

INSPECTION REPORT

CHURCHMEAD C of E (VA) SCHOOL

Slough

LEA area: Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Unique reference number: 133580

Headteacher: Mrs Gaynor Goodman

Lead inspector: Terence Parish

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th February 2005

Inspection number: 269624

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 643

School address: Priory Way
Datchet
Slough
Berkshire

Postcode: SL3 9JQ

Telephone number: 01753 542707

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of Mr Byron Thorne
governors:

Date of previous 18th November 2002
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is in the third year of being a Church of England Voluntary Aided school and also the third year of having a sixth form. The number of pupils makes it smaller than other secondary schools and the sixth form is much smaller than most. The local education authority to which the school belongs operates middle schools everywhere but in Datchet, where the school is located. Consequently, there are only two local authority primary schools that can 'feed' the school. Most pupils, typically around 80 per cent, come from a neighbouring authority, Slough; this authority operates grammar schools so, commonly, pupils coming to Churchmead do so having not succeeded in entering a grammar school. However, some likely come because Churchmead is not a grammar school and is seen as a better alternative to other non-grammar schools. There is a considerable range to pupils' socio-economic circumstances and they are below average overall. Standards on entry are also below average overall. One third of entrants are from diverse ethnic minority groups; the most significant numbers come from Asian British minorities. In addition a proportion comes from 'settled travellers'. Though significant numbers of pupils may speak a language other than English at home, typically none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average overall though the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. There is a significant amount of sixth form provision elsewhere in the local authority or in Slough and most potential sixth form students choose to attend such provision.

Glossary

The term 'Key Stage 3' is sometimes used and means 'Years 7 to 9'. It is often used in connection with national strategies to improve teaching and learning and hence raise pupils' achievement in these years.

The term 'Key Stage 4' is sometimes used as an alternative to 'Years 10 and 11'.

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15465	T Parish	Lead inspector	
19369	C Wild	Lay inspector	
22685	N Moss	Team inspector	English
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Science
21806	P Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology
32787	S Appleyard	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
29212	M Smith	Team inspector	French
8873	C Evers	Team inspector	History
20247	R Parry	Team inspector	Geography
30899	K Boden	Team inspector	Art and design; business studies
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Music
20192	T McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education; citizenship
7958	G Lewis	Team inspector	Special educational needs; media studies
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall, though it provides unsatisfactory value for money due to an inadequate sixth form that fails to attract sufficient students. Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form achieve satisfactorily overall. Standards of pupils' work are below average overall whilst standards of students' work in the sixth form are broadly average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher shows a clear sense of purpose which has been hindered by staffing difficulties, the creation of the sixth form in September 2002 and the slow development of the new school governing body from January 2003.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of work and pupils' achievement have improved following better staffing and management.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; they are good in English across all years, in art and design, history and physical education across Years 7 to 11, and also in geography and in music in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards of work in citizenship are well below average and statutory requirements are not met due to poor leadership and management.
- Standards in literacy are broadly average but significant numbers of lower attaining pupils have poor writing and speaking skills which hinder their achievement; pupils' skills in numeracy are below average.
- Though the attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are satisfactory overall, a minority misbehave at break-times and lunchtimes.
- Although the school strives to improve attendance and punctuality and both have improved, a significant number of pupils have low attendance rates or are late; too often parents do not take this seriously enough.
- The number of vocational options and pathways available in Years 10 and 11 is too limited.
- The sixth form curriculum is very narrow and does not meet the needs and aspirations of most of the pupils in the main school; students achieve very well in media studies and well in English literature and in business studies.

The last inspection placed the 11-16 school in serious weaknesses, primarily because of concerns then about the quality of teaching and learning, provision for pupils with special educational needs, weaknesses in assessment and areas of the curriculum, and ICT and design and technology not meeting statutory requirements. This inspection finds that the 11-16 school no longer has serious weaknesses though improvement does need to continue. Teaching is better, improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, assessment is satisfactory and improving rapidly, and ICT and design and technology are satisfactory and improving. The learning resource centre (library) is now good and used well by pupils. Improvement in the 11-16 school is satisfactory overall. The sixth form opened a few weeks before the last inspection, and has not lived up to expectations for growth; improvement in sixth form provision is poor.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses in one or more of its areas of activity for pupils over compulsory school age.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	n/a	D	E	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	n/a	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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily overall and by Year 9 and Year 11. Standards of work seen are below the national average overall. In 2004, neither achievement nor standards were good enough and statutory targets were not met at GCSE level, though they were met for English and mathematics at the end of Year 9. Recently improved staffing and developing management systems have improved provision and enabled pupils to achieve better and more consistently. No long term trends have been analysed as the school changed status in 2002. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in most subjects though standards of work are most often below average. Standards of work seen in English are average by Year 9 and Year 11 and pupils achieve well. Standards in mathematics and in science are below average by Year 9 and Year 11 but pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards of work in art and design are above average by Year 11 and pupils achieve well by Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils achieve well in physical education and attain average standards by Year 11. Standards of work are average in ICT, but pupils achieve satisfactorily and further improvement seems likely. Standards of work in citizenship are well below average due to poor leadership and management. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall. Standards in literacy across the school are broadly average though significant numbers of lower attaining pupils have poor writing and speaking skills which hinder their achievement and reduce their standards of work. Pupils have below average standards of numeracy; they cope with the basic mathematical demands in subjects but rarely develop their abilities. Students in the sixth form are achieving satisfactorily overall and standards are broadly average; standards in media studies are above average and pupils achieve very well; students achieve well in English literature and in business studies.

