

INSPECTION REPORT

YEWLANDS SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Grenoside, Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107136

Headteacher: Mrs A Armytage

Lead inspector: Mrs J Jones

Dates of inspection: 20th - 23rd September 2004

Inspection number: 269510

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of students eligible for free school meals.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of students: | 11 - 16 |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| Number on roll; | 877 |
| School address: | Creswick Lane Grenoside Sheffield South Yorkshire |
| Postcode: | S35 8NN |
| Telephone number: | (0114) 232 9010 |
| Fax number: | (0114) 232 9011 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Steve Tagg |
| Date of previous inspection: | 29 th November 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Yewlands School Technology College is a mixed comprehensive school on the northern edge of Sheffield for students aged between 11 and 16 years. The school is popular with parents and over-subscribed. It is smaller than average, with just under 900 students compared with the national average of over 1000. There are approximately as many girls as boys. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average, and their attainment on entry is well below average overall, although there is evidence that this is improving and the school has a significant number of able students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is below average. There is a small number of students with moderate hearing impairment but not profoundly deaf. There are two students with physical disabilities that do not prevent them from playing a full part in school life. The majority have specific learning difficulties, and around one third of the others have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Very few students come from ethnic minorities and there are none who are at an early stage of learning English.

The school is now in its third phase as a technology college and benefits from being part of the Excellence in Cities initiative. As a result it has a City Learning Centre (CLC) on the campus and receives funding for additional support for students through Learning Mentors. The school is housed in several buildings, one of which is a former primary school a short walk from the rest. This and some parts of the other buildings are in poor repair, and the school is hoping to be rebuilt in the next two years.

The current financial situation is preventing the school from appointing as many classroom assistants as it needs and this is a barrier to the learning of some students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--|
| 12460 | J Jones | Lead inspector | |
| 19743 | A Taylor | Lay inspector | |
| 27050 | V Blackburn | Team inspector | Science |
| 8756 | P Hanage | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| 20287 | D Harris | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages |
| 22906 | B Hodgson | Team inspector | Information and communication technology |
| 19915 | P Hooton | Team inspector | Geography History |
| 3943 | D Innes | Team inspector | Design and technology |
| 22524 | S Innes | Team inspector | English |
| 21971 | J Glennon | Team inspector | Religious education |
| 31680 | P Redican | Team inspector | Art and design Citizenship |
| 14446 | B Simmons | Team inspector | Physical education |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The headteacher provides the school with very clear direction and the school is well led. There are many areas of sustained improvement, particularly attendance and test and examination results. The overall effectiveness of the school is **satisfactory** when compared with all schools nationally. Teaching is satisfactory overall and leads to satisfactory achievement. There is some very good teaching. The school gives **satisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Examination results are improving at a faster rate than nationally, but they remain well below average.
- Many students do not speak or write English well and this handicaps them in other subjects.
- GCSE results in art and design and in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above average.
- The headteacher is a strong leader with an exceptionally clear vision for the future of the school.
- The very good care and guidance enable all students to follow courses that are suited to their abilities, aspirations and talents and the quality of education for careers and the world of work is outstanding.
- Too many students underachieve in modern foreign languages and few choose to study them after the age of 14.

Changes since the previous inspection

In the last two years there has been a change of headteacher and a significant change to the rest of the leadership team. This has led to the establishment of a more rigorous system of planning and monitoring. As a result the school has been able to respond well to the key issues of the previous inspection: attendance has improved from being well below average to close to the national average and there is a significant increase in the number of students who leave school with GCSE qualifications. The discipline policy is raising standards of behaviour. Standards in tests and examinations show a steady improvement at a faster rate than the national average. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory in spite of some innovative improvements and time is lost when students walk from one building to another.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

| Performance compared with: | | all schools | | | similar schools |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2003 |
| Year 11 | GCSE examinations | E | E | E | E |

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

Achievement overall is **satisfactory**, in view of most students' low starting point. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Results are improving but the band into which they fell in

years 2001 to 2003 (band E) is too broad for this to show in the table. The average point score for students taking GCSE in 2004 maintained the upward trend, although there was a drop in the proportion achieving the higher grades of A* to C. Standards seen in lessons are generally better than examination results. In Year 9, students are working at below-average levels in English, mathematics and science; in Year 11 they are working at below-average levels in English and science but at well-below-average levels in mathematics. Students underachieve in modern foreign languages and results are well below average.

In all years, and particularly in Years 7 and 8, there is a significant number of very able students and the school recognises and provides for these. Support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory at present and is having a positive impact on the progress they make. The few ethnic minority students are fully absorbed into the school and senior staff check that there is no difference in their progress or personal development from that of others. Children in the care of the local authority are looked after well by the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and there is very good or excellent teaching and learning in around a fifth of lessons. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, although teachers do not all mark written work carefully enough, so opportunities to improve literacy are lost. In Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient assessment of ICT for the school to be sure that students not following the GCSE course still cover the national curriculum. Care and guidance are very good, as are partnerships with the community. Partnerships with parents are good. Attendance, although still just unsatisfactory, has improved significantly over the last year. Students' behaviour in lessons is at least satisfactory and often good, although their attitudes to work are sometimes passive, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour around the badly-designed school site is often noisy and boisterous, but is generally good-natured. Students' personal development is **satisfactory** overall, and that of more vulnerable students is good. Students' moral development is good and their spiritual, cultural and social development is satisfactory. The school makes good provision to seek students' views, but does not give them enough opportunities to develop qualities of initiative and independence by taking responsibility for aspects of school life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** and having a significant impact on standards and behaviour. Governors are good critical friends. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and vision for the future. They play a significant role in the school's development. Leadership by the headteacher is very good and she is well supported by the leadership team. Leadership of middle and senior managers is good overall, but is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages where an acting head of department is dealing with a legacy of several years' unsatisfactory leadership. The school does not keep sufficient track of students' progress in ICT in subjects across the curriculum to ensure that those not taking the GCSE course cover the full requirement of the national Curriculum. Systems are well thought out and entirely directed to improving the work of the school and raising standards through rigorous evaluation. Financial management is now good but the school is dealing with a history of poor financial management.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Links with parents are good. Parents feel their children are well cared for, the school is over-subscribed, and the school has a number of ways of communicating with parents that are usually effective. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to raise standards, the school should:

- Reinforce the strategy to improve literacy and learning by monitoring the quality of written work more thoroughly and improving the consistency of marking.
- Improve the provision for modern foreign languages.

and, in order to fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, ensure that all students receive the full entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Standards are below average but improving, and students' achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in art and ICT are well above average.
- Poor literacy prevents students from doing as well as they should in many subjects.

Commentary

Standards in tests and examinations

1. Results in tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average. However, they are rising and over the last three years the rate of improvement has been above the national trend. This is particularly evident in mathematics tests at the age of 14. Results in modern foreign languages were very low and a reflection of the unsatisfactory nature of the department.
2. GCSE results continued the upward trend in 2004. Although the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades (A* to C) dropped in 2004 and fell below the predicted level, the overall point score rose. The school has fully investigated the drop, which is related in part to the choice of levels for which students were entered. The school is taking effective steps to prevent this happening again. The overall improvement is partly due to the improved attendance rate throughout the school, and partly to the effective provision for students to follow appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students leaving school with no accredited qualifications has dropped significantly in the last three years and the 2004 figure is now close to the national average in 2003.
3. Highest standards are achieved in subjects that rely least on written or spoken English. Thus GCSE results in art and design are well above average, and so are those in ICT. The school sets high targets for test and examination results. In both 2003 and 2004 the school did not achieve the ambitious statutory targets. However, test results in mathematics at the end of Year 9 were close, as were the overall GCSE point scores. The school exceeded its GCSE target in ICT.

Standards seen in lessons

4. Both by the age of 14 and by the age of 16, students are reaching standards that are below average. This is evidence of at least satisfactory achievement, given students' standards on entry, which are at least below average overall. The biggest obstacles to higher achievement are poor attendance in the past, and the continuing poor literacy of many students. The school recognises the need to improve literacy and it is a permanent focus of the drive to improve learning. Teachers in all subjects make an effort to help students but the low basic skills of many are evident when they have difficulty constructing

all but the simplest sentences, and find spelling common words difficult. Ironically, they often spell specialist words they have been taught accurately, so that a history student may spell 'bicentennial' correctly but cannot spell 'believe.'

5. Highest standards are achieved in subjects that rely least on written or spoken English. Thus GCSE results in art and design are well above average, and so are those in ICT. Students reach above-average standards in physical education by Year 9.
6. Standards in modern foreign languages are very low, not because of unsatisfactory teaching, but because the disruption in the past has left students with too little knowledge to build on.

Achievement

7. Students' success in relation to what they are capable of achieving is satisfactory overall, and for some it is better. Girls achieve more highly than boys and in 2003 the gap in science was well above that seen nationally. The number of students from ethnic minorities is too low for any trends to be identified. Few students underachieve, except in modern foreign languages. Here the current satisfactory teaching is enabling students to learn, but they cannot make up the ground lost in previous years. The proportion of students who leave school with no qualifications has dropped significantly in the last three years, and to a large extent this is due to improved attendance that enables nearly all students to complete coursework and reinforce the knowledge gained in lessons. The increased variety in the curriculum over the last three years has improved achievement by enabling students to follow courses and combine subjects that are most suited to their skills.
8. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good because the school's financial difficulties mean that in some subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9, classes contain many of the lowest-attaining students. As the school cannot yet afford to employ more classroom assistants, students do not get the individual help they need, particularly with literacy.
9. Achievement of students with special needs is satisfactory overall. In lessons when students are withdrawn for specialist support, mainly for language development, it is good and often very good. In lessons taught by special educational needs specialist teachers, students, including those with physical disabilities, make good progress towards educational and behavioural targets because students' individual needs are well known to teachers and there is a very good rapport between teachers and students. In consequence, students become enthusiastic learners and their confidence and self-esteem are raised. In mainstream lessons, these students make similar progress to others because their needs are known and usually planned for.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 30.3 (28.0) | 33.4 (33.3) |
| mathematics | 33.5 (32.0) | 35.4 (34.7) |
| science | 32.0 (32.5) | 33.6 (33.3) |

There were 163 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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 | 37 (30) | 52 (50) |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 72 (79) | 91 (91) |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 87 (88) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 26.0 (27.3) | 34.7 (34.8) |

There were 167 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory** overall. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall. The attendance rate is improving, although still **unsatisfactory** compared with all schools nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students are keen to please and work well.
- Many are content to be led and lack confidence in their abilities.
- Promotion and monitoring of attendance are very rigorous and effective.
- A strong anti-bullying programme is helping students understand what is and is not acceptable.
- The effective way the school encourages students to behave well is helping their personal development. There is still some way to go.
- Students are not given enough opportunities to take responsibility or learn for themselves.

Commentary

10. Overall, students have satisfactory attitudes to learning. They generally enjoy lessons, are keen to please and do as they are asked. Students in the higher ability sets are more motivated but overall, students lack confidence in their abilities. They are not used to having to think deeply for answers. The school's appropriate focus on control of behaviour in lessons has, understandably, had a somewhat stifling effect upon students' spontaneity and individuality. They are not used to working together productively in pairs and groups and their ability to work independently and learn for themselves is minimal. This is beginning to change.
11. Students work better for teachers they like and respect and when they are given the chance to get actively involved in lessons. Many have low self-confidence and need constant reassurance that what they are doing is right. Some find listening to each other difficult. They respond very positively, for example, when given chances to undertake work placements, research careers and attend colleges. There is not yet a strong culture of learning among students, although things are improving. A minority of students, mostly boys in Years 10 and 11, who have a legacy of past poor behavioural habits, still have unsatisfactory attitudes to school and do not behave well. Many of these are following a work-related curriculum or are being supported by learning mentors, with some success.
12. Some parents expressed concerns to inspectors about behaviour. Inspectors find that behaviour is satisfactory and improving, although sometimes too noisy and boisterous. The school has worked very hard establishing effective systems and structures in order to maintain the momentum of improvement. Movement between lessons and in corridors remains disorderly, although teachers are quick to settle students at the beginnings of

lessons. Movement from one site to another along a footpath has an unsettling effect on students' behaviour. In a minority of lessons, boys' behaviour is hard to control, despite the best efforts of staff. This makes it more difficult for others in the class to learn.

13. Moral development is strong, with a clear focus on helping students understand the difference between right and wrong. The way the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, overall. The school's strong anti-bullying programme is helping students realise the implications of their actions. There are too few opportunities for students to take responsibility and thus develop maturity, either in their learning, as members of the school community or as citizens of the future.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data: | 8.3 |
| National data: | 7.2 |

| Unauthorised absence | |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data: | 3.1 |
| National data: | 1.1 |

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

14. Students' attendance is improving, but is just below the national average and so is judged to be unsatisfactory. The partnership between school and local education authority to improve attendance is a real success story. The school receives very good support from the Educational Welfare Service and this has been instrumental in raising attendance. All those involved realise there needs to be continual multi-agency efforts to prevent attendance from falling again.
15. An important factor accounting for attendance rising is the very good number of external agencies providing work experience placements and learning outside school. This is helping to keep a number of potentially disaffected students, mostly boys, in education.
16. The rising trend in parents taking holidays in term time accounts for nearly one per cent of all absences. This was especially so during the inspection week, in September. Unauthorised absence, although significantly better than it was, is above the national average, because many students do not have legitimate reasons for not attending school and some parents condone their absence. This affects students' examination results, particularly when they are unable to complete course work.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – White and Black African |
| Mixed – any other mixed background |

Exclusions in the last school year

| Number of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 832 | 151 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 8 | 1 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 1 | 0 | 0 |

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

17. Use of fixed-term exclusions has risen over the last academic year, although numbers permanently excluded have fallen. Compared nationally, the use of fixed-term exclusions is on the high side. The school's strong focus on improving behaviour has meant that out-of-class behavioural and smoking-related incidents have been clamped down upon. The school is continually trying to reduce numbers of students excluded and their internal exclusion room has been set up with this intention. The school is alert to the needs of students from ethnic minorities and deals with issues sensitively. Teachers with responsibility for this are satisfied that they are not more likely than others to be excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory but accommodation is unsatisfactory overall and prevents the school from operating as efficiently as it should, in spite of some limited areas of very good provision. Students are well supported through very good advice and guidance. They benefit from good links between home and school and from very good relationships with other schools, colleges, industry and other educational organisations.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

There is very little teaching that is less than satisfactory and in around a fifth of lessons, teaching is very good or excellent. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some excellent teachers who share good practice well.
- The teaching among the high proportion (around 12 per cent) of newly qualified teachers is at least satisfactory, and this is creditable since most had only been teaching for two weeks at the time of the inspection.

Commentary

18. Teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall, with slightly less good teaching and more satisfactory teaching than is seen in most schools. There is, however, very little unsatisfactory teaching and the proportion of very good and excellent teaching is as high as is usually seen. This pattern reflects the teaching profile and the time of the inspection – close to the start of the school year. Around 12 per cent of the teaching staff is new to the school, and most of these teachers are newly qualified. The school provides good support for these teachers and they are coping well, often with large classes or challenging groups. In these circumstances they do well to ensure that learning in their lessons is satisfactory.
19. Teachers know their subjects well. In the few areas, for example, in some religious education lessons, where teachers are not specialists, they are well supported by subject

leaders. The school has embraced the Key Stage 3 Strategy¹ fully and this shows particularly in effective planning. Lessons have clear objectives, students know how what they are learning in each lesson fits into the topic as a whole, and many lessons are introduced by interesting starter activities that set the scene for the main activity.

20. The assertive discipline policy that is used throughout the school is well understood by students and is generally effective. Senior staff who could manage without it are scrupulous in using the system themselves and this gives the system credibility with students when it is used by less experienced teachers. Occasionally these teachers find it difficult to know how soon to use the assertive discipline policy and they can afford to have more confidence in it and invoke it earlier.
21. While some subjects provide students with opportunities to take decisions and work in groups, there is a need for teachers to expand this. A good example was seen in a Year 9 science lesson using the school's most up-to-date ICT facilities. A high-attaining class was set the task of researching genetic features of plants and animals and making presentations to the rest of the class. Students worked well together and produced some interesting presentations. However, many were diffident when showing their findings and need more practice at speaking to an audience. In modern foreign languages, students do not spend enough time practising in groups or pairs. There is also a need to ensure that students are challenged at all times and that where – as in some science lessons – students copy notes or instructions from the board, the teacher permits this only rarely and by those who would take too long to complete the writing in their own words.
22. In general, teachers make good use of the school's expanding computer facilities. Teachers are themselves confident with ICT and are developing materials that help students to learn well. Geography teachers use ICT particularly well to illustrate geographical features and deal with data. There is, however, a need to ensure that the facilities are used by all students. At present the school does not have a system to monitor this accurately.
23. The school's focus on learning is well managed, and the advanced skills teachers are active in helping others to be more reflective about their skills. The school's own survey of teaching over the last two years shows evidence of considerable improvement. The use of classroom assistants is generally good and the newly introduced flexible approach to providing help where it is most needed is largely working well. There are not enough classroom assistants, however, to meet the need for support in all classes where behavioural difficulties in particular are slowing the pace of learning. Classroom assistants are most effective when they plan support with subject teachers and this is a positively developing area. Class teachers are well informed about the special needs of pupils and take an active part in monitoring their progress.
24. Assessment of students' learning is satisfactory overall. On the whole, teachers know how students are doing, and they communicate this to students. However, there are areas of weakness. Work is not always carefully marked, and in a number of subjects, including science and design and technology, teachers are not sufficiently demanding of high standards of written work. In geography, students are not set clear enough targets for improvement. There is some doubt about the effective use of information to predict students' likely performance in GCSE in some subjects, as the drop in the expected number of A* to C grades in 2004 is partly the result of students not being entered for the most appropriate GCSE level paper in all their subjects.

¹ A government initiative to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 114 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 6 (4 %) | 19 (17%) | 42 (39)% | 43 (38%) | 3 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |

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

THE CURRICULUM

The school provides good learning opportunities for students aged 14 to 16. It ensures good continuity for boys and girls of all aptitudes and abilities. A particular strength is the excellent preparation and advice students receive for the next stage in their academic or working careers. For students aged 11 to 14 the curriculum is satisfactory, as are their opportunities for enrichment through the extra-curricular programme.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The broad range of academic and work-related courses offers good choice to students aged 14 to 16.
- The quality of careers education and preparation for the world of work is outstanding.
- The school does not ensure that all students aged 14 to 16 are receiving their entitlement to ICT in every subject.
- Students have too few opportunities to express themselves through drama.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

25. The school provides a good curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 and has moved a long way since the previous inspection. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. This has in part been helped by the continuing award of Technology College status, but is essentially the product of good, innovative thinking. Each year the school takes good account of students' wishes and creates a series of options designed to accommodate them, consistent with a balanced choice. The range of courses on offer in these years is now broad, balanced and, most importantly, well geared to the social, academic and cultural needs of individuals. This ensures that all students have equal access to the curriculum. Higher-attaining students, for example, can take all three sciences separately to GCSE level. All students take a course in design and technology at GCSE level, although there are, as yet, no opportunities to study this at a more vocational level.
26. New courses offering two GCSE grades in health and social care, business studies and an ICT technology course are well subscribed and create new vocational opportunities. These encourage more independent learning and help students orientate themselves towards their future careers. Students with learning needs, for whom a chiefly academic programme is inappropriate, are guided towards a well accredited course in life skills and work-related learning, some of it spent at a local college. A few students who are most at risk of dropping out of full-time education follow a course of extended work experience. All this has added an important new dimension to the curriculum and helps to make continued education relevant to young people. Careers guidance and work-related learning are exceptionally good and dealt with in more depth in a later section of this report.

27. In Years 10 and 11 a good proportion of students choose to follow a course in ICT. A small group of committed students take a course of ICT after school. The rest, however, receive their entitlement to ICT through individual subjects. Not all of these are fulfilling the requirement to teach aspects of the subject through the medium of ICT, and the school does not yet fully check that this is happening. A modern foreign language is offered as an option at this stage, but very few students take it up. In Year 11, for example, only nine girls and one boy are studying French.
28. For students aged 11 to 14 the curriculum is satisfactory and fulfils all legal requirements. Areas for improvement in the curriculum at this level still remain, however. In mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education students of lower attainment are divided into four groups which allow for smaller numbers and therefore better learning. In other subjects, however, these students are in much larger groups. In some cases, for example, in history and German, the size of these groups combined with the learning needs of several of the students create difficulties which inevitably slow down the pace of learning. Students have occasional opportunities for self-expression in English and other lessons. In music the allocation of only 50 minutes per week is not enough to allow adequate development of students' practical skills.
29. Provision for gifted and talented students is good overall. It is good in geography, history, design and technology and some English lessons. In art and design, achievement is very good because teachers create a very positive atmosphere for learning and devote significant time to providing individual advice and guidance. There are opportunities for able students to extend their studies within the curriculum through options to take two modern foreign languages and three separate sciences. There are some additional opportunities to use ICT at a higher-than-usual standard and the school makes good use of the extra facilities and staff in the CLC to enable students to develop exciting new skills, for example, by making presentations using animations of a high standard.
30. Overall, the school's provision for enrichment outside lessons is satisfactory. In some respects, however, this is a real strength. In physical education and sports, for example, students have good opportunities to join teams and take part in a range of individual activities such as gymnastics. The area of careers and work experience, too, offers an unusually broad experience both outside and within the taught curriculum. A few subject areas, particularly science, design and technology and ICT, offer courses and keep workshops open after school for keen students wanting to do extra work. Music offers good opportunities to take part in bands and singing groups. In a number of subjects, however, there is little to supplement what is taught in class. There are trips to Belgian battlefields each year and a Year 9 history trip to France. There is potential to use such trips more to enhance students' French. There are few visits to theatres, art galleries or places of worship. This is an area for development.

Staffing provision

31. The school has done well to recruit and retain sufficient subject specialists to cover the curriculum. There has been some temporary teaching and some students have suffered from too many changes of teachers, but at present the staff is stable and there are very few temporary appointments. The lack of funds has so far prevented the school from employing sufficient classroom assistants and their need is very evident in some large classes where students requiring additional help do not get enough individual attention.

Accommodation

32. Since the last inspection there have been improvements made in the range of accommodation with the building of the new CLC and the Classroom of the Future. Rooms for the teaching of design and technology and for the special needs department have all been improved. However, the fabric of the remaining buildings, particularly the older blocks, is still unsatisfactory despite the hard work of staff to improve teaching areas with colourful and stimulating displays. Unsatisfactory science accommodation is housed in two different buildings and some laboratories are too small for group sizes or inadequately furnished. Time is wasted by students and staff moving between buildings, and the poor standard of repair in a few areas is unacceptable. The difficult site is well cared for by an efficient site manager and team.

Resources for learning

33. The provision of resources is satisfactory overall. The school library has a good stock of books, although a small number are not in good condition, and are in the process of being replaced. The provision of computers for students' use is better than the national picture. In subject areas, there is some variation in the provision of learning resources. In geography, provision is very good, with electronic boards in both teaching rooms and very good resources provided for group activities. Provision is good in history and in ICT. However, in English, and in modern foreign languages there are not enough books provided in lessons, so that students have to share. There is a need for better datalogging equipment in science and more resources for composition in music. Books in modern foreign languages are not at the right level for some of the teaching groups and this adds to students' underachievement. In addition, in art and design, there are shortages of materials, particularly for three-dimensional work, and this is restricting the range of experiences on offer to students in Years 7 to 9, although statutory requirements are met.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care, welfare and safety is good. They are provided with very good support, advice and guidance. The school involves students satisfactorily through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a wide range of innovative measures providing high quality support and guidance for the considerable numbers who need it.
- The quality of careers advice and guidance is excellent.
- Year 7 students are receiving good guidance, helping them settle in well.
- The school council does not provide students with enough responsibility to organise and decide things for themselves.
- Heads of Year appropriately recognise their next step is to involve themselves and form tutors more in monitoring students' academic progress.

Commentary

34. The very good levels of support and guidance students receive through many different networks and strands of care are a main strength of the school. Central to these are the learning mentor team, learning support unit and the developing role of heads of year. There are

sophisticated methods to identify students who need extra adult support, to help them overcome problems preventing them from learning as well as they could.

35. The range of support includes specialist counselling, or just the chance to talk to someone who listens and cares. Courses held outside school, for instance, involving basic skills combined with practical activities such as bricklaying, are keeping more boys in education. These systems are working very well and are one main reason why the numbers of students leaving with a GCSE qualification have significantly risen, because students have been so well supported throughout their studies.
36. Systems ensuring students' welfare needs are taken care of are good. Child protection procedures are well established and the named person with responsibility is extremely experienced and holds a key position in supporting students. Health and safety procedures are adequate and improving.
37. It was possible to see how well the new Year 7 students were settling in, as the inspection took place at the start of the academic year. Staff are good at identifying those who may have trouble in adjusting to secondary life and provide a network which enables them to resolve potential problems. There is much good practice in the arrangements supporting students' move from primary to secondary.
38. For example, small groups of Year 7s meet with staff in the Learning Support Unit, who find out how they are settling in and get to know them better. In discussion with inspectors, students said they appreciated attending the special transition² clubs (held in the summer holiday and in Year 6) run by Learning Mentors, which helped them become more confident and reassured. The school benefits extensively from funding for a team of Learning Mentors, through the Excellence in Cities initiative.
39. Heads of year appropriately recognise the pastoral system needs developing further to focus more sharply on monitoring students' academic performance. This is in order to raise the numbers of students achieving five A*-C grades in GCSE. Currently, form tutors have limited involvement in monitoring the progress of their students. However, the further introduction of progress days, where tutors meet with parents and students to set targets for improvement, is a move in the right direction. The system for setting targets for students and tracking their progress is very well planned and used effectively for identifying those who need extra support.
40. The large main school council operates satisfactorily. Students have been involved in improving the catering facilities; they have given their opinions about behaviour around the school and raised money for others in need. However, opportunities to develop students' independence have been missed. They do not have any money of their own which they could use for school improvements. The council does not have students in positions such as chair, secretary and treasurer. Students say the large numbers involved makes decision-making more difficult. The students in the Year 11 council have more autonomy and responsibility for the way it works.
41. The school takes good care of students with special needs. All students are equally and highly valued. Teachers of students with hearing impairment and other physical problems are given good advice about how to support these students and do so effectively. This illustrates the strong commitment of the headteacher and senior staff to the support and progress of students on the special needs register and the good quality of specialist staff.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

² Transition in this context describes the move from primary to secondary school.

The partnership with parents is good. There are some very good business links. Relationships with primary schools and other educational establishments are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are supportive of the school; it is popular and oversubscribed.
- There are very strong links with the business world.
- Staff keep parents well informed about how their child is getting on.
- Yewlands has a highly productive partnership with local primaries.

Commentary

42. The school is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. Parents are generally happy, as confirmed in their own recent survey of opinions.
43. However, parents at the meeting with Ofsted inspectors were particularly concerned about the way the school gives homework. Inspectors found that the quality of homework is satisfactory. Some of it is finishing off but it is regularly set and does reinforce learning in lessons. The school plans to review the use of homework.
44. The quality of information to parents about how their child is getting on is good. In addition to interim and full reports, the school is in the middle of introducing progress days for all year groups. This is a day when the timetable is suspended and parents, students and form tutors meet to talk about how students are getting on and set targets for improvement. Attendance at these days has so far been high, because staff have gone out of their way to encourage parents to attend. Reviews of students with special educational needs are carried out as required.
45. The partnership with primary schools has developed considerably since the arrival of the new headteacher. She firmly believes in the importance of schools working together to share good practice and help improve performance. A new joint teaching and learning policy, resulting from everyone working together in this spirit, is now in place. Music is an area where there is much good practice in the work between primary and secondary. There are shared staff teaching music to both primary and Yewlands students, and standards in music are rising as a result.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. As a result, standards are rising and the school is coping successfully with a difficult financial situation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has an outstanding sense of purpose and is an inspiration to all staff.
- There is very good teamwork at all levels and policies and procedures are clear and effective.

Commentary

46. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has a very clear and detailed vision of the way the school should develop and has established an appropriate and achievable range of priorities. These include raising the aspirations of all members of the school, including parents; improving learning by making it more flexible and active; and ensuring

that all students are fully included in the school. The steady decline in the number of students leaving without any qualification is proof that these policies are beginning to show success. The headteacher consults widely across the whole-school community so that all views are taken into account and all members of the community are more likely to share in its ambitions. She takes firm action where necessary. She is very active in enlisting the support of agencies which can help the school, for example, in providing funds for much-needed new buildings. Her undoubted energy and enthusiasm for school improvement make her an excellent role model. There are, however, some areas that suffer while attention is being paid to others. For example, in 2004 the proportion of students achieving GCSE A*-C fell, while the concentration was more on ensuring that all students were gaining passes at A*-G.

47. The leadership team provides good support for the headteacher. It has benefited from reforms that the headteacher has made so that its members share the leadership role rather than simply managing different aspects of the school. Aspects of inclusion are very well managed, and have become integral to all the school does. Overall, including the provision for students with special educational needs, inclusion is good. The leadership team plays a major role in decision-making but is at pains to ensure there has been full consultation before doing so. The quality of leadership of heads of department is good. It is particularly strong in art and design and design and technology, where standards have improved rapidly. Only in modern foreign languages is leadership unsatisfactory, and this is an area where the senior leadership team is not active enough in providing support.
48. The governors fulfil their role well. They take part in the life of the school. For example, they play an active role in looking at the key issues identified in the school improvement plan. They gain further information about the school by attending sub-committees chaired by members of the leadership team. Governors played an important part in solving a complicated problem concerning a budget deficit. The governing body has met all the key issues for action listed in the previous inspection report and meets all its statutory duties.
49. The member of the leadership team with responsibility for inclusion plays a major and positive role in ensuring that all students in the school are valued and equally provided for. Leadership and management of students with special educational needs are good. Special needs staff work exceptionally well together as a team. The newly appointed co-ordinator has settled in very quickly and has already had a positive impact on current practice and future planning for the department. Much of the day-to-day management of the department is ably carried out by the specialist teacher and the higher learning support assistant. Teaching assistants are enthusiastic and caring in their support for students and, as well as devising activities and support materials to help students make progress, they regularly meet to discuss and monitor the progress of students. Accommodation is well planned to allow easy access to facilities for mentoring and behavioural support. The result is a fully integrated department that benefits students with continuing special needs and those who have short-term difficulties. Independent education plans are mixed in terms of quality. Older-style ones are overcrowded with information and not easy to use on a day-to-day basis. New, clearer ones, with short-term measurable targets, are being developed and their introduction is being well managed by the co-ordinator.
50. The school manages staff recruitment, deployment and training well. Where financial constraints have forced the school to make cuts, they have been done sensibly, on the basis of priorities in the curriculum. Imaginative use is made of non-teaching staff to release teachers from administrative tasks, or to provide specialist non-teaching support for students' personal needs and development. The school improvement plan explains clearly where additional staff are to be employed and used as finances become easier. Currently a member

of the leadership team is dealing with finance. The school recognises the urgent need for a business manager and is planning to appoint one soon. There are insufficient classroom assistants.

51. The two advanced skills teachers are used very effectively to improve teaching and learning standards and to spread good practice to all departments. Training for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is well planned and takes good account of the needs both of the whole school and of individuals.

Finance and efficiency

52. The school is dealing effectively with a shortfall of funds resulting from earlier ineffective accounting practice. It is greatly to the credit of the leadership team and the governing body that the school is now recovering from the stringent economies that have had to be made. Through the agreement and support of the local education authority the school now has a balanced budget. Departments manage their budgets efficiently and systems for day-to-day financial control are effective. The difficult site is well cared for by an efficient site manager and team.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--|----------|
| Total income | 3,368,535 | Balance from previous year | -297,822 |
| Total expenditure | 3,279,855 | Balance carried forward to the next year | -254,598 |
| Expenditure per student | 3,753 | | |

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES - Work related learning

The provision for work-related learning is **excellent**.

53. The school has long had a reputation for the excellence of its careers education, and has built successfully on this in its work-related learning (WRL) programme. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and highly skilled and makes sure that careers and WRL feature in subjects across the curriculum. While not all students follow vocational courses, all learn about the world of work through a very well planned careers course, through identified links to subjects such as science, and through a very well planned work experience programme. Careers education is integral to weekly personal and social education lessons, so that by the age of 13 all students have a good idea of the opportunities open to them. Links with the local organiser for work experience and with around 40 individual employers ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience life in a place of employment, where they get a good all-round picture of what goes on.
54. Students following the ASDAN³ course and those who are following work-related individual programmes benefit from the focused advice and teaching that allows them to choose further education courses or employment wisely.
55. The school has good standing in the community, especially with the business fraternity. So much so, that 65 delegates attended a recent lunch to discuss the school's vision for the future. These business links are a key component of the school's excellent work-related

³ Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

curriculum. They are especially well used during mock interview day, which is an important event for all Year 11 students. A good number of well known companies support the school. For example, a steel company helped with team building last year and a pharmaceutical company is involved with the science department.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average.
- Improving teaching and learning are having a positive effect.
- Achievement is satisfactory.
- Low levels of literacy and lack of self-confidence limit progress.

Commentary

56. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were well below average. They were below average overall for students in similar schools, although the proportion achieving higher grades matched that average. The trend over the last three years is one of improvement.
57. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average. Most students lack confidence in speaking. They have limited vocabularies and their speech is often indistinct. This contributes to their failure to listen supportively to each other or with proper attention to teachers. Most read with satisfactory understanding of at least the main ideas. For fuller understanding they are heavily dependent upon help from teachers. The quality of writing is below average, although much improved from the time of entry. Students can organise lengthy pieces of work and communicate, especially when using computers. Many show increasing ambition in their choice of words. Too often the quality of work is reduced by errors in spelling words in everyday use and in using full stops and capital letters. The minority of high attainers use wide vocabularies, read and write confidently and accurately, and contribute maturely to discussion. Examples of such good standards were noted especially in Years 7 and 8. Students from ethnic minority heritages match the attainments of others.
58. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average in English language and above average in English literature, where the proportion entered was well below national figures. The proportions gaining grades A to C and, especially, A to G have improved during recent years. Girls attained more highly than boys. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average. Poor listening skills, inaccurate writing and unwillingness to accept responsibility for their own learning continue to limit students' progress. Higher-attaining students are confident in writing about literature and support judgements with evidence and explanation. Students with learning difficulties, including very weak language skills, show good improvement, especially when withdrawn in small groups for specialist help.

59. Achievement generally is satisfactory when standards are compared with those reached earlier but the improvement is insufficient to match national averages. The main obstacles to learning are low levels of literacy and poor confidence.
60. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and leads to satisfactory learning. It is often good and occasionally either very good or excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They usually plan lessons carefully with links to future and previous work. They explain tasks clearly. They set a good pace and vary activities to help students sustain concentration. In the best lessons, very good management encourages all students to work with a willingness to share responsibility for their learning. Learning is less effective when some students resist teachers' efforts, usually because the pace of lessons is uneven, or students lack skills needed to work effectively in groups.
61. There has been satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. There is good leadership and sensible sharing of responsibilities among teachers in the department. Management is satisfactory rather than good because energy is dissipated by aiming at too many targets and there is insufficient monitoring of marking and assessment of students' work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Learning in most subjects is limited by students' weak language skills. Most enter with restricted vocabularies. They offer only short answers to questions and are reluctant to listen to each other. Spelling of common words and the misuse of full stops and capital letters are major weaknesses. Students respond well to encouragement to widen vocabularies, as was seen in a very good lesson in food technology. Improving accuracy is seen in some work in English. Provision to raise standards is inconsistent and therefore unsatisfactory. The absence of drama reduces opportunities to develop communication skills and this is a significant weakness.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in French and German are not high enough and many students under-achieve.
- Teachers set a good example to students, manage them well and encourage good relationships.
- Management of the department has not got to grips with the causes of under-achievement.
- Very few students choose to study a foreign language after the age of 14.
- Students with learning needs taught in small groups achieve well.

Commentary

63. The modern foreign languages department has suffered in recent months from several changes of staff which have taken their toll on teachers' morale and on students' achievement. These changes have been managed with admirable commitment but have not allowed the time or energy to move forward and tackle the underlying causes of students' under-achievement. As a result, foreign languages are not seen as a popular choice and the large majority of students give them up as soon as they can. However, the

new academic year starts with greater stability and the opportunity of improving the quality of what is on offer.

64. In 2003, GCSE results in French and German were well below the national average, although they had improved over the previous year. The large majority of students took a GCSE in one of the two languages and many did well to gain a GCSE grade. Consistent with the national picture, girls did much better than boys. However, higher-attaining students did not achieve a grade A* or A in either language. In 2004 very few students were entered for a foreign language so their results cannot be compared with previous years.
65. Standards in the small group of Year 11 students studying French are well below average. Most of them are currently under-achieving because of the serious disruption in the continuity of their teaching last year. These students have limited understanding of spoken French. Their attempts at writing under controlled conditions, however, show a fair grasp of verb tenses at a simple level and the more gifted linguists remember pre-learned phrases accurately. Their good attitude and capacity for hard work promise well for the rest of the course. In Year 9, too, standards are well below average, although the highest-attaining students, boys as well as girls, are capable of work, particularly writing and reading in French, which is above average. It is in speaking and listening, however, where most students are under-achieving. They have had too little experience of hearing spoken French and of practising speaking. As a result, most students in Year 9 are very limited in what they can say. Students with learning needs achieve well. They are taught appropriately in small groups and enjoy their experience of learning French. Younger students learning German have better accents and pronunciation than older students and are achieving satisfactorily.
66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although much of it is better than this. At its best, teaching is vivid and engaging, using a lot of colourful visual stimulus and involving students actively in speaking. Pleasant, good-humoured relationships contribute well to a good learning atmosphere. Most students are well behaved. In such conditions they thrive and learn well, and with real enjoyment. This applies equally to students with learning needs. Much of the teaching is carefully planned, new points are clearly explained and students are skilfully managed. However, teachers do not follow this through by systematic oral practice of the new language. Students are often too passive and the highest attainers are not pushed hard enough and challenged to go beyond the ordinary. Their learning in such cases is restricted to what the teacher has told them rather than what they themselves have done. In this context there is scope for much more active pair and group work, and the use of more colourful visuals.
67. Teachers have made the most of poor accommodation that is ill suited to the needs of an up-to-date languages department. However, they do not have enough good new audio-visual and ICT resources to supplement their teaching. Students of all levels of attainment, but most especially those who are keen, able linguists, would benefit from activities such as trips and exchanges abroad to enrich their experience of learning a foreign language.
68. The department currently lacks direction and clarity of vision and therefore leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Provisional leadership has not been able to move the department on by identifying the causes of persistent under-achievement and taking appropriate action to put things right. Teachers are not all teaching at their best because they have not been made aware of what needs to be improved. There is no systematic sharing of

good practice through observation and monitoring of teaching. Schemes of work and the department's improvement plan are superficial and do not go to the heart of what needs to be done. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. The reservations in the previous report about the importance of stretching high attainers and of practising more speaking remain to be tackled. With a more stable staff and fresh support from senior management, the department is well placed to improve.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good and is a key reason for the improving standards.
- The well-planned curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of different groups of students.
- Weak literacy skills are hampering students' progress in mathematics.
- ICT is not used consistently enough by all students, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

69. Students' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average, and for a significant minority it is very low.
70. The Year 9 national test results have risen steadily since the previous inspection. In 2003 these results were below average, compared with ones that were previously well below. These results are broadly in line with similar schools. The test results for 2004 are similar to those for 2003.
71. The GCSE results have also risen steadily. The 2004 results were better than those for 2003; in both years these results were well below average. School data shows that these students had lower attainment on entry than the current Year 7. Most students in 2003 did as well as expected. However, a small proportion did not. Major factors in this were staffing problems and poor attendance from some Year 11 students.
72. Standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection are below average, with higher attainers reaching above-average standards. The improving standards in Year 9 are having a positive impact on standards in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11 higher attainers are also reaching well-above-average standards. However, overall standards in Year 11 are still well below average. Poor attendance is one reason and, although staffing issues have been largely resolved, the cumulative impact remains with some older students.
73. Standards are similar across most aspects of mathematics but are weaker in the application of mathematics to unfamiliar situations. The impact of the Key Stage 3 strategy is seen in the way teachers emphasise the importance of talking about methods and reasoning, and encourage students to widen their vocabulary. However, many students, especially average and lower attainers, are reluctant to give anything other than very brief answers to questions. Many students also find it difficult to interpret word-based questions, although when the problem is explained to them they are able to carry out the mathematics successfully. These weak literacy skills are hampering their progress in mathematics.

74. Achievement is satisfactory overall for nearly all students in Years 9 and 11. The well-planned curriculum, matched to the needs of different groups of students, is one reason for this. Great care is taken to develop innovative programmes, for example, the boys-only class in Year 9, based around sporting topics. This has had a very positive effect on boys who otherwise were likely to underachieve. Students with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, generally achieve satisfactorily; smaller classes and the presence of teaching assistants help them to make progress. However, sometimes groups are too large and there is not enough additional support for the least able students. This affects students' progress, especially of those with emotional and behavioural special needs. There is some variation by gender in the results but no overall trend. In class, attainment is similar, but boys are more likely than girls to be boisterous during lessons and prevent all from learning as effectively as they could.
75. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with about half the teaching observed good or very good. There was only one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory; this was because students did not do sufficient work to make progress. Teaching is well planned to make the best use of lesson time. All teachers use questions well to find out what students have remembered from previous work and what topics need to be further reinforced. Many students come to mathematics lessons without a keenness to learn. Teachers work hard to overcome this. Students improve and widen their knowledge and skills base as a result of patient, persistent teaching. This helps students to settle down and work hard. When teaching is very good, the lively, carefully crafted and structured methods generate an enthusiastic approach from students. A feature of very good teaching is excellent class management skills; these help some disaffected students, especially boys, to learn effectively.
76. ICT is used to help students learn, more regularly in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. There are many opportunities for older students to use ICT, for example, in their coursework. However, it is not used consistently enough by all students. The department recognises this as an area for development.
77. Leadership is very good and management is good. The school has had considerable difficulties in recruiting mathematics teachers. However, a specialist team of teachers is now in place, with just one vacancy filled by a supply teacher. The very strong leadership of the head of department is a key reason for the overall improvement of standards and the satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. This has been even more difficult to achieve because of the time she has had to spend dealing with staffing problems.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. Students' mathematical skills are below average but are sufficient for the requirements of most subjects. There is currently no numeracy co-ordinator and this is slowing down the planned systematic development of these skills across the curriculum. Students can tabulate and plot the results of experiments in science and can interpret graphs. Students have the required skills for work in design and technology as they can measure, draw and cut out with a reasonable degree of accuracy. There is particularly good practice in geography where students interpret population and other statistics and present information in well-annotated maps, graphs and diagrams.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests are improving but remain well below average.
- Information technology is increasingly used to interest and stimulate students' learning.
- Systems for tracking students' progress over the length of a course are used well.
- Inconsistent marking of students' work does not give help on how to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop their skills of writing.
- The unsatisfactory standard of accommodation is having an effect on some students' learning.

Commentary

79. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were well below average but only just below the target set by the school. In relation to similar schools, the results in the same year at average levels were in line with national figures and above at the higher levels. Over the past three years, results showed improvement but remained well below national figures and dropped in 2004. Students' work seen in many lessons is better than the examination results but is overall below average. However, several groups are working at or above national levels, such as an upper band Year 9 who could understand and predict how different metals produced their salts when reacting with different acids. The majority of students achieve satisfactorily from their starting points in Year 7, including many of those with special needs, particularly when supported by specific resources matched to their needs. However, in some large groups without additional support, many students do not achieve as well as they could.
80. GCSE results for the double science award in 2003 were significantly below national figures both at the higher grades and when compared to other subjects in the school. Boys' results in science were significantly below other subjects and ten per cent below the girls' results. GCSE results improved in the three years up to 2003 but remained well below national figures. In 2004, in the first group to take triple science, not all students passed all three subjects at the higher grades and the results for double science were also much lower than in previous years. Standards of work seen reflect the examination results and are overall below average, with variation amongst the groups. However, the majority of students achieve satisfactorily during their GCSE course. Students taking triple science are working at average levels and can, for instance, calculate the solubility of various chemicals and plot graphs to show how it varies with temperature.
81. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school but better in the first three years, where it is good. All teachers plan lessons well to include many different tasks to keep students interested. Despite this, the 100-minute double period is too long for many students, particularly in the lower bands, and this affects learning. The best lessons include activities which constantly challenge students' thinking, such as Year 8 building their ideas about the combination of features children could inherit from their parents. Teaching methods which stimulate students' interest, such as the use of new technology or practical work, are also successful in keeping students involved and learning. Behaviour is generally satisfactory and any low-level disruption is handled firmly, employing the school behaviour strategy.
82. Where teaching is less effective, students are not involved, lose concentration and do not learn well. Teachers' expectations are often not high enough in terms of what students will complete and to what standard. This is particularly true of written work, where students'

work is often untidy and incomplete. Students copy texts and are given insufficient opportunity to develop their own skills of writing.

83. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is now increased and improved use of examination data to track students' progress and set targets. Use of the Key Stage 3 strategy has sharpened teachers' planning. However, as mentioned at the last inspection, there is still much inconsistency in the marking of students' work, which rarely gives indications of how to improve. Science accommodation is still unsatisfactory and affects the learning of several groups owing to its small size or lack of facilities. Students use ICT for research but there is only enough datalogging equipment for it to be used for demonstrations.
84. The head of department leads the team well and has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. He heads a team of science specialists with varying lengths of experience who work well together and are well supported by the two technicians. The annual development plan outlines the key issues to be addressed and at present the management of these is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

- GCSE results were well above average in 2003.
- Students are interested in the subject, and their keenness contributes to their good achievement.
- There is no tracking or assessment of ICT capabilities of those students who do not take a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

85. Standards of work by students in Year 9 are average. By this stage they recall and make good use of a range of skills they have developed in previous years to complete short projects. This involves using mainly word processing and desktop publishing. The Key Stage 3 national ICT strategy is now being used, and is beginning to help students understand how to use different software programmes. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is good, as students produce work of average standard even though they have had little experience of using some software programmes in their primary school.
86. Over the past three years GCSE results have been well above average, and for many students ICT is their best subject. Generally girls do even better than boys by a small margin. Standards of students' work in the current GCSE groups in Year 11 are above average. Students are working enthusiastically on their second major project, where they are expected to justify and make use of relevant software. For example, they have a good understanding of database structure and the advantages of using a database. Their achievement, including that of students with special educational needs, is good.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and in the GCSE groups it is good. Teachers have good understanding of their subject, and this helps them plan lessons well. This is particularly good in GCSE lessons, where teachers also have very good understanding of examination board requirements, and set helpful targets for students. This means that students are very clear about what they need to do to achieve maximum marks in coursework and examinations, and this is a significant contributor to

their results. The additional GCSE classes held twice each week after school are a feature of good provision because they enable students to take an additional GCSE. Students also benefit from the good access to computers across the school as well as in the specialist areas.

88. Teachers have good relationships with students, who are interested in the subject, keen to find out more and behave well in lessons. This is a significant factor contributing to progress in lessons and overall achievement. In the GCSE classes this is particularly evident. In some lessons lower down the school, teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of students' capabilities and planned activities are not sufficiently well matched to the varied levels of understanding. In Years 7 to 9, students are not always clear enough about how well they are doing and how to improve, because there is not enough use made of National Curriculum or similar levels in assessment.
89. The curriculum is satisfactory for students in Years 7 to 9; however, the monitoring of provision for students in Years 10 and 11 not taking a GCSE course is unsatisfactory.
90. The leadership of the subject within the department is good. Teaching is monitored effectively and there is good day-to-day management of teachers and resources. However, co-ordination and management across the school in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory because, although all students use ICT regularly and competently in most subjects, there is no tracking of these students to ensure they receive their full entitlement of ICT, nor to assess their attainment accurately.
91. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection, with improved resources with more computers and interactive whiteboards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. Most but not all departments have planned use of ICT in their schemes of work. Teachers have successfully undertaken training to develop their skills in the use of ICT in their subjects. There is satisfactory use of ICT by teachers and students in the majority of subjects. There is very good use of ICT in geography, and good use in history, English and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in music and modern foreign languages. There is some imaginative use of ICT in science, particularly of research and communication software, but datalogging equipment is out of date and used only for demonstration purposes. There is a high demand on computer rooms in the school, and the establishment of a CLC adjacent to the school has helped increase opportunities for departments. In the geography department very effective use is made of interactive whiteboards in teaching; in history the planned use of the CLC makes up for the lack of computers in the department. In music, students in Years 7 to 9 are not able to use computers to help with their composition, and in modern foreign languages there is no planned or systematic use of ICT. Overall, the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and monitoring are raising standards.
- Very good provision and imaginative use of ICT enrich teaching and broaden learning.
- Good support for colleagues ensures consistency in teaching.
- Students have too few opportunities for developing speaking at length.
- Marking does not identify skills and targets for improvement.

Commentary

93. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 have significantly improved to near average. Students write accurately using geographical terms and factual knowledge to understand the impact of human intervention and natural activity in a range of countries across the world. Poetry helps to explore human aspects. Graphical skills and interpretation of maps, diagrams and data develop well, helping to illustrate the effects of erosion on coastal features or the characteristics of ecosystems. There are insufficient opportunities for students to express alternative points of view and write for different audiences. Research, presentations, data analysis and editing develop through expertise with ICT. Insufficient Specialised Teaching Assistants in unusually large special educational needs groups compromises the learning of some students. Given the low attainment levels on entry, all students' achievement is good. Students with special educational needs also achieve well overall. Learning is particularly effective when there is a classroom assistant to support them. In some large groups they struggle when there is no support.
94. In 2003, GCSE results were below average, substantially improved over three years, as have numbers choosing geography. Results fell in 2004 but were well above predictions, indicating success with monitoring progress and setting targets. Students at risk (some because of poor attendance) are supported in examination preparation in various ways. They access the CLC website for homework and resources. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average, although achievement is satisfactory considering previous attainment. Predictions for 2005 suggest continuing improvement.
95. At this stage students apply accumulated knowledge about land use, climate and economics to synthesise and explain factors affecting development and response to natural and human influences. They build up and compare case studies to illustrate, for example, why Bangladesh, Mississippi and York have different responses to floods. ICT skills, especially for those with literacy problems, enrich coursework about Stanton Moor Quarry and the Lower Don Valley. Students integrate well geographical observations and imaginative comments about people's fear of change. Higher-attaining students are comfortable with conflicting views and apply appropriate language and tone for various letters to planning officers, for example.

96. Teaching is good, often very good, when activities in pairs and groups challenge students to rationalise decisions and produce an agreed response within deadlines. Interactive whiteboards focus students' interest with high quality images, accelerate learning by interchanging information and instructions instantly, build up diagrams from question-and-answer sessions and keep objectives in view. Teachers mostly assess learning with reference to objectives so students recognise progress. Marking is not specific enough to identify skills achieved in a piece of work nor for setting targets for improvement. Teachers' questioning skills are variable and students are not given sufficient opportunities to develop longer explanations or speculate and consider others' views.
97. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because of good leadership and management. Regular meetings, support for colleagues and lively learning activities all contribute to rising standards. Monitoring performance needs to include lesson observations.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New leadership has resulted in better teaching and rising standards.
- ICT underpins learning, creative projects and outstanding resources.
- Shortage of textbooks limits extended writing and extensive source analysis in Years 7 to 9.
- Large lower sets and insufficient specialist support compromise learning.

Commentary

98. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average. Students understand the evolution and effects of social, economic, political and religious change. They make judgements, using knowledge and terminology accurately about the legacy of lifestyles, movements, inventions and human experience from Roman times to 20th century Britain and Europe. They develop the historian's skill of speculating from field observations in Conisbrough and battlefields in Belgium. Internet, computer presentations, analysis and interpretation of numerical information and evaluating each other's work develop independence and responsibility. Since students arrive in school with well-below-average attainment, this represents good achievement. Creative and analytical writing of higher-attaining students is insufficiently developed to allow them to structure long studies based on text sources and therefore improve their literacy.
99. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of skilful teaching and specialist support from classroom assistants. Lower sets are much larger than usual, with a wide range of learning difficulties, and as there are not enough classroom assistants, it is difficult for teachers to use more adventurous activities that develop responsibility and independence.
100. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average. Very few students took history – little changed over three years. Better teaching led to dramatically increased numbers in 2004. Although results were below average, there were more A* and A grades than for three years, with boys doing particularly well. Analysis of results and target setting support improved assessment and good support for examinations. Consequently, standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 have risen to below average, and much-improved GCSE

results are predicted for 2005. This represents good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs.

101. At this stage, students evaluate and make inferences from sources, impressively demonstrated in ICT coursework on the virtual Museum of Abbeydale Industrial Village. In work on Medicine through Time, the Plains Indians and Homesteaders, they apply knowledge to make moral judgements about the nature of progress and its links with culture. Note making is insufficiently developed as a study tool.
102. Teaching is good overall, and in Years 10 and 11, some is very good or excellent. Overall, very good planning, imaginative resources and good questioning make students think. Clear “starters” and ends to lessons and learning objectives shared with students mean they know how they learn. Older students appreciate how changed teaching styles stimulate them and help them to make progress. Literacy is integral to every lesson and students regularly read aloud, scan text and explain using appropriate terminology. Teachers’ ICT skills are impressive and open up creative learning. Students have insufficient opportunities for extended talk to present a reasoned view, illustrated by evidence.
103. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. It is grounded in good leadership and management working to raise standards by improving teaching. Newly appointed, the head of subject has already made substantial changes based on high expectations and clear educational thinking. New systems for assessment and monitoring will take time to impact on standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE short course in 2003 were very low.
- Time allocation for the GCSE short course is not sufficient.
- Students are not sufficiently challenged to produce their best.
- Provision for students in Years 7 to 9 who have special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and management have improved since the previous inspection.
- There is only one specialist teacher.

Commentary

104. Standards of work seen by Year 9 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. As standards are below average on entry, this represents satisfactory achievement. Students have basic knowledge of the major world faiths. Many show that they understand why religious beliefs play an important part in the lives of the faithful. By Year 9, higher-attaining students have enough understanding to form their own reasoned opinions. Even so, the standard reached by these students is not as high as in most schools.
105. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE short course in religious studies. The proportions of students achieving grades A* to C and grades A* to G in 2003 were very low compared to national figures. This is partly explained by severe staffing difficulties.

The staffing situation improved in 2004 and results were significantly better. However, the amount of time allocated is not enough for most students to explore the subject in enough depth to obtain high grades.

106. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 shows that students continue to achieve satisfactorily. Standards are below average. Students consider wide issues such as belief in God and social and moral issues surrounding life and society. It is only the higher-attaining students, however, who examine such topics in the expected amount of depth and apply what they have learned to form their own philosophy. Most students know the teaching of the major religions on a number of such issues but are less able to develop their own ideas.
107. The standard of teaching is satisfactory. Only one teacher has very good subject knowledge. A number of classes are taught by non-specialist teachers who have to rely on support. Lessons are well planned and some imaginative methods are used. Teachers make the objective of the lesson clear to students and involve them in a number of relevant tasks, thus maintaining interest. Some homework extends students' learning but too often it consists merely of finishing off work begun in class. The main weakness is that there is no clear indication given that only a student's very best work is expected. Consequently, although learning is satisfactory, students often do not work hard enough to improve.
108. Teachers use a suitable system of levels to track students' progress in Years 7 to 9 and use GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. Thus both teachers and students know what progress is being made. However, comments on students' work do not relate to these levels or grades and therefore an effective way of showing students how to improve is lost.
109. In some classes in Years 7 to 9 there are too many students with special educational needs for the teacher to be able to take account of their individual difficulties. Consequently, although teaching assistants provide very effective support, many of these students do not make as much progress as they should. Senior management is aware of the problem and the development plan provides for additional classroom assistants as funds allow.
110. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The time allocation for the GCSE course is insufficient. The number of specialist teachers has decreased this year, leading to reliance on non-specialists. Not enough use is made of data in order to improve standards. On the other hand, the support given to the newly qualified teacher in the department is imaginative and effective. The schemes of work are helpful, particularly for non-specialists. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when both teaching and management were unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are below average but improving.
- Good teaching and learning are successfully helping to raise standards.
- The computer room is too small and restricts teaching and learning activities.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

111. Last year the new head of department and permanent staff began to raise standards despite difficulties with staffing and disruption to learning by the building programme.
112. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average but show a continuing improvement. This is because of the good quality of teaching and learning currently taking place. By Year 9, students are confident in their use of the design process and have satisfactory practical skills in all materials areas. Weak writing skills that restrict overall attainment are being improved.
113. GCSE results were significantly below the national average for students gaining grades A*-C in 2003. Provisional results for 2004 show a small improvement. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-G was above the national average in both years. The percentage of students entered was greater than seen nationally. Standards are currently below average but rising because of improved teaching and accommodation. A significant proportion of Year 11 students are reluctant to work hard in lessons and their coursework projects, particularly written work, are completed superficially. There are technical difficulties with computers that sometimes restrict their use. Standards in practical graphics are good. Work is presented imaginatively and shows good understanding of communication with potential consumers. Higher-attaining students, in all materials areas, have very well ordered folders and approach projects thoroughly. Students with special needs make similar progress to others because teachers provide suitably challenging work and closely monitor their progress.
114. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Students make very good progress with learning to use tools and materials new to them and use the design process to develop products. Year 7 students are developing a good technical vocabulary and are prepared to work independently. They have good attitudes. Year 9 students are more dependent on teachers. Students are achieving higher standards than expected in computer-aided design activities because they have very good attitudes to learning in these lessons. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, although some design skills are insecure and attitudes are less positive.
115. The quality of teaching is good overall, often very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They provide very good individual help so students of all abilities are suitably challenged. Teachers question students effectively to ensure they understand the work and can move on confidently to the next stages. Teachers mark work thoroughly and tell students how to improve. Assessment information does not provide a clear picture of individual progress.
116. Leadership is very good and the new head of department has made a very good impact on approaches to teaching and learning and the quality of accommodation. There is excellent co-operation between staff, including technicians. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement and there are realistic plans for future development. Health and safety issues raised in the previous report have been dealt with.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11, and students achieve very well as a result.
- There are not enough resources, and this restricts the range of activities in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management are very good, and results at GCSE have shown very strong improvement in recent years.

Commentary

117. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are average. Students' achievement is good, and they make good gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their colour work is bold, and they use bright yellows and lime greens to create lively abstract patterns. Their collage work is careful and considered, and they produce attractive mosaic designs based on the work of Antoni Gaudi. They also work well together on large group murals. However, there are not enough opportunities provided for students to work in three dimensions, and their skills in this area are not fully developed. This is because there are not enough resources provided, and this is restricting the range of activities on offer.
118. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average, and have shown very strong improvement in recent years. Most students did much better in their art and design than in most of their other subjects. Results in 2004 were at a similar level. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Students' achievement is very good, and they make much better progress than expected. Their self-portraits are of a high standard, showing a confident and sensitive use of line and tone in pencil. Observation skills grow rapidly, and students produce beautiful detailed studies of fruit and vegetables in coloured pencil and pastel. Their oil pastel studies of still life and plant groups are vigorous and colourful, and show a growing knowledge of the formal elements of art and design.
119. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. This is because students' attitudes are very good in Years 10 and 11, and teachers build very good working relationships with these older students. Strong features of the teaching and learning are the teachers' very high expectations, and the very high levels of individual advice that students receive. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students were expected to get down to work as soon as they came into the room, and to concentrate completely on their own work. The teacher spent considerable time with each student, showing genuine interest in their work, helping them to improve their skills with individual advice. The higher level teaching assistant was deployed effectively to meet the needs of some students and showed good knowledge of the subject and the students' needs. Students responded very well to this approach. Their attitudes and behaviour were excellent, and they were engrossed in their work. This created a very

positive learning environment, and very good learning was the result. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11, because of the high quality individual advice they receive from teachers, which helps them improve their work very effectively.

120. Course leadership and management are very good. There has been a focus on raising standards and results, by improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has been very successful. GCSE results have improved from a level that was below average to the current results that are now well above average. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore very good.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning overall are good.
- There has been good improvement since last inspection thanks to recent very good leadership and good management, but time for lessons is still too short and there are no computers for students' composition in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

121. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. Students play well in time with other players, and some respond sensitively. Their steady improvisations using a jazz scale are confident and show an appreciation of beat and rhythm. Higher attainers try more interesting rhythms and include appropriate jazz notes. In some lessons, students have difficulty in finding the notes on the keyboard, which hinders their progress. Overall though, standards are improving and achievement at this stage is good. Students with special educational needs in other subjects are in no way disadvantaged and their achievement is as good as that of others.
122. Students' performance in Year 11 is average. They have worked hard to reach these standards from a low base and their achievement is good. Most perform with some style, especially the singers. Students perform their composed Samba, keeping time well. One group recovered well after a shaky start because of faulty rhythmic writing. Recorded compositions show a good grasp of techniques and are effective and attractive to listen to. They use a single computer and appropriate software for this. Standards continue to improve, as shown in GCSE results. In 2003, four out of the ten students taking the GCSE examination achieved a grade between A* and C and all students gained a grade. There were too few students taking the examination to make reliable comparisons with national averages. In 2004, all four students passed and two achieved a grade C. Small numbers make comparisons unreliable between the years.
123. Teaching and learning are good and are enhanced by students' good attitudes. Some teaching is very good and excellent, so students work hard and enthusiastically and make very good progress. Students enjoy highly imaginative tasks. Strong links exist between every activity in the lesson and continue in homework. These build their skills, knowledge and understanding, for instance, in Year 7's pulse and rhythm lesson. All teachers follow

the same scheme, giving a real coherence to the programme. Students are clear what they have to do in lessons. Computerised white boards are very effectively used by all teachers and help provide the students with much information. In some lessons though, students lose their focus and concentration because the pace is slow and teaching not so enthusiastic. New teachers have not yet established effective relationships with their students. Also, students need regular access to keyboards and computers for composition. The latter are still not in place. They are urgently needed and will attract more boys to GCSE music. Students are assessed regularly but do not talk confidently yet about this.

124. Music has strong links with three primary schools. This highly creative arrangement will be beneficial for all students in the schools and for raising the profile of the subject in the community. Students enjoy music. They take part in extra-curricular groups and were very enthusiastic about the school production of 'Grease' at their first meeting. The development and growth of these activities are due to the enthusiasm of teachers.
125. Leadership of music is very good. The head of department in a short time has been responsible for the good improvement in standards and the development of composition since the last inspection. The department is well managed. The school still has matters to address though. In addition to lack of dedicated computers, the lessons are still too short, and classes in Years 7 to 9 are too large for effective practical work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are good and all staff show a commitment to raising the status and standing of the subject.
- The good quality of teaching leads to good learning.
- The standard of indoor accommodation for the subject is poor.

Commentary

126. Although the number of students gaining the higher A* to C grades is below the national average, there has been a significant increase in recent years in the number gaining these higher grades. Students' attainment in the examination compares very favourably with their attainment in their other subjects. Inspection evidence indicates that this improvement will continue as the current students in Years 10 and 11 are producing work of a good standard.
127. The formal assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9 show that standards of attainment in physical education are at least in line with those achieved nationally, with a significant number doing even better. Standards overall are above average. This judgement is confirmed by inspection evidence. This represents good achievement by students who often arrive at the school with standards below those expected of 11-year-old students. In games activities, particularly in soccer, rugby, hockey and netball, they demonstrate good levels of skill, and are aware of simple attack and defence strategies. This good progress is continued in Years 10 and 11. By the time students are 16 years old, they are demonstrating skills in a wide range of activities that are at least in line with

those seen nationally, with a minority of students, particularly those in the examination groups, doing even better. Standards overall are average.

128. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of work being set that is thoughtfully planned to meet their particular needs. Many students take part in a large number of inter-school matches and competitions and gain much success. Many students have represented Sheffield and South Yorkshire and a girl in the current Year 10 is the junior national fell running champion.
129. Teaching and learning in all lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory, with the majority judged to be good or very good, and a minority excellent. This is a major strength of the department. All teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. Classes are well organised and expectations of students are high. Teachers inject fun and enjoyment into their lessons and the vast majority of students respond very positively and enthusiastically.
130. The head of department has been in post for one year at the time of the inspection. In this short time she has had a significant impact on the work of the department, and leadership and management are already good. The head of department is a very good role model for the department and curriculum innovation is very good. The curriculum is now less games-orientated, and students have the opportunity to take part in a wider range of activities. Teachers are hard working and talented. They work well together, support each other, and show a strong commitment to their students.
131. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The number of students gaining the higher grade passes at GCSE has increased and students are now able to take part in a wider range of activities. Although the school now has a good all-weather pitch, the indoor accommodation remains poor.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school offers a sound range of examined courses in addition to the ASDAN youth award and work-based programme for students taking a limited number of GCSE and other accredited courses:

- Business studies.
 - Health and social care.
 - Computer and communications technology.
132. **Media studies** adds interest and variety to work in English. At GCSE, the subject is a popular option and in 2003, results matched the national average. The course is successful because teachers have very good knowledge of the topics covered and know how to gain the interest of students so that they want to increase their understanding. ICT is very well used to reinforce effective learning.
 133. **Business studies** is a popular course in which students with a wide ability range usually do well. Teaching is good and students apply their ICT skills well. Timetabling in Year 10 means that on one day four of students' six lessons are business studies, and their remaining two lessons are both on one other day. This has the advantage that students can spend time in business placements, though there are some days when such heavy concentration on one subject can be tiring and tax students' ability to concentrate fully.

134. **Health and social care** is well taught. Results are low because it is a popular choice of lower-attaining students. However, they achieve well in view of their low starting points.
135. **Computer and communication technology** is an accredited course enabling a group of students in each of Years 10 and 11 to acquire a basic grounding in computer architecture and system installation. It is an unusual but valuable addition to the curriculum and students following the course are achieving well and learning a highly marketable skill.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school has a programme of personal and social education, which runs through all years. This includes sex and drugs education. Many of the lessons are used to teach citizenship and careers. Citizenship is reported on in detail below.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good, and the course has been well planned and enthusiastically promoted.
- There are lively discussions in many lessons.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of assessment is weak, and they are not sure how well they are doing, or how to improve.
- There are not enough opportunities provided for most students to exercise responsibility.

Commentary

136. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average. Students' achievement is satisfactory, and they make sound gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. They learn about different systems of government, and the rights and responsibilities that shape our society. They recognise the importance of the election process, and they produce posters that encourage other students to vote for their council representatives. They help to improve the school environment by picking up litter, and they raise money for local charities. Their written work, however, is rather brief, and does not reflect the complexity of the issues they study. In addition, their knowledge of assessment is weak, so that they are not sure how well they are doing or how they can improve.
137. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 are below average. Students' achievement continues to be satisfactory. They draw up ground rules for debate, and discuss the importance of listening to others and accepting their views. They learn about employment laws and take part in very realistic mock interviews. They also learn first aid techniques and appreciate the importance of helping others. They discuss topical and controversial issues, such as abortion, with interest, and these discussions are often lively. However, there are not enough opportunities for most students to exercise responsibility in practical activities, either within the school or in the local community.

138. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, tasks are very active, the work is pitched at just the right level for the students, and the class is well managed. For example, in a lesson exploring leadership and democracy, the class were split into groups that elected their own leaders. The group members were then blindfolded, and had to carry out practical tasks, directed only by their leaders' voices. Students were excited and inspired by the lesson, and were highly motivated to succeed. Excellent learning was the result. In too many lessons, however, tasks are not active enough, or they go on for too long, and students lose interest and concentration. In addition, work is not always marked regularly enough. These factors restrict learning to a level that is satisfactory overall.
139. Course leadership and management are good. The course is well planned, and the subject has been enthusiastically promoted. All the main topics are well organised, and model lesson plans are used to help teachers with their planning for individual classes. The school council is well established, and has been successful in achieving change, for example, by providing litter bins for the school, and installing a vending machine which serves healthy snacks and drinks. However, it is too tightly run by staff to make a significant contribution to students' understanding of citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| Inspection judgement | Grade |
|---|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 4 |
| How inclusive the school is | 3 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 4 |
| Overall standards achieved | 4 |
| Students' achievement | 4 |
| Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos) | 4 |
| Attendance | 5 |
| Attitudes | 4 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 4 |
| Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 4 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 4 |
| The quality of teaching | 4 |
| How well students learn | 4 |
| The quality of assessment | 4 |
| How well the curriculum meets students' needs | 4 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 4 |
| Accommodation and resources | 5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Students' care, welfare, health and safety | 3 |
| Support, advice and guidance for students | 2 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on students' views | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 3 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 3 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 2 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 3 |
| The effectiveness of management | 3 |

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