students come in with a wide range of prior attainment, resources are carefully matched to their abilities, for instance in English. Students are given well-structured opportunities to work independently, for example in ICT and media studies. In geography, students are enabled to prepare for an expedition by carrying out a risk assessment as part of their planning. In French, they are encouraged to give spoken presentations in the language. Students gain in confidence through opportunities such as these. ICT is used well in some of the non-technical subjects, for example physical education.
23. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. The only exception to this is the school-based component of the engineering course in Year 13. The Year 12 students who attend the local college are learning well and appreciate working in an adult environment. In the other vocational course inspected, ICT, there is a strong emphasis on the vocational aspects. In media studies, although not a designated vocational course, students receive a good grounding in practical production work. In art, students' learning is preparing them well for higher education courses in art and design.
24. Teachers have a good knowledge of the examination requirements and prepare students thoroughly. There is a focus on assessment criteria. Peer assessment is used well in mathematics and biology. Overall, written work is marked carefully with good suggestions for improvement. Assessment in the sixth form is good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 137 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (4%)	32 (23%)	69 (50%)	24 (18%)	6 (4%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good** overall. Curriculum enrichment is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory curriculum arrangements for religious education and a daily act of collective worship are not met.
- Vocational courses are increasingly popular with students.
- High quality learning opportunities for sports and community are available and very well used.
- The school offers a good range of additional activities to enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

25. The curriculum has good breadth in the main school, underpinned by a commitment to equality of access for all students. It provides many good opportunities for students to

achieve in academic and vocational courses. It meets the recommended teaching time and all of the statutory requirements with the exception of religious education and a daily act of collective worship.

26. The curriculum in Year 9 is organised into two broad bands, with each of the bands loosely sub-divided into upper and lower bands to cater for students with different ability levels. The senior management team and teachers conduct half-termly reviews to assess the progress of individual students. Schemes of work are planned with feeder middle schools where possible. In design and technology, for example, a transitional unit on teaching food has been planned to assist continuity in learning from Year 8 to Year 9, although there is still an imbalance, as highlighted in the previous report, in the time allocation for the different materials areas. The technology-related subjects, mathematics, science, and design and technology, which together formulate the specialist status of the school, are given due time allowance and recognition including a discrete lesson for teaching ICT.
27. All students also take two languages in Year 9. Personal, health, social and educational development (PHSE) is currently delivered through a well-developed citizenship course, science, drama and physical education and by a 'collapsed' timetable of two periods every half term. The PHSE course is well planned, co-ordinated and monitored by the pastoral heads of year. A period for religious education, mentioned in the last report, has been replaced by a period for teachers' planning.
28. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is very broad and well balanced. Increased flexibility in curriculum design has given the school the opportunity to reduce the total number of GCSE courses in Year 10 and provide more time for English and physical education. A good number of students do both French and German to GCSE level. GCSE applied courses in science, health and social care, and ICT have been introduced to provide students with more vocational opportunities, although the vocational element in the applied sciences course is underdeveloped due to insufficient time allocation. A good alternative individualised curriculum is also available for a small group of students who attend school for some of the time whilst also attending the local college to follow a course in hairdressing or building studies. The National Vocational Qualifications Authority accredits these courses.
29. The school offers a broad and varied range of activities outside of the school day, many of which are planned to complement normal lessons. In technology, for example, enrichment days give students opportunities to work in groups alongside experienced industrialists and business personnel. Several subject areas also offer master classes and extra revision classes for examination preparation. The mathematics department is also extending the curriculum by offering statistics at GCSE. The youth and community and sport provision is extensive and very well used by students and adults in the locality.
30. Students with special educational needs have full access to a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. The curriculum is sufficiently broad, balanced and relevant to their needs. Students with special educational needs are generally well supported within classrooms and follow the same curriculum as their peers. However, there is some variation in the management of support by departments and, although

all departments have a designated person for overseeing provision for special educational needs, this is more effectively managed in some departments than others.

31. The accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory although there are some areas, for example science and history, where accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although there are sufficient computers and other ICT resources to meet the school's needs, access to their use is not always easy and use of ICT across the curriculum and within subjects remains an area for development.
32. The school benefits from the Learning Resource Centre being based on the campus. The school's modern library and some other facilities are housed in the centre. The school makes good use of ICT and some computer-aided design.

Sixth form

Curriculum provision in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of courses is available to students.
- There is increase in take-up in Year 12 of the specialist courses.

Commentary

33. The sixth form has an 'open access' policy for students, demonstrating the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all. The curriculum in the sixth form contains a good breadth of opportunities, catering for many students and generally enabling them to achieve well, although standards are sometimes affected where attainment levels on entry are wide ranging. Statutory requirements for religious education are not met. There is an increase in the take-up of specialist courses in Year 12. These attract a high proportion of Year 11 students at the school and also students from other catchment areas. Many of the options that are followed in Years 10 and 11 continue in the sixth form, even though some courses operate with low numbers.
34. A good range of modules is offered in the sixth form in mathematics, leading to two courses: pure and applied, or pure and statistics. A number of students study French and German to A-level and some begin to study Spanish. Psychology has become a popular course with good numbers going on to study this at university. There are various courses available in engineering at different levels, including a GNVQ course and an NVQ at GCSE level. Standards in the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Engineering level 3 are below national expectations although in Year 12 the AS course has been modified to include experiences in manufacturing at the local further education college. AS and A-level vocational courses are also running in health and social care, leisure and tourism, and ICT, which demonstrates good continuity from Key Stage 4
35. The curriculum is enriched by very good links with, for example, a local further education college, by the youth and community provision, by recreational and sports activities, and by art and design, where students benefit from visits to galleries and a local artist's workshop. A voluntary 'extra' course called community sports leadership has also been introduced into Year 12, which enables students to support teachers in organising sports events for younger students. This is an accredited course at pre-GCSE level and can be studied at a pace controlled by the candidates. Part of the AVCE course in ICT occurs in the Open Learning Centre, which is outside the school and provides an adult environment in which to study. In English, students have opportunities to attend lectures on Shakespeare texts and war literature and to make visits to the theatre. Students studying French are encouraged to go to France during the course and teachers take them to see French language films in Newcastle.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **good** provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety and provides **good** support and guidance. Procedures to seek and act upon students' views are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and welfare are actively promoted.
- Students have very good access to trusted, conscientious adults in school.
- Well-structured induction procedures help children settle into school.

Commentary

36. The school is a very caring community, providing a good level of pastoral care that has a positive impact on achievement. Staff get to know students well and use carefully considered procedures to provide good support and guidance to individuals. The school is outward looking and pro-active in its efforts to meet the varied needs of students.
37. The very good relationships throughout the school are a strong feature of the school's pastoral care. Daily contact with their form tutor helps students develop a trusting relationship with an adult who they can turn to for help. This is supplemented, when necessary, by a strong network of trained personnel with a wide range of knowledge and experience. The roles of support assistants, learning mentors and staff linked to support agencies are very effective features of school life, providing timely support and guidance for individuals and groups of students. A team of youth workers run a drop-in club at lunchtime and provide very good support. Connexions staff offer careers guidance in school, formally and informally, as individual needs arise.
38. Child protection procedures are well established and the school has a trained child protection officer. Appropriate procedures are followed when concerns arise and the school has established very good links with outside agencies. The school has a good health and safety management system. As a mark of their commitment to student safety, senior staff accompany students out of school, to help them pass through a nearby area that gives cause for serious road safety concerns.
39. The school takes an active role in the Healthy Schools Programme and staff and students respond enthusiastically to ideas from associated agencies for highlighting health issues and promoting good practices. This aspect of school life provides students with particularly effective opportunities for personal development, not only through helping them learn about healthy lifestyles but by training students to run promotions, workshops and out-of-school activities to pass on information to other students and families in the local community. Several informal groups are convened to help support individuals with specific needs, often utilising the kindness and skills of students to provide self-help techniques, for instance with others who experience bullying or friendship disputes.
40. The school has developed very good relationships with feeder schools, thus ensuring students move to high school confidently and staff are able to focus their teaching and pastoral support effectively. In particular, the school's work in federation with one middle school is giving staff the opportunity to begin working with future students earlier than usual. Students new to the school are happy that they were helped to get to know the staff and school procedures in good time to settle quickly into their new environment.

Sixth form

41. Students in the sixth form receive very good support, advice and guidance. Students clearly value the sixth form provision. They believe they were helped to transfer smoothly and find staff friendly and easily accessible for advice, especially in relation to choice of subjects. They appreciate the emphasis in the sixth form on fulfilling their

aspirations and the first-hand guidance they receive at university open days and specific projects organised by school. Arrangements for their welfare are an extension of the pastoral system in the main school and enable them to continue to form trusting relationships with staff to whom they can turn for help when necessary. Staff with pastoral responsibilities monitor and support the progress of sixth form students in partnership with their parents, colleagues in the main school and outside agencies.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established **good** partnerships with parents and other schools and colleges. Links with the community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with the community enhance provision for students and provide leisure and educational opportunities for local residents.
- The school has developed an impressive range of formal and informal links with other schools.
- Good procedures are established to support the school's commitment to working in partnership with parents.

Commentary

42. Staff and governors recognise the value of community links in enhancing students' experiences and broadening their horizons and extend this commitment towards the adult community, especially to assist learners in continuing their education as far as possible. The school works hard to find out the needs and wishes of local residents. It also works very closely in partnership with the local education authority to provide youth club facilities, adult education and opportunities for community groups to meet in school. An open learning centre in the town, managed by the school's youth and community department, provides very strong support for community education through teaching essential skills such as literacy and numeracy and providing ICT courses. Adult education classes provide vocational and non-vocational courses on the school premises. In addition, the school manages sports and recreation facilities, including a local swimming pool, for local residents of all ages.
43. The school plays a strategic role in local educational partnerships, enabling staff to extend their own skills and share their expertise with others and increase the educational opportunities available for students. A particularly notable link is the federation with a feeder middle school, assumed at the request of the local education authority. The headteacher provides leadership of that school in partnership with a first school colleague who has responsibility for its day-to-day running. As a team, they have formulated an action plan, leading and supporting all aspects of the school's improvement. Liaison and support amongst the staff of both schools are strong, with cross phase teaching taking place in English, physical education, languages and drama lessons. Special projects are run in partnership with middle schools to help students transfer smoothly to high school, and to provide master classes for groups of students. Good partnerships enable the school to provide an evening youth club for students who live outside the immediate area. Good links are established with colleges and

universities to help students embark on further learning and provide mentoring and experience for trainee teachers.

44. The school is committed to working in partnership with parents and has made improvements as a result of formal and informal consultations. The school has an open-door policy and senior staff hold a monthly drop-in session for parents to raise queries and concerns. The school provides parents with a good range of information to keep them up to date on events and new developments and frequently contacts parents directly by post to ensure they receive the information they need. Annual reports provide good detail for parents on their child's personal development and progress in each subject. Staff try hard to work closely with parents of students experiencing difficulties, to seek their views and provide appropriate support. Parents are generally supportive of the school and its efforts on behalf of their child, but too many still do not ensure that their child attends school regularly. A supportive parent teacher association is well involved in school life and has recently raised funds that have helped improve provision in music and art.

Sixth form

45. The school provides parents with a good range of information on how well students are progressing in the sixth form. There are opportunities to meet with staff, together with their son or daughter, to discuss issues and find out about further progress needed and the next steps necessary for progression to higher education. Pastoral staff involve parents constructively, should their child need additional support or guidance during their time in the sixth form.
46. Partnerships with other educational establishments and with the wider community are very good in the opportunities that they provide for students in the sixth form. These include residential trips to university to sample student life and find out about courses, trips to theatres and art galleries and field trips to support practical assignments.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **good**. Governance is **good**, although not all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school leaders have a very inclusive approach and a commitment to raising standards.
- Teamwork between senior managers is excellent.
- The management team aims to improve teaching and learning through a well-planned approach to staff development.
- Governors know their school very well but have not ensured that certain statutory requirements have been met.

Commentary

47. The headteacher provides good leadership. The teamwork within the senior management team is excellent and together they provide exceptionally good role

models for staff and students. They are very strongly committed to inclusivity, and demonstrate this by example. Planning has a clear focus on raising achievement, especially through improving the quality of teaching and learning. Plans are regularly reviewed and updated. Each department is linked to a member of the senior management team, and these lines of communication contribute effectively to both monitoring and support within the school.

48. The governing body at Bedlingtonshire Community High School has a good working relationship with the school, in particular with the headteacher and senior management team. Governors ensure that they have a good knowledge of the school, and they are well aware of strengths and weaknesses, for instance in subject areas. They are used to carrying out their own surveys, when they come into school to interview staff and students to report on, for example, the way the homework policy is being implemented, the system for performance management, and procedures for students with special educational needs. The reports produced make clear judgements and recommendations. Governors are aware of the problems in recruitment, but are not prepared to make appointments that might be unsuitable. This has led to the current situation in religious education, where statutory requirements are not being met. However, governors have been able to appoint an assistant headteacher from next term to address the statutory duty of work-related learning. The recent requirement of citizenship in the curriculum has been very effectively implemented.
49. Governors support the links with one of the middle schools in the town through a federation arrangement, as they feel it will be beneficial in the longer term. They have a particularly inclusive vision for the school, and are pleased to see the impact of the open sixth form, where the staying-on rate is rising. Governors see the ethos of the school as one of its strengths and they value such aspects as work in the community, or the work of older students with younger students, as well as the improving standards of attainment.
50. The governors work hard for the school. They support it as well as providing challenge. The quality of governance is good overall, notwithstanding the statutory requirements of religious education and work-related learning that are not fully met at the moment, the fact that a collective act of worship is provided on some days but not all, and a few details of information that have been omitted from the school's prospectus.
51. The quality of management is good. The efficient collection of data on students' attainment and progress is now being used throughout the school in order to focus on raising achievement. Objectives for performance management link well with the school's targets and priorities. The school is committed to continually improving teaching and learning and has established a weekly session for departments to plan and to share good practice, and a cross-curricular teaching and learning group also meets once a month. The principles of the national strategies are well embedded. Staff volunteer for a programme of joint observations, which is widening across the school. Some issues of health in the area are seen as a barrier to achievement, so the school has become a Healthy School as well as gaining Sportsmark and Investors in People awards.

52. Good overall provision is made for supporting students with special educational needs. The department is well organised and managed, with the head of department providing very good leadership for the teachers and support staff in her charge. The school system of having an identified teacher with responsibility for special needs within each department is good. However, not all departments are effective in using the support provided for students with special needs.
53. The school contributes well to initial teacher training. Newly qualified teachers are receiving good induction through a whole-school programme, and their departments give good advice and support on a more informal basis.
54. The approach to financial management is good and the school now has a healthy balance. Spending is closely linked to the school improvement plan. Departments follow the same principles in their development plans. Given that students' achievement is good, value for money is good.
55. Since the last inspection, a number of key issues have been addressed, although the senior management team is clear about the areas and subjects that still need attention. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have risen steadily, especially in GCSE results at age 16. Attendance has improved, although it is slightly below average. Management at all levels is becoming skilled in self-evaluation and there is now a clear link between staff development and raising achievement. The school is committed to the developing federation with the middle school and believes it has the power to raise attainment through these links, which already include shared teaching in some subjects.

Sixth form

56. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. It is led by a very well informed head of sixth form whose aim is to raise standards and students' aspirations. She analyses data very well and keeps a close track of all students' progress, taking appropriate action if difficulties start to occur. She has set up an effective programme of workshops to help students plan for their future. Assemblies cover religious issues and other current affairs. Work with charities is promoted, which students often initiate themselves. Opportunities for students to work with younger students are well organised. The school provides a common room for students, which is a good area for them to meet and engage in discussion, but the head of sixth form is aware that there is a need for better facilities for individual study.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,179,529	Balance from previous year	134,094
Total expenditure	3,188,043	Balance carried forward to the next	125,580
Expenditure per pupil	3,582		

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Work-related learning

Overall, provision in work-related learning is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no clear leadership of the work-related curriculum. Management of work-related learning lacks co-ordination with other aspects of the curriculum.
- Work experience is well established for all students.
- Vocational courses provide further opportunities to learn in the workplace.

Commentary

57. Leadership and management of work-related learning is unsatisfactory. Whilst different work-based and work-related activities currently operate across the curriculum, there is no overall day-to-day co-ordination to ensure opportunities are maximised by all students. However, the school has taken action to address this by appointing a new member of the leadership team with specific responsibility for work-related learning. This takes effect from January 2005.
58. No policy or programme is in place in line with new statutory requirements. Careers education and guidance provision is generally satisfactory. In Year 9, students focus on the world of work through the use of the Kudos database as part of the ICT curriculum. A virtual travel agency is also used as part of the ICT curriculum to develop work-related learning. The 'Trident project' and the 'Be Real' game resources are used in Years 10 and 11 tutorial work and as part of the PSHE programme to prepare students for work experience. This is delivered mostly by tutors and is at least satisfactory. Visits to local businesses and guest speakers from the armed forces, health and social services, further education and industry are used to learn about different employment opportunities. All students take part in a one-day conference focusing on Key Stage 4 achievement and the world of work. Although there are some good examples of work-related learning within some subjects it is not yet evident in all subjects and requires much more planning.
59. Work experience is firmly established and the school has a range of business and industry links that ensures all students participate in a two-week placement in the workplace. Students evaluate the success of their placement and some monitoring takes place *in situ* during the work placements. For a few students, for whom aspects of the curriculum may be unsuitable, extended work experience placements are established.
60. The vocational curriculum has expanded to include courses in health and social care, ICT, science, and travel and tourism in Key Stage 4 and English and engineering for sixth form students. The vocational element of the science course is limited and requires a greater emphasis on applying science to the work place. A few students study NVQ courses in hairdressing and building studies at a local further education college. Other opportunities to experience types of work include mini-enterprise activities in Key Stage 4, and sixth form students acting as mentors to help younger students with their learning. Further experience for sixth form students is provided through the 'Trident Gold project'.

61. Partnership agreements with the Connexions service are at a rudimentary stage. Representatives from the Connexions service, school, local college and industry have met regularly to plan and review provision. However, it is clear from minutes of these meetings that this aspect of the curriculum lacks co-ordination and overall management. There is no governor representation in these meetings.

Careers education and guidance (CEG)

Provision in careers education and guidance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience is well established for all students.

Commentary

62. The CEG programme has recently been matched with the new national framework introduced in 2004 and, although not fully completed, an outline programme of careers education is in place, including access to personal advisers from the Connexions service. A variety of activities is planned to allow students to visit careers conventions, attend work-related presentations, consider their own learning, prepare personal statements, take part in a work placement and accrue records of achievement.
63. CEG and Connexions staff are located together in a CEG library. Students have access to computers and video during lunchtimes to research post-16 opportunities and higher education courses. Sixth form students can access these facilities at any time. Connexions personal advisers target their work towards those not attending school regularly, providing them with a full assessment of need and an individual programme of support. In addition they support the CEG co-ordinator in facilitating interviews for sixth form students seeking advice on higher education courses.
64. Leadership and management of CEG are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only a limited amount of time to co-ordinate the programme across the whole school and the training of tutors and other support staff is minimal.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students progress well and, at the end of Year 11, their achievement is good.
- There is an improving trend in standards in Years 9 and 11.
- Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace, which leads to good learning.
- Students demonstrate good attitudes to learning, which ensures they make good progress.
- Some students do not know the level at which they are working or what to do to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT.

Commentary

65. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. In the 2004 Key Stage 3 tests students made good progress with 76 per cent achieving at least a level 5. The proportion of students gaining an A*-C GCSE grade in GCSE examinations in English was below average for both boys and girls. This indicates good achievement when their performance at Key Stage 3 is taken into account. Standards in current work seen were in line with what is typical and this indicates good achievement. More students are entered for GCSE examinations in both English language and English literature than nationally and the majority achieve a pass grade. Girls perform better in English and English literature but the difference between the performance of boys and girls in both subjects is less than the difference reported nationally. In both subjects students perform better when compared with their performance in all other subjects together
66. The quality of teaching is good, and often very good. Teachers plan carefully and use a wide range of strategies to encourage students in their learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to ask probing questions, which helps students develop their own thinking. Very good learning was seen with older students of middle and lower ability where teachers provided tasks which were well matched to students' abilities. These groups, including students with special educational needs, are supported in their learning with a good range of resources to help them access the curriculum. Relationships between students and teachers are good and contribute to a good learning atmosphere.
67. Students have good attitudes towards learning. They persevere with difficult tasks and work well in paired and group situations. Good learning takes place during class discussions when students express themselves well and listen carefully to the views and opinions of others. Some students, however, need support in expressing their

views in a more extensive and formal fashion. Students' reading skills are in line with national expectations and these have a positive impact on learning. Students write in a wide range of styles for different purposes and for different audiences, but the work of middle ability students is sometimes marred by lack of accuracy and weak presentational skills. The department is developing good assessment arrangements to track students' progress but marking is inconsistent. As a result, students do not always know what they have achieved and what they should do to improve. There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT.

68. Leadership provided by the head of department is good. The newly appointed head of English has a strong strategic vision. The management of the department is also good and the new leadership team leads a group of good, committed teachers. Long and medium-term planning for both key stages is refined and this has added clarity to what students should learn. Systems to track students' performance are in place but further work needs to be done in this area to ensure that students fully understand what they have achieved. There are procedures for teachers to share good practice through observing each other at work. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection as all the key issues have been addressed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Standards in literacy in the school are in line with standards nationally. A senior member of staff leads on literacy across the curriculum using the National Key Stage 3 Strategy materials. Good progress has been made in this area. There is a focus on literacy objectives for each year group and the use of key words. Good practice to develop students speaking skills is evident in art, geography and design and technology. In mathematics key vocabulary is introduced very effectively to ensure that students pronounce words correctly and fully understand their meanings.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed.
- Over half of students continue to study a language in Key Stage 4 despite low standards on entry.
- Teaching and learning are good overall. There were examples of excellent teaching.
- The provision for students with special educational needs and those with talent for language learning is variable and hinders their progress.
- The pronunciation and intonation of many students are poor.
- There are insufficient opportunities to develop higher level speaking and writing skills.
- The provision for social and cultural development of students is good.
- There are too few opportunities for students to use ICT.

Commentary

70. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are below the national average. However, given that standards on entry to the school are often significantly below the

national expectation and that large numbers of students continue to study languages in Key Stage 4, attainment overall is satisfactory. All students study German as a second foreign language in Year 9, and many opt to continue with German as their language in Key Stage 4. A good number choose to continue with two languages to GCSE. Although results in German have been lower than those in French, the gap is narrower. German has been introduced in the middle schools and students seen in a Year 8 class have made very good progress in the three months they have been learning the language.

71. Achievement in lessons in both French and German is good overall. The achievement of students with special educational needs is variable, particularly in Year 9. Regular assessment in all four attainment targets allows teachers to measure students' progress and to plan for improvement. The best teaching incorporates strategies to help students improve. Achievement of some groups of high attaining students is very good. Marking is generally helpful. There is clear evidence from exercise books that students make good progress through Year 9, and this was reflected in lessons observed.
72. Teaching and learning are good overall. There were examples of excellent teaching. Generally, insufficient time is devoted to developing writing skills and linking these to the other attainment targets. In some classes, students are not challenged to write from memory in order to encourage accuracy and independence. Whilst there are sensible strategies in place, support is not always withdrawn when it is unnecessary. Similarly there were few examples of students speaking fluently and at length.
73. In Key Stage 4 teaching is never less than satisfactory; in German it is very good. The best teaching is characterised by insistence on accuracy, patience and allowing students thinking time to formulate their answers. There is a varied repertoire to engage all learning styles and good planning builds in progression so that the class leaves with a clear sense of achievement. Some teachers use the target language very effectively, and good use of the overhead projector, flashcards, and other homemade materials helps them to sustain its use. Students in these classes, even those with very low prior attainment, have very well developed listening skills. Behaviour and attitude in these lessons are very good. Some teachers are less confident that the students can cope with a high level of French or German and switch to English when it is not necessary. A very few students try to use the language to their teacher but only in short phrases. Pronunciation and intonation are often poor, especially in French, where students have weak understanding of the link between the sound and spelling. Greater emphasis is being placed on the teaching of grammar and this is improving students' understanding of how the languages work and consequently on their ability to create new language. Relationships between teachers and students are usually very good, and in some cases there is a very professional working relationship. Teachers are preparing students well for the GCSE and there is an impressive bank of resources to help students to prepare for all aspects of the examination.
74. Both leadership and management of the department are very good. The subject leader shows vision and determination to sustain improvement and teachers work hard to provide a positive experience of language learning. The involvement with the middle schools is also helping achieve parity of outcomes between German and French.

75. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teachers are paying more attention to development of speaking and writing skills, with evident success, but more work still remains to be done in this area. Although the department has a wide range of ICT-based resources, opportunities for integrating ICT into lessons are irregular. Consequently ICT has not yet had any significant impact on learning and teaching. Provision for the social and cultural development of the students is very good. There are regular trips to France and Germany, both well subscribed, and many students show curiosity about the countries whose languages they are learning. Participation of sixth form students in lessons in Key Stage 4 is an excellent way of encouraging students to consider taking their study further and to provide role models.

Example of Outstanding Practise

In a Year 9 German group excellent teaching helps a group of students with low prior attainment to surpass their potential.

In a Year 9 German class, the students are learning how to describe different types of dwelling and their location in the town and country. The class contains a large number of boisterous boys, but the teacher manages, with sympathetic insistence, to suppress any restlessness and to lead them through the carefully planned stages of the lesson. She uses a variety of strategies to help the class remember words, their spelling and pronunciation. She gives a clear sense of purpose to the lesson. Response to questions is very positive and lots of hands are in the air; some boys show great delight when they achieve. They are encouraged to work out the meaning of longer phrases through deduction and thus their retention of the new language is more secure because they have learnt it by themselves. They successfully tackle a very difficult listening test and the teacher even manages to get them to predict the words they will hear in the test. They are kept on task for a whole hour and, despite their low prior attainment, make excellent progress and the impact on their general literacy is significant.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average and achievement is good.
- Achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.
- Teaching and learning are good and are supported by good quality assessment.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Most students have very good attitudes to learning.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning in mathematics is restricted due to access to resources.
- In a minority of lessons students disrupt and reduce the pace of learning for others.

Commentary

76. Standards attained in the national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were below those found nationally. Results in national tests in 2004 were average. Standards attained in lessons and in the sample of work are average. Students' written work is neatly presented with full solutions and method shown. Students benefit from lessons broken

down into episodes that they can digest and as a result they move from below national average at age 11 to average at aged 14 with achievement being good.

77. By the end of Year 11 in 2003 the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C at GCSE was below average. Results in 2004 were much higher and were above the national average as are standards attained by students in lessons and in the sample of work seen. Achievement is good as a result of the high expectations of teachers and the generally positive response of students.
78. The good achievement of students is a direct result of the quality of teaching that is good and often very good. A significant strength of the teaching is teachers' knowledge of mathematics, which is very good. In planning lessons, teachers select suitable teaching strategies to provide variety and to engage students. In one practical lesson in Year 9, average attaining students took pleasure in seeing their two-dimensional nets become animated three-dimensional models. Teachers model solutions very well and their example is followed by students in their working. Almost all lessons involve periods of interactive work, where students are encouraged to demonstrate their reasoning and to ask questions to clarify their thinking. There is a strong emphasis placed on the correct use of technical terminology and correct phrasing of answers. Teachers' own questioning reflects the quality of their subject knowledge as they guide students through a series of explorations linking one idea to another. An example of this was a Year 10 class, who initially considered graphs of straight lines and their features, then transformations of these graphs and the effect of the transformation on the equations of the lines. This was then extended into work on the graphs and equations of quadratic curves under various transformations. Students' enjoyment of the challenge of this lesson was a positive factor contributing to their learning. Teachers support students by creating lessons in which students' contributions are valued and celebrated. Their use of praise motivates students and their encouragement gives students confidence to answer questions. Relationships are generally very good.

Example of Outstanding Practise

In one outstanding lesson in Year 10, excellent collaborative working enabled students to clarify their thinking of the application of Pythagoras' theorem to new contexts. Expectations were high and students worked with interest on the tasks. A key feature of the lesson was the way in which students' self-assessment was used to influence the pace of the lesson with students opting for the additional challenges when they felt ready to do so. The high levels of achievement reached were exemplified when towards the end of the lesson one boy explained how he had used Pythagorean triples to predict the co-ordinates of points a fixed distance from a given fixed point without the aid of drawings.

79. There are inconsistencies across the department in the amount and quality of written feedback given to students.
80. In a small minority of lessons some students cause disruption that diverts the teacher's attention. This behaviour is generally efficiently managed by the teacher, but as a consequence, the pace of learning for other students is reduced. Most students have very good attitudes to learning and work with concentration and effort.
81. The department is well led and managed by a leader who is focused on student achievement. The mathematics department work well as a team and are very supportive of each other. There is a very good match of staffing to the needs of the

curriculum. Self-evaluation has led to the identification of actions that include the rewriting of the schemes of work. The scheme relating to students in Years 10 and 11 provides guidance at two levels but is not backed up by indications of timescale, methods and links to the school's resources. Opportunities for using and applying mathematics and for the use of ICT are not clear in all schemes of work. The use of ICT to support students' learning in mathematics is restricted due to some limitations of access and limited resources, especially software. Students do use ICT to present findings and graphs when doing mathematics coursework. The department has enhanced the learning environment in the mathematics classrooms and nearby corridors with good quality displays aimed at all abilities.

82. Improvement since the last inspection is good with increased standards of attainment and issues relating to teaching addressed. Problem solving remains an area to be developed further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. Standards of competence in mathematics are satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Students use mathematical skills appropriately in other subjects such as interpreting pie charts in citizenship in Year 11, using statistical data and graphs in history and manipulating decimals and percentages linked to business profits in geography in Year 9. There has been development of numeracy across the curriculum, but as yet this has not resulted in written guidance for staff to refer to.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved in 2004 and are close to national averages.
- There is a good collaborative ethos amongst members of the department.
- Some aspects of teaching are good and are consistent across almost the whole of the department.
- Laboratory accommodation and access to ICT are poor and detract from the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

84. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average and below those for similar schools. This is partly explained by staffing difficulties at one of the feeder middle schools. This has seriously affected students' learning. However, achievement during Year 9 is satisfactory, although there is not enough good teaching to fully support all students' learning.
85. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were significantly below national averages. However standards have improved in 2004. There was a significant improvement in the double award examination results. Overall standards are close to national

averages, although progress from Year 9 is only just satisfactory, so further improvement is clearly needed.

86. High attaining students have a good understanding of abstract ideas, such as molecular structures, and can apply their understanding in new contexts. Many middle attaining students understand practical aspects of science, such as the function of everyday electrical components, but are not confident in the use of abstract ideas, such as the use of formulae for electrical calculations. The lowest attaining students similarly develop understanding of practical examples, but often lack the vocabulary and confidence to put their understanding into fluent explanations. Students' understanding of scientific enquiry processes is generally underdeveloped and GCSE coursework is of too low a standard. In a few lessons standards are brought down by students' lack of interest and motivation. The introduction of applied science in Years 10 and 11 is helping to address this and standards in lessons are benefiting from the nature of the course.
87. Teaching overall is good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9. Nearly all lessons start with a good activity that quickly gets all students involved in the content of the lesson. Most teachers' explanations are clear and readily understood. Well-chosen practical activities often help students to understand abstract ideas and interesting teacher demonstrations are very effective. Usually there is a sequence of activities that keep up the pace of the lesson but rarely does the teacher make the main learning points explicit at either the start or end of the lesson. School test results are well used to monitor students' progress but marking and feedback for improvement are not well enough used to be helpful to students.
88. Leadership and management provided by the two joint heads of department are good. Through a period of unstable staffing the department has held together as a strong team and new staff are being well integrated. Some aspects of recent training are being well used in lessons. Systematic monitoring of teaching has just begun and will contribute to further improvement. Detailed evaluation of GCSE results has been used to modify the curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The department now needs to develop a clear vision for science and to raise standards through extending recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum. Laboratory accommodation is very dated with some rooms too small and others in need of immediate repair. Access to computers and other ICT equipment is inadequate for current requirements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well on the GNVQ ICT course.
- Most teaching and learning is good.
- Good links exist with the feeder middle schools.
- Cross-curricular delivery of ICT is inconsistent and as a result unsatisfactory overall.
- In a minority of lessons there is insufficient structure, pace and challenge.

Commentary

89. Students' attainment on entry to Year 9 is below the national average. By the end of Year 9 it is still a little below. Teacher assessment of National Curriculum levels is over-generous.
90. By the end of Year 11 standards have risen and students' attainment is around national expectations in the intermediate GNVQ course.
91. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is no more than satisfactory, partly because students receive only one hour a week of discrete ICT and the use of ICT across the curriculum is inconsistent. Good liaison with the three feeder middle schools has improved curricular continuity. The new ICT Sample Teaching Units have been used well to provide this continuity. Students are able to understand basic spreadsheet models and can use simple formulae to calculate profit and loss in an organisation.
92. By the end of Year 11, achievement on the GNVQ option course is good. Students are able to produce presentations suitable for a particular audience with good quality content. Some students are creating hyperlinks and multimedia elements in their presentations. For non-GNVQ students there is no discrete ICT on the timetable. Although these students get some good ICT experiences in a few subjects, the delivery of cross-curricular ICT is not organised formally enough to ensure consistency for all students, neither do these students receive any accreditation for their work in ICT.
93. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Most lessons are well prepared and presented, engaging students' interest and resulting in good application of effort. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, as are relationships in class. Students with special educational needs are well supported, enabling them to make good progress. Students show a generally positive attitude to their work. In a minority of lessons in Year 9, a lack of structure leads to noisy behaviour and progress is limited.
94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. An assistant headteacher is currently the subject leader. The school recognises that the staffing of the department is not ideal and plans to improve this are in place. Documentation is clear and up to date. Action plans have appropriate priorities. Computer resources are above national target levels and work reliably, though peripherals and software are not up to the same standard.
95. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with the introduction of successful courses, improved attainment and new specialist staff and has maintained and improved hardware and software resources.

ICT across the curriculum

96. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is inconsistent and overall unsatisfactory. Subject departments have varying degrees of access to ICT resources and the use of ICT to support learning in subjects is inconsistent. This is due to the deployment of resources, not a shortfall in computers. Audits of provision have been undertaken

recently and plans are in place to improve the structure and monitoring of the ICT learning activities available to students. Students' general ICT skills are satisfactory. They log onto the network confidently and can select and use a range of software competently. Staff are generally competent and confident in their use of ICT but there is a need to provide more focused training for teachers in making effective use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. There is a lot more work to be done to maximise the impact of ICT resources on learning in the subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and management ensure staff and students receive good support.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and present information clearly.
- In a few lessons there is insufficient challenge in oral work.
- Assessment procedures in Year 9 are not sufficiently robust.
- There is good guidance in examination requirements in Years 10 and 11.
- The limited time in Year 9 reduces opportunities to enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

97. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate standards were above average, which is not confirmed by this inspection. In 2003, standards achieved in the GCSE examination were well below the national average. In 2004 standards in GCSE were slightly higher. Prolonged staff absence and late changes of coursework requirements by the examination board adversely affected the overall achievement of this latter group.
98. On entry to the school, students' standards of work are below average. Through good teaching and learning, standards improve to be broadly average by the end of Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are below average. However, achievement is satisfactory, as students meet targets based upon their prior attainment. Whilst teaching is good, learning is satisfactory, because about half this cohort have limited skills in literacy that impact adversely upon rates of progress.
99. Most students in Year 9 quickly adapt to their new school environment and work hard in class. The more able students write accurately and reach valid conclusions when comparing contrasting environments. They understand how climate affects economic activity and how human interventions impact upon the environment. In a study about Japan, they use data effectively to describe problems and solutions of urbanisation. Most students are able to identify how physical and economic factors influence the location of specific industries. Students with special educational needs achieve well because of effective class teacher support. Teaching and learning are good overall. Work is carefully planned and all staff have a secure understanding of the subject. Relationships are good, with most students behaving well and demonstrating positive attitudes to learning.

100. Students in Year 11 have positive attitudes towards learning, relationships are very good and students work hard. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject, present information carefully and use resources effectively. They provide good guidance to students about examination requirements. However, they do not always challenge students' thinking rigorously, so that restricted verbal answers are too easily accepted as being good. As a result, in written work, a significant proportion of students do not write in enough detail, because they have not internalised learning to a sufficient depth. For example, in studying settlements, the higher attaining students write effectively to provide detailed information; they interpret data well and analyse differing factors that impact upon population distribution. However, other students provide information but do not interrogate it adequately to identify differing arguments for and against suggested urban development.
101. The quality of leadership is good. There is a clear determination to raise standards. All staff receive good support, especially newly qualified teachers, who benefit from very good guidance. As a result teaching in the main school is consistently good, with some very good teaching being observed. Management is good. The department is efficiently run, with all appropriate procedures in place, regular meetings and careful budgeting.
102. The curriculum is satisfactory, though its development is restricted in Year 9 through time constraints. It promotes numeracy well and the use of ICT has improved since the previous inspection. The promotion of literacy skills is too narrow. Assessment procedures in Year 9 do not give a sufficiently accurate picture of standards achieved. This masks subsequent achievement in Years 10 and 11. The quality of staffing is good; accommodation and resources are satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results in the GCSE examinations have been consistently well below the national average.
- Achievement of students in Year 9 is good.
- The students display good attitudes to their work.
- The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory and the effects of long-term absence have been disadvantageous.
- The present team of teachers, including temporary staff, are doing a satisfactory job in difficult conditions.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Access to computers is very limited.

Commentary

103. By the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of students is close to national expectations and this represents good overall achievement in the light of their

attainment on entry to the school, their brief time in the school and a relatively short time allocation for lessons.

104. By the end of Year 11 the attainment of the majority of the students is consistently well below national averages in GCSE examinations and is below their attainment in other subjects. Although there is evidence that history attracts more low attaining students than some other subjects, this represents unsatisfactory achievement in the light of their recorded prior attainment. There has been no improvement in examination results since the last inspection.
105. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books in inspection week, under the present teaching team, is better than the examination results would imply and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, particularly in Year 9. The students have less well developed historical skills of interpretation and source evaluation, but two good lessons which tried to address this weakness were observed. Students also have some literacy weaknesses that need addressing. Provision to develop students' skills in ICT is undeveloped and access to specialist facilities is difficult. Students have sufficient numeracy skills to cope with the necessary statistics, graphs and charts involved in the subject matter. Students co-operate well with teachers but are often too dependent upon them. Whilst students with special educational needs make appropriate progress with the help of modified materials and some in-class support, the lessons are often pitched at the middle ranges and present less challenge to the gifted and talented students. The history courses make a satisfactory contribution to citizenship and to the moral, social and cultural development of the students.
106. During this inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and two lessons were good. The present teaching team includes an acting head of department, a recently qualified teacher and a newly qualified teacher who is on supply. Their planning, pace and enthusiasm are all at least satisfactory. They are doing a satisfactory job in difficult circumstances and in unsatisfactory accommodation which has no connection to the ICT network. Assessment is generally accurate but targets are missed. Teachers have not yet been able to improve the very low GCSE marks in Year 11, which were noted as a key issue during the last inspection.
107. A major reason for the unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection is the long-standing unsatisfactory situation in respect of the leadership and management of the department. This has been caused by some unfortunate long-term staffing difficulties which have had two adverse consequences for the provision of history. Firstly, particular groups of students have had a succession of different teachers and an interruption to the continuity and progression of their learning. Secondly, the department has lacked the necessary stability and guidance in its efforts to improve its standards as required by the previous inspection report.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Commentary

108. There is no evidence on which to make a judgement on students' standards and achievement. Teaching time is not allocated to this subject. References to religious traditions are used as might be expected to illustrate topics in citizenship lessons such as 'Multicultural Britain' and 'Communities and Identities'. However, a curriculum to teach the local religious education agreed syllabus has not been prepared to ensure that provision meets the religious education entitlement of all students. The school is, therefore, not meeting statutory requirements in the basic curriculum. In the previous inspection report religious education was explicitly embedded in the school's curriculum and provision was judged as good overall.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good and provide good direction for the work of the department.
- A team of specialist teachers is committed to the policies and practices of the department.
- Computer-aided design and computer-assisted manufacture (CAD/CAM) are underused.
- There is an imbalance in the curriculum for Year 9 students and planning for progression in learning needs further development from Year 9 onwards.

Commentary

109. By the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations. Students' progress is greatly assisted by the use of booklets, which contain planned activities leading to the completion of a project. These are carefully managed and assessed by the teachers, although in the planning, there are no clear references to the National Curriculum statements or progression in learning.

110. Standards overall in Year 11 are average. When compared with those of recent years, there are improvements in standards at GCSE examination level in most of the material areas, especially in food and textiles technology. There are also signs of improvements in electronics and graphics products. The wooden box project for Year 10 students in resistant materials is beginning to raise standards of making, although in Year 11, students' modelling skills, when working in cardboard, are underdeveloped. In some areas there is insufficient use of ICT to support the development of design skills and CAD/CAM are significantly underused as a strategy to raise standards.

111. Teaching in Year 9 ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Where teaching is very good, teachers conduct practical demonstrations skilfully in their specialised area. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is either satisfactory or good across the materials areas. With the exception of food technology, where students learn how to develop sensory analysis skills, not enough use is generally made of existing products and exemplar materials to raise students' awareness of the standards expected.

112. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department and the second in charge work harmoniously. Together they lead a newly appointed team to develop corporate strategies for making further progress, particularly in teaching and learning, and contribute to whole departmental policies and practices. A broad choice of courses is available to students at GCSE level, supported by specialist teachers. Schemes of work and planning documents are in place for all areas, although in Year 9 students still do not receive a balanced curriculum experience, as was mentioned in the previous report. The department needs to improve its lesson planning by making references to the National Curriculum statements and identifying where and how students' learning progresses. Accommodation is very good in the

newly refurbished food technology rooms. Overall the accommodation is spacious, with all material areas being situated close together.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- Standards at GCSE level continue to improve, with many examples of high achievement.
- The achievement of the majority of students is very good, especially in drawing, painting and ceramics.

Commentary

113. GCSE results have continued to improve in recent years and are now around the national average. The number of students attaining grades A*-B is in line with the national average. This represents high achievement. Art is a popular subject and the numbers taking art and design to GCSE is above the national average. Achievement for the majority of students is very good. They make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 because of the well-structured curriculum and good teaching.

114. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment. In Year 9 the strong emphasis on teaching drawing skills results in high standards of work using high quality coloured pencils, pen and wash and pastels. Students can use tone, pattern and texture effectively in their close studies of vegetables. They are able to mix and apply paint with care, choosing colours and blending tones to show the planes of the face, for example in their Cubist portraits. They learn to use relief construction techniques in the African mask project; and are able to build upon and extend this skill in later years.

115. In Year 10, students hand-build large ceramic sculptures developed from their studies of shells, using incised and applied decoration with a variety of textured finishes. They work confidently and with enjoyment, taking pride in their work. Other students following the creative textiles course experiment with colour and texture in felt making, mixed media, collage, silk painting and quilting. Textile students have benefited from working with an artist in residence, investigating light and structure. The direct teaching of skills and techniques in both two and three-dimensional work, with opportunities for consolidation, leads to some very high standards of making from the most able students.

116. Teaching is consistently good and often very good. It is characterised by high expectations, direct one-to-one tuition, demonstration of techniques and positive feedback. This enables all students to make good progress. They are inspired and encouraged to improve and refine their work by the many examples of excellent work displayed in the department and around the school. The curriculum is broad and provides good progression in learning. Assessment procedures to examination level are good and students are aware of how they might improve their grades. In Year 9 this is less well established and understanding of National Curriculum levels is not yet

embedded into practice. There are some structured opportunities for students to discuss their own and others' artwork.

117. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear educational direction for the subject and good teamwork. Management of resources is very good, and the use of good quality materials has a positive effect on the standard of work. There are not enough computers and dedicated art software within the department and this means that there are few opportunities for students to use digital media creatively.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Lessons are well planned.
- Good use is made of practical activity.
- Schemes of work are incomplete.
- The use of ICT is inadequate, particularly for Key Stage 3.

Commentary

118. Standards in music are average by Year 9 and slightly above average by Year 11. As a result of past difficulties, previous examination results have often been poor, with small groups being entered. For instance, in 2003 only 20 per cent of those entering achieved A*-C grades, which is well below the national average. However, the new head of department, appointed in September 2003, has brought stability and, as a result, standards have clearly begun to rise. For instance, the inherited small cohort of eight Year 11 students achieved 100 per cent A*-C grades in 2004. The present Year 10 and Year 11 cohorts of 22 and 24 students respectively show, by their numbers and in the quality of their work, that standards are improving significantly. At Key Stages 3 and 4, key skills are being addressed in such a way that achievement in lessons is very good. This is an aspect that the department should continue to develop. Students with special educational needs achieve well, with one or two achieving excellence. It is the department's pro-active policy regarding inclusion that is producing such good results.

119. Teaching and learning are good. In particular, the head of department is a very good teacher, often displaying excellence in her work with students. This was noted in lessons in all years. The head of department is a skilled performer. She uses demonstration effectively and creates an atmosphere conducive to learning. Class management and relationships are generally good. The uncharacteristic lapses of discipline within the department tend to occur in Year 9 and are the result of students not being kept on task. However, this is a rare occurrence and generally there are very good teaching, good use made of lesson time, well-planned lessons and good classroom management within a range of teaching styles. These are resulting in very good learning and many students understand key concepts. Practical activity is carefully presented so that students can achieve success. There is no doubt that it is the quality of teaching, linked with high expectations, that has led to the large numbers of students opting to study music at GCSE. The department must now look to ways of achieving higher performance and academic standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 in order to increase the number of students and raise standards and at AS and A-level.

120. Leadership is very good. The head of department is positive in encouraging and motivating students to make music. Consequently, students respect the subject and use the department at all times of the day. There is a 'music school' feel about the

place. Management of the department is very good. New schemes of work are being prepared and these should be completed as soon as possible. There is good monitoring, particularly of data, although the monitoring of teaching within the department could be more effective. A clear development plan and new assessment procedures are proving effective, particularly in the detailed use of level indicators for individual disciplines, (singing, keyboard etc.) rather than overall principles. The extra-curricular programme has elements of world music through the African drumming and steel band, but also includes a traditional choir and wind band. About 10 per cent of the school population is involved in extra-curricular music and instrumental lessons. This provision is well organised.

121. The accommodation is very good, although there are still some concerns over security. Resources are adequate, with more tuned and un-tuned percussion required for Key Stage 3. However, ICT resources are inadequate, particularly for Key Stage 3 students and as preparation for possible music technology courses post-16. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been good and the head of department should be congratulated for achieving so much in such a relatively short time.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are below average and average in Key Stage 4.
- GCSE results have improved since the last inspection and are now well above average.
- Achievement is good. Students make good progress in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are very good and a strength of the department.
- Subject management and leadership are very good.
- ICT is not used well enough in lessons.
- Further monitoring of lessons and sharing of good practice are required.

Commentary

122. Standards in Key Stage 3 are below average. On entry, the majority of students display a limited range of movement skills and lack the basic ball skills to apply in different sports. A significant number of lower attaining students struggle to link movements together into a sequence in gymnastics. In football, students do not understand the need to move their feet to get into positions to head the ball effectively and cannot apply skills learnt in unopposed practices into a competitive game. They show some knowledge and understanding of fitness and health and most can lead warm-up activities.

123. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. However, this year's teacher assessment showing 74 per cent of students achieving the expected standard by the end of the key stage is too high. Some students can assess their own work and that of others and are able to help others improve by suggesting ways of improving. In all lessons achievement is good. Students learn quickly and make good progress, usually from a very low level of previously acquired skills.

124. Standards in Key Stage 4 are average. Students continue to make good progress in all lessons so that by the end of Year 11 the majority meet the standards expected for Key Stage 4. Year 10 girls' movement and ball-handling skills in netball are well developed and they show a firm understanding of the fitness requirements of players in different positions. They can identify the strengths and weaknesses of players and recommend ways of improving play. The curriculum is planned to provide students with long periods of time to practise skills to consolidate learning. Standards in football and netball are above average, but below average in badminton, volleyball and rugby because insufficient time is spent earlier in the key stage developing the necessary basic skills that can be developed further in Key Stage 4.
125. GCSE physical education results have risen consistently since the last inspection. In 2004 68 per cent of students achieved A*-C grades and 100 per cent achieved a pass; 29 students achieved higher grade passes. This is well above the national average and is a direct result of high quality teaching and learning in theory and practical lessons. Coursework is well presented and provides a good resource for revision.
126. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory, mostly good and often very good. They are real strengths of the department and consequently student achievement is good in both key stages. This is a direct result of high quality teaching that provides well-planned lessons, coupled with advice from the teacher on what to do to improve. Work is challenging and demanding, and planned so that students of all abilities can achieve. In some Key Stage 3 lessons with high numbers of students with special educational needs, progress is less marked but staff ensure they are included in all aspects of the curriculum and have the same opportunities in which to succeed.
127. Lessons are well planned, with clear introductions, warm-ups, teacher demonstration and effective class management. Teachers have good subject knowledge and very good working relationships with students, and generate high activity rates in lessons, with the few non-participants engaged in learning through planned observation tasks. Praise and questioning are used well to engage all learners, test understanding and encourage students to think about what they are doing. Statements describing the standard of their work required are displayed in teaching areas and students are encouraged to use these to assess their own progress and set targets to improve their performance.
128. Some of the best teaching is in Key Stage 4. Students are encouraged to work together in pairs and small groups. Time in lessons is maximised and provides opportunities for students to fulfil the different roles of performer, observer, umpire and referee. Students are given time to reflect on their learning and share what they have learnt with others. In a few Year 9 lessons there is limited challenge and incorrect technical advice on forward play in rugby. Time is not always maximised and too much time is spent talking to students, restricting time spent actively participating in learning.
129. Students enjoy physical education. They are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Participation rates are high, few students opt out of lessons and students show respect towards all members of the department. The standard of physical education kit is very good and the majority of students arrive well prepared for lessons.

Behaviour is very good and students display positive attitudes towards physical education and sport.

130. The department is very well led. Physical education and sports provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. Very good facilities are used to provide a wealth of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. The school achieved the Sportsmark award in 2003. The head of department is actively involved in supporting physical education and sport in the feeder middle schools, providing guidance and sharing good practice to ease transfer in Year 9 and raise achievement throughout Key Stage 3. The department has a clear development plan highlighting the main priorities to improve provision further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship (including PHSE)

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11, is very good.
- Teaching is good and often better and lessons are informative and challenging.
- A well-structured curriculum provides a relevant and topical programme of study for all students.
- Leadership is good and enthusiastic and shows clear direction in planning.
- Management is very efficient, especially in the co-ordination of the various subject strands.
- Assessment, especially the marking element, is not used enough to promote progress.

Commentary

131. Standards in Year 9 are broadly in line with expectations of citizenship requirements for this age. Students' file work shows they have a firm knowledge and understanding of topical issues. They are able to give clear explanations of important terms associated, for example, with employment law and cultural diversity. Students arrive in school with below average attainment. Teachers promptly challenge students' thinking with a range of well-adjusted speaking and writing activities. As a result, students of all abilities make good progress. They show increasing confidence when asked to give an informed opinion. Higher attaining students, especially, are producing some thoughtful, reflective work on what it means to be a good citizen. Achievement is good, with the exception of a minority of low attaining boys whose learning is hampered by unruly behaviour.

132. In 2004, all Year 11 students were entered for the GCSE short course in citizenship. Almost all students achieved a grade although, at the higher level A*-C, students' performance was marginally below the national average. The school made a good start in its first year of entry for this accreditation. Standards in Year 11 in work seen are above average. Students have a clear understanding of contemporary issues and can put forward reasoned and mature arguments on aspects of human rights. Teachers prepare the students effectively for examination work and this underpins the

very good progress they make through Years 10 and 11. They are becoming adept in researching and presenting coursework, including topics such as fair trade and animal rights. Achievement is very good.

133. Teaching is good overall. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson in Year 9 occurred when the disruptive behaviour of low attaining students was not effectively managed. Clear objectives provide teachers and students with a common focus for learning. Well-informed teaching enables students to grasp new ideas quickly. In the best lessons teachers adjust activities effectively to meet students' needs. Teachers make realistic demands and create supportive relationships. Students respond positively and work with good humour and concentration. Learning is good overall. Several students commented on their interest in the subject and especially enjoy exploring real-life situations. Homework is not used consistently to help students extend their learning. Marking provides insufficient commentary to support further progress. Students generally know their target but are not well aware of how they might improve. Self-assessment is insufficiently used to raise standards, although self-assessed coursework is helping students to gain knowledge of their own learning.
134. The school council provides all students with a lively forum for debate. Involvement, for example in traffic management with the local council and the recent referendum on the North East Regional Assembly, engages the students effectively in first-hand experiences of democratic processes. The students have good opportunities to participate in environmental projects. The reclaiming of land in the school grounds for a wildlife area is a good example. Citizenship makes a strong contribution to the students' spiritual and personal development and enables them to be alert to moral, social and cultural dimensions.
135. Support by senior management has made a significant contribution to the very good arrangements that have been established to meet the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship. Efficient management has resulted in strong teamwork and a coherent approach to teaching. Citizenship has a distinctive place in the whole-school curriculum. The clear sense of direction in the leadership of the subject shows a good capacity for further improvement.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	80	80.1	10.0	23.7	25.0	29.9
Business studies	3	66.7	76.4	33.3	16.3	23.3	26.2
Chemistry	5	100.0	72.7	20.0	13.9	30.0	24.1
Communication studies	4	100.0	86.4	25.0	23.8	37.5	32.0
Drama	4	100.0	86.5	0.0	19.6	35.0	30.6
English/English language	8	87.5	82.9	12.5	17.5	28.8	28.7
English literature	12	66.7	85.9	0.0	19.1	20.0	30.2
French	1	100.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	20.0	27.6
Design and technology	1	0.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	0.0	25.3
Geography	3	100.0	74.3	66.7	19.8	40.0	26.5
German	2	100.0	81.5	0.0	19.3	30.0	28.9
History	5	80.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	18.0	28.6
Mathematics	12	25.0	61.9	16.7	17.1	11.7	22.1
Music	2	50.0	86.5	0.0	21.4	10.0	30.7
Other social studies	1	100.0	69.7	0.0	16.7	20.0	24.1
Physics	6	66.7	68.6	0.0	14.4	16.7	22.7
Sociology	1	100.0	71.8	100.0	18.4	60.0	25.4
Sports/PE studies	1	100.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	30.0	23.1
Total	81	72.8	73.9	12.3	17.4	23.3	25.7

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	100.0	98.6	0.0	50.2	62.9	87.5
Biology	8	87.5	96.4	37.5	39.2	67.5	78.6
Business studies	7	71.4	98.7	0.0	36.8	45.7	80.1
Chemistry	6	100.0	97.6	83.3	49.0	103.3	84.9
Communication studies	12	100.0	99.4	8.3	37.8	66.7	82.1
Drama	11	100.0	99.5	0.0	40.1	63.6	83.6
English / English Language	16	100.0	99.4	0.0	36.3	68.8	80.9
English Literature	13	100.0	99.5	15.4	46.5	61.5	86.5
French	4	100.0	98.8	25.0	51.5	55.0	87.6
Design and technology	6	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	66.7	77.9
Geography	10.0	100.0	98.7	40.0	44.5	84.0	84.0

German	3	100.0	98.4	33.3	47.9	66.7	84.8
History	13	100.0	99.0	15.4	44.6	64.6	84.6
Mathematics	14	92.9	96.7	42.9	55.6	77.1	88.8
Music	1	100.0	98.8	100.0	38.9	120.0	81.1
Other sciences	1	100.0	97.3	100.0	41.5	120.0	80.3
Other social studies	5	100.0	97.4	0.0	42.7	52.0	81.8
Physics	11	100.0	96.7	63.6	44.6	90.9	81.7
Sociology	9	100.0	98.2	33.3	44.3	75.6	83.6
Sports/PE studies	6	100.0	98.0	0.0	30.9	60.0	75.2
Total	163	97.5	97.7	22.7	42.1	70.2	81.9
VCE engineering	1	0.0	n/a	0.0	n/a	0.0	n/a
VCE health and social care	14	85.7	67.7	0.0	14.5	44.3	63.5
VCE manufacturing	1	100.0	n/a	0.0	n/a	60.0	n/a
VCE travel and tourism	10	80.0	71.8	30.0	14.5	58.0	62.2
Total	26	80.8	n/a	11.5	n/a	48.5	85.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- Students' skills of critical thinking are developed well.
- Standards are below the national averages.
- Many students are confident in their ability to question and challenge.

Commentary

136. Results in English literature AS and A2 were well below the national average in 2003. In 2002 results for A2 were in line with, and AS well above, national averages. However, in 2003 all students achieved a pass grade at A2. The difference in standards is as a result of the open access policy, which is operated by the school; the department attracts a high number of students onto both courses. Students in the current Year 12 have a wide range of predicted grades and are currently performing in line with them. They are responding well to the demands of the new course and improving their understanding of texts. Students in Year 13 are building on their performance and standards are in line with national averages. Achievement since entering the sixth form is satisfactory.

137. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are conducted at a very brisk pace. Lessons are planned carefully and assessment, both written and oral, is closely linked with the examination criteria. Sensitive questioning by teachers allows students to develop their

skills of analysis and evaluation. A wide variety of resources are provided to stimulate thinking, including mood graphs, card sorting and sequencing activities. These enable students to achieve insight into characterisation or assimilate received ideas more effectively. Boys particularly respond well to activities of this nature. Resources are also carefully matched to students' abilities and careful planning of resource use and availability leads to good quality debate in which all can contribute. Students are very enthusiastic learners and the relationships they have, with each other and with their teachers, result in very effective learning. Many are confident in their ability to question, speculate and challenge others' views. There is, however, a small minority, often girls, who remain quiet. Written work is marked accurately with good suggestions for improvement.

138. Leadership of the course is good and teachers work together as teams to achieve high standards. Teachers take good advantage of the in-school planning sessions to ensure their teaching is of a very high quality. Explicit reference is made to the examination criteria and students have a full understanding of the course they are studying; they have a very clear idea of their achievements and how to improve. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities available to students post-16 and these include theatre visits and lectures.

139. Standards since the last inspection have been maintained and good progress has been made.

Literacy across the curriculum

140. Literacy skills in the sixth form are satisfactory. Students express themselves confidently and articulately. They read fluently and with good expression but some experience difficulties with complex sentence structures. Students are given support in essay writing, using techniques adapted from the Key Stage 3 Strategy of modelling and sequencing. There is good practice of teachers placing emphasis on communication skills, especially in mathematics.

French

Provision in **French** is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inclusion of students with a wide range of attainment on the AS course is a strength.
- All teaching is good or very good.
- Pronunciation and intonation of some students are poor.
- Excellent relationships significantly enhance students' learning.
- All students make good progress.

Commentary

141. AS and A2 results reflect the wide range of prior attainment of the students embarking on the course. For this reason results have fluctuated. Overall, however, standards reflected in AS and A2 results are close to national averages. Standards in the AS group vary according to the aspects of language covered in lessons. For example,

students' grasp of grammar is often deficient and teachers have to spend considerable time in ensuring that students improve their understanding in order to cope with the rigours of the course. Teachers have to prepare a lot of revision work to ensure that students acquire the ability to handle simple tenses with confidence. This has a consequent effect on their speaking and writing and teachers plan lessons to incorporate practice in these skills. However, students have good reading and listening skills so that they are able to cope with the high demands of the course. Pronunciation and intonation are sometimes poor, though a number of students speak with impressive fluency and have good accents.

142. Achievement in lessons is good. This is because students are fully engaged in the lessons. All students have access to the Internet so they are able to do their homework, which requires research on websites. They are interested in the culture of French-speaking countries and have opportunities to go to France during their course. Teachers also take the students to see French language films in Newcastle. Students show high levels of concentration and respond to high levels of challenge. Their attitudes are positive and many are already committed to continuing through the two years of the course.
143. Teaching is good, and lessons are planned to develop high levels of accuracy in all skills. Students are taken by different teachers for different lessons, but each teacher concentrates on a different aspect of the course that is best suited to her specialism, for example grammar. In all lessons teachers have high expectations. At this early stage of the course, students are still making many elementary grammatical mistakes, but the teachers pick up on these and guide the students to accurate speaking and writing. Some spoken presentations are of very high quality. Progress in lessons is very good, and some students have reached high standards in the short time they have been following the course. Teachers use French almost all the time, and expect students to respond in French. Although there is little spontaneous use of French between students and teachers, students respond very well to the teachers' questions and teachers are skilful at giving students time to think before they answer. Resources such as tape recorders and overhead projectors are well used but, apart from students' use of the Internet outside of lessons, there is little use of ICT.
144. By Year 13, all students express complex opinions with reasonable fluency and accuracy. They paraphrase when they lack the right words and are experimenting with a range of different tenses. They respond to their teacher's challenging questions. Judicious interjections help the students to keep going, and their very positive attitudes help them to achieve very well. The accent and intonation of some students are still weak. Listening comprehension tests are very challenging, but students work at their own pace, and work out answers successfully, whilst at the same time extending their grammatical and lexical knowledge. In all lessons progress is good and sometimes very good.
145. Marking and reporting are good. Teachers' comments on written work are helpful. Teachers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each student and plan their work to include all students in the learning process. This is important, since the department has a policy of accepting any student with a GCSE grade who wishes to continue with French. All students are well integrated into the learning process. Some students give up their free periods to work alongside teachers in Year 10 lessons. This

not only gives them extra practice, but it also provides a good role model for younger learners and boosts the confidence of the individual students.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes to learning are very good and students participate well in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment is used well.
- Leadership and management of mathematics are good.
- A small proportion of lower attaining students do not organise their work well.

Commentary

146. The inspection focused on the AS level and A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics.

147. Standards attained at A-level in 2003 were below the national average. Female students did much better than male students. Results for 2004 at A-level are likely to be below the national average with female students outperforming male students, although less markedly than in 2003. Standards attained at AS-level in 2003 were below average, with male students doing better than female students.

148. Standards of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of work are in line with national averages and represent satisfactory achievement. Standards are better in Year 12 overall than in Year 13. Those students studying further mathematics demonstrate high levels of technical skill.

149. Teaching in all sixth form mathematics courses is good. The teaching of further mathematics is very good. Teachers use their high levels of subject knowledge to ask challenging questions and to plan carefully for the needs of the students. In all lessons, teachers place emphasis on good quality written communication and model solutions to a high standard. Teachers provide good quality notes and exemplar solutions in all courses and modules that are valued by the students. Students work with high levels of concentration and generally present their work well, following the very good example set by teachers. Higher and middle attaining students organise their work well, but some lower attaining students leave work incomplete and jumbled. Teachers of these students provide lots of written comment and detailed marking demonstrating methods of solution. There are some inconsistencies in both the quantity and quality of marked work. Students appreciate the support given to them by teachers both in and outside of lessons. Students in the sixth form are also supported by access to suitable ICT software. Lessons involve significant amounts of interactive work in which students ask questions, as well as answering them. Students are happy to explore their own misconceptions by working at the front of the class. Opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their work and there is a strong emphasis on them understanding the assessment criteria. Peer assessment of

solutions to problems allows students to 'step inside the shoes of an examiner', so as to reinforce this understanding.

150. Mathematics is well led and managed. The department offers a good range of modules covering pure mathematics, mechanics, statistics and discrete mathematics. There is good deployment of staff to teaching these modules. The focus on raising the achievement of students is very good and is supported by thorough assessment procedures including the use of self- and peer assessment. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching has improved but this has not yet had an impact on standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

151. Standards of competence in mathematics are average. Students make satisfactory use of mathematics across the curriculum. For example, in psychology students solve problems that involve multi-step calculations, the solutions of which are then related back to the original context. In geography, students in Year 12 use measurement in relation to a river study and Year 13 students use calculators and ICT efficiently when working with research data.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards are average, and considering the starting levels of attainment, is a strength.
- Teaching overall is good.
- Accommodation is poor and has an adverse effect on learning.
- Students greatly value the quality of teaching and the good relationships with teachers.

Commentary

152. Student numbers are generally small so valid comparisons are difficult to make. Nonetheless national comparisons indicate that over the past three years standards in the A2 examination have fluctuated from above national averages to below, but standards are average overall. Results in 2004 were particularly disappointing. Standards in the AS-level examination in 2004 are more varied. Most results are below the predicted grades, yet almost all students gained an award and a high proportion gained the higher grades.

153. Achievement is also variable from year to year. In 2003 students' progress from GCSE to A2 was largely in line with the national average. The 2004 results for both AS and A2 do not meet the school's expectations. However, students are accepted on to the course with a relatively wide range of GCSE results, as well as basic study skills. Standards in lessons reflect this range. High attaining students have good understanding of, and ability to explain, complex processes such as the functioning of

specialised cells in the eye, whilst lower attaining students have difficulty explaining simpler processes such as the functioning of the iris. Student files are well kept and demonstrate good organisation and care. Overall achievement is good.

154. Teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and well prepared. A variety of teaching and learning activities are used including teacher explanations, detailed observations using microscopes, the making of models and student presentations. Students are always clear what they are to do, are well motivated and work hard. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students are treated with respect and know that teachers are available for individual help if needed. Private study is well supported with books and other publications. Private study space is inadequate and students sometimes work in laboratories where another lesson is taking place. Marking of work is good, with advice for improvement as well as an indicative grade level provided.
155. Leadership and management are shared between two experienced members of staff and are good. The three teachers of biology form an effective team and the teaching of the syllabus is clearly shared between them. Student progress is monitored regularly and a useful annual analysis of the results is carried out. However, given the extent of the disappointing results recently, the department needs to plan more systematic student support. Laboratory accommodation is poor, requiring full refurbishment but also immediate repair and tidying.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most learning activities are well planned, prepared and delivered, resulting in good achievement.
- Students apply considerable intellectual effort to their work.
- Access to ICT resources in the sixth form is good.
- There is a good match of courses to the students' needs.
- Timetable clashes result in a few students missing some lessons.

Commentary

156. Standards seen in the inspection are around the national average. Sixth form courses have been introduced recently, so there are no examination results available for analysis yet.
157. Students' achievement is good. They work hard, applying good levels of intellectual effort. Higher attaining students follow an AVCE and have the option to gain accreditation after three, six or 12 units. This provides flexibility and a good match of course to students' needs. Those students with less experience of ICT follow an intermediate GNVQ. Online resources are well used to support both courses. Students can access these from home or library, which increases their independence for study. Students on the AVCE course are able to identify layers within complex organisations and can relate ICT systems to the level of the users. However, they are less clear

about the way managers might use IT systems such as Management Information Systems. Work folders are tidy and well organised. Students are aware of their target grades and what they must do to achieve or better them.

158. Most lessons are well planned and carefully structured to support students and enable them to develop their work independently, when appropriate. Students respond well and collaborative group work is particularly well developed. There is a supportive ethos in the sixth form that leads to good quality outcomes. Teachers of both courses display good subject knowledge and there is a genuine emphasis on the vocational aspects of the courses. Some teaching occurs off site in the Open Learning Centre. This centre is part-funded through Technology College status, providing an adult learning environment that is ideal for the delivery of the AVCE course. Teachers go out of their way to support those students who have problems outside of school, enabling them to maximise their potential for achievement.

ICT across the curriculum

159. Sixth form students have good access to ICT resources. They are able to access a computer whenever needed and open access is provided for them at lunchtimes. Students enjoy their work in ICT, which has already become a popular option at the school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership ensures students are very well supported in their studies.
- Consistently good teaching and learning are helping to raise standards.
- The good quality curriculum promotes independent learning effectively.
- The students' positive attitudes contribute well to their good achievement.

Commentary

160. In 2003, standards achieved in the A-level examination were just below the national average. In 2004 they were significantly higher, although only four candidates sat the examination.

161. Standards in Year 13 are above average. This is because students respond extremely well to good and very good teaching. Their mature attitude helps promote their good achievement; they work hard to contribute actively in their studies and demonstrate the ability to study independently.

162. In Year 13, students interrogate data confidently and use ICT well. They produce very detailed work across a range of topics, using subject vocabulary effectively to explain their findings. For example, they use Home Office statistics effectively to identify locations with different burglary rates and then apply their geographical skills to

understand those differences. They gain a secure knowledge and understanding of diverse topics, such as urban regeneration, weather patterns, coastal erosion and deforestation in the Third World. In Year 12, students quickly recognise the higher standards demanded in advanced studies and do well in working to achieve these. For example, they apply their knowledge effectively to test a hypothesis by planning an expedition to the local river. This work demonstrates good levels of prior learning being used effectively to expand their understanding of river currents.

163. Teaching and learning are consistently good and very good in some lessons. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and teach it confidently. Because they treat students as adults they are met with mature and positive responses. Students clearly enjoy their studies, though recognising the work is difficult. A particular feature of teaching is the very good guidance given in lessons, so that students know exactly what is required of them. For example, in preparing the river expedition, great care is taken to ensure students conduct a risk assessment as part of their planning.

164. Leadership is very good. The head of department has a very secure command of the subject, knows the demands of the course and provides very good guidance. She is a very good role model to both staff and students and is highly skilled in classroom practice. Management is good, with a clear view of the needs of the students and effective systems in place to support their studies.

165. The good quality curriculum meets all examination requirements well. It makes good use of ICT to encourage independent research. Field-work enriches the curriculum and provides further opportunities for students to develop their decision-making skills. Students have a realistic view of their own potential. In Year 13 they can identify how the course will benefit them in pursuing higher education and career opportunities. This is a successful course, competently taught, which meets effectively the needs of all its students. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned to move students on, while reinforcing their previous knowledge.
- Good use of planning and assessment to inform student progress is a strength.
- Lessons are about specific and detailed knowledge and research methods.
- There is a commitment to raising standards through improved assessment and monitoring.
- There is insufficient use of computers to explore and present information.
- Low attendance has an adverse effect on performance.

Commentary

166. Results for grades A-E in 2003 were above average. Male and female students do not gain similar results. Girls perform better than boys in most aspects of their work. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A/B was well below average. The

overall results were similar in 2004 but a higher proportion gained grade A or B. Psychology is a new subject to students in Year 12. Given this fact, there is value added in the examination success gained by most students. There is open access to the study of psychology. The predicted grades for 2005 show a significant improvement in current student performance.

167. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average for most students. The higher attaining students work at an above average standard. Most students have a good knowledge of the topics they have studied recently. Higher attaining students often do better than expected for their age at Year 12. By Year 13 students are making more accurate use of specialist terms when describing human behaviour. Lower attaining students find it more difficult to write precisely about their understanding of the subject. Most students' skills in research work match their attainment in other aspects of psychology.
168. Students' achievement in psychology is good. They enter Year 12 with attainment that is broadly average. Those few students with a learning need make good progress. The gifted students do very well and are closely supported. Progress, overall, is good. Key skills are taught and students benefit from the clear direction given on writing and reading. Number work is good, as is computing skill.
169. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers follow detailed schemes of work. Lesson plans ensure that students move on quickly to new knowledge, while continually reinforcing their understanding of previously learnt material. Students make good progress because they are provided with a good variety of interesting and challenging activities.
170. The leadership and management of psychology are good. The head of subject leads the subject well and has established a good sense of commitment to psychology being taught in the sixth form. The head of department knows what needs to be improved and the plans devised are relevant. The subject has made good progress over time. The teacher is vigorously promoting a learning and success culture amongst students. Challenging targets are set for students.

Sociology

171. Sociology was sampled in the sixth form.
172. Examination results in 2003 and 2004 were below average for the higher grades A/B. The results over all grades are average. There is evidence that students make progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Positive student/teacher relationships aid learning and careful and detailed planning links knowledge, understanding and methods. In most lessons pace, challenge and support are the best features of teaching. Too little on-line learning and web-based learning is used to engage students. Good feedback to students via regular marking helps students understand how to improve their work.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Engineering

Provision in engineering is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the local further education college are good.
- ICT is well used for investigation and design purposes.
- The school does not have many of the specialised resources needed for teaching motor vehicle engineering.

Commentary

173. By the end of Year 13 standards are below national expectations. In motor vehicle technology students' knowledge and understanding of the steering geometry for a motorcar are weak, and in engineering drawing too, many orthographic and isometric views of engineering components are incomplete and/or incorrectly dimensioned.
174. Students in Year 12 are following a different examination syllabus from Year 13 students, and one day a week attend a local further education college, where they receive a good experience of working with precision tools and equipment to develop practical skills in manufacturing with mild steel. These students appreciate working in an adult environment and respond positively to the lecturer's guidance for obtaining high standards.
175. In school, teaching on the engineering course is satisfactory. Teaching is most effective when students are following a design development module and where completing technical views of engineering components is the aim. Some unsatisfactory teaching resulted from a lack of specialised knowledge or the ineffective use of resources to assist students' understanding of the movement of engineering mechanisms. Students are competent users of ICT, conducting research and investigation into technical practices and using their findings to dimension drawings according to accepted national and international conventions.
176. The second in charge in the design and technology department, who is responsible for the appropriate engineering course, recognises the difficulties with the motor vehicle module for the Year 13 students. Effective management decisions have been taken to enable the Year 12 group to gain experience with the further education provider instead. The current Year 13 students are not, however, receiving the specialised input that they need for the motor vehicle module to prepare them for the forthcoming examinations next year. The good links that have developed between the school and the school/industry co-ordinator (Training and Development Resource Ltd) for the course at the college also include regular quality control assessments of the college's input.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work confidently and with increasing maturity and independence on two and three-dimensional work.
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average with some very high attainment.
- Very good teaching, on an individual basis, helps students to make very good progress.

Commentary

177. The AS-level course is increasingly popular. In previous years the numbers entered for the examination have been too small to make statistical comparisons. However, the standard of work seen during the inspection was high and there are examples of excellent achievement. Students have very good technical skills in drawing, painting and ceramics, which are a result of the good grounding provided in the main school. They are able to consolidate and refine skills; for example, the ceramics work is expertly constructed and finished to a very high standard. Ideas are developed in a sustained way and students experiment with techniques and media to achieve the best solutions. They are able to apply skills learned previously to new situations, for example using textile techniques in a relief mixed-media composition.

178. A2 students make very good progress and consolidate their skills, working with confidence and independence on their individual projects. They are able to research personal interests for their written study, which is often related to their practical work. Students have benefited from visits to galleries, and a workshop in the studio of a local artist. Their individual development is supported by the encouragement and expertise of their teachers, whose flexible teamwork is a positive feature of the provision.

179. Teaching is consistently good and the very good subject knowledge of the staff helps to extend and develop students' abilities and achievements. The strengths of the staff complement each other and this combination provides a broad sixth form curriculum, preparing students well for higher education. Leadership and management are very good and the courses are well planned to meet the examination assessment objectives. Improved access to computers in the department and a more contemporary focus on critical studies could improve provision still further.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2003 were below the national average but current standards are in line.

- The quality of teaching is good and students' independence is developed well.
- Students gain a high level of confidence in using media equipment.

Commentary

180. Examination results in media studies were below the national average in 2003. Results were higher in 2004, especially in the number of A and B grades at AS and A2. Students achieved mainly in line with predictions at A2, and above at AS. Students entering the course in 2004 came in with a wide range of prior attainment, and overall is below average compared with national expectations. Nevertheless, students make good progress. Students in Year 12 already show confidence in their grasp of media concepts and terminology, even if they have not taken media studies before. They are able to deconstruct media texts, such as advertisements, and are at the point where they can start designing and filming their own commercial. By Year 13, students show a good level of skill in their mastery of media technology. Their written work shows that their level of analysis has developed well since Year 12, and they are now able to present their arguments in more depth. The group is currently writing individual projects, which cover a wide range of topics such as *Big Brother* as a media phenomenon, the presentation of terrorists during recent events, and the effect of the media on sports personalities. Students have shown independence in their choice of topic, and in their own research and preparation. Their achievement during the course is good.

181. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher's own subject knowledge is good, and he draws on a wide variety of material. He gives students a clear overview of the course and guides them to take well-organised notes. He prepares students well for their independent projects and gives them a good grounding in practical production work. Students are well prepared for the examination, although recently their grades in the practical element have been higher than in the examination itself. The teacher marks their written work carefully, with a useful commentary on how to improve.

182. The course is well managed. The teacher has a good knowledge of students' prior attainment and progress. Administration for the examination is carried out thoroughly, with close attention to detail. Results are carefully analysed.

183. This is a popular course, attracting many more students than at the time of the last inspection. This subject in the sixth form had a good report last time, and continues to be good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school offers physical education studies and vocational courses in travel and tourism. Physical education was inspected in detail.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the sixth form are in line with the national average.
- Achievement is good, as students of all abilities make good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Opportunities for participation, leadership and coaching in sport are very good.
- Further opportunities to use ICT to enhance learning are required.

Commentary

184. Standards in the sixth form are average. In 2004 numbers of students in Years 12 and 13 were small, with only one student achieving a pass at AS and A2-level. However, in 2002 and 2003 teaching groups were larger and results significantly better, with several students achieving passes and a few achieving A or B grades. Numbers have increased this year. Students of different levels of attainment can access the course, so the pace of progress varies. In lessons, most students show an understanding of recovery from exercise, explaining the physiological effects both graphically and orally. However, student learning is heavily dependent on the teacher and learning is less secure when they are required to work independently. Overall, achievement is good.
185. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a firm understanding of the course requirements and apply a range of different techniques to generate interest and debate that stimulate students to learn. In a Year 13 lesson ICT was used very well to analyse data and demonstrate the reasons for a recovery period after exercise. Questioning is used well to engage all students, particularly the lower attainers who learn at a slower rate than others in the group. Provision includes opportunities to participate in extra-curricular sport. Increasing numbers of students achieve the Community Sports Leader Award and support teachers in organising physical education and sports competitions for younger students and those in feeder middle schools.
186. Coursework is usually well presented and collated to form a useful revision tool to use in preparation for examinations. There are few examples of using ICT in theory and practical lessons, particularly the provision of opportunities to analyse performance, and the use of software and Internet websites to research physical education and sport. Homework is set regularly, but not all students complete it and hand it in. Marking of homework usually provides students with good advice on how to improve their work.
187. Subject leadership is very good. The AS/A2 course is very well prepared. Teachers have very good working relationships with students and these help to create a positive working atmosphere in lessons. The dedicated teaching base for theory lessons is a valuable resource that helps maintain the profile of the subject and supports students' learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