Pupils' personal qualities are satisfactory overall. Their moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but their spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall though a minority misbehave, particularly outside lessons. Attendance and punctuality remain unsatisfactory overall but the school tackles both rigorously and they are improving; some parents need to take more responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall and across all years. Teaching and learning are good in English across all years, in art and design, history and physical education across Years 7 to 11, and also in geography and in music in Years 10 and 11. Learning is poor in citizenship and within personal, social, and health education lessons (PSHE) in Years 7 to 11. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and recently much better staffing and better assessment practice are improving pupils' achievement. Teachers particularly encourage younger pupils, in Years 7 to 9, and older students, in Years 12 and 13, well. The teaching

and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall though not all teachers make effective use of support assistants or set appropriate work.

Care, guidance and support and the partnership with parents, other schools and the community are all satisfactory overall; community links are hindered by most pupils living elsewhere. The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall as there are too few vocational options, statutory requirements for citizenship are not met and insufficient potential students are attracted into the school's sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both satisfactory in the main school but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Governance is unsatisfactory as not all statutory requirements are met. Leadership has enabled the school to improve sufficiently so that it no longer has serious weaknesses. Governors have not yet come to full terms with what a voluntary-aided school is. Management has been improved with the help of national funding; systems to manage such things as behaviour and assessment have been well developed and now need consistent application. Finances have been managed very effectively but not with a view to overall best value; the sixth form is not in the interests of most pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both pupils and parents have very mixed views of the school and though most questionnaire returns said most pupils like the school, a very significant number of pupils and parents have negative opinions. Unsatisfactory behaviour, inadequate homework and too little assessment are common grounds for complaint. Inspectors agree that a minority of pupils misbehave from time to time and sometimes have effects out of proportion to their numbers; they also agree that homework is not a strength of work in the school and assessment is still developing, developing well in fact. However, behaviour is satisfactory overall and there is an air of overall improvement within the school, largely due to a better staffing situation than pupils and parents had to contend with up until the recent past.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to improve and build on good practice in teaching and learning so that they become good overall rather than satisfactory.
- Improve leadership and management of citizenship and of personal and social and health education and learning in both; time available at the start of the day needs to be more productive too.
- Further improve standards of literacy and of numeracy.
- Tackle the minority of pupils who misbehave more robustly.
- Improve further pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Improve curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11.
- Very rapidly address weaknesses in the sixth form (see sixth form summary).

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure citizenship is appropriately provided for.
- Ensure requirements for a daily act of collective worship are met.
- Ensure the governors' annual report to parents is complete.

THE SIXTH FORM AT CHURCHMEAD C of E (VA) SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **unsatisfactory overall** and consequently cost-effectiveness is unsatisfactory. Students are currently progressing well in lessons and teaching and learning are both good; however, overall achievement is only satisfactory because attendance is too low and recent examination results not good enough. Leadership and management have not been able to significantly increase student numbers and are consequently both unsatisfactory. The sixth form was opened just prior to the previous inspection with the help of considerable funding for accommodation; since then it has adversely affected provision within the main school without demonstrating that it can offer anything to students that is not available at other nearby sixth forms.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Current students are achieving satisfactorily overall, and do well in English literature, business studies and media studies.
- There were too many unclassified results at AS level in 2004.
- The curriculum is poor; it neither attracts sufficient students nor provides an adequate range of enrichment activities to promote improved key skills, including academic skills and social skills.
- Attendance is too low.
- Students enjoy the small class sizes, which mean they get good support.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses in one or more of its areas of activity for pupils over compulsory school age.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Standards are below average but students achieve well due to good teaching. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	No students are taking advanced courses. No students were participating in informal opportunities to improve GCSE mathematics results. Numeracy standards are below average overall.
Science	Provision in biology is good . Teaching is good and students are achieving well. Leadership and management of science are good; the very small numbers of students are managed within this sphere. No other advanced science courses are offered.
Information and communication technology	ICT was sampled. Teaching and achievement in the lessons seen were satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in media studies is good . Students achieve well due to good teaching and because of good leadership and management. This course has been particularly successful. A drama lesson was sampled; teaching, learning and achievement were

	satisfactory.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	An A-level physical education lesson was sampled; teaching, learning and achievement were good.
Business	Provision in business studies is good . Students achieve well due to good teaching and because of good leadership and management.
General education	All Year 12 students take an AS general studies course but it was not inspected. Over a third of the students received unclassified grades in 2004. All students taking A-level general studies attained A or B grades.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good advice and guidance overall; small groups mean they can receive individual assistance with their studies. A well-stocked library and very good ICT resources enable students to seek other advice and support too. A good prospectus has been put together and advice for prospective students is provided at an open day, though the most recent one was not well attended. Opportunities available at other centres are made clear; most prospective students, likely living closer to other centres, take up those opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory overall. This is not the fault of any particular person or office within the school. The sixth form was set up on the belief that it would rapidly expand; it has not and is likely to decline. Though current financial figures show that its expense more or less now balances the money provided for it, the sixth form continues to utilise staff time which could be better directed towards the main school. The curriculum is too narrow to attract more students and cannot be expanded without costing more. There is very little special management of current students necessary; subject heads of department look after the small numbers involved and do it satisfactorily or well depending upon the subject. Too many of the Year 12 students in 2004 attained ungraded AS levels. Current attendance, including negotiated study leave, runs at about 85 per cent; this is too low when a missing student can be a quarter of a class and student discussion and interaction are important.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most students spoken to had positive views about the sixth form. Small group sizes mean they get plenty of attention from teachers. In questionnaires, most indicated there were few worthwhile activities beyond lessons; many say careers advice is weak; most indicate that students' views are not well enough taken into account. Despite these opinions almost all enjoyed being a student in the sixth form.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and across all years. Students achieve satisfactorily in the sixth form. Standards are below average overall by Year 9 and by Year 11. Standards are broadly average in the sixth form; small groups make comparative judgements difficult.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, standards and achievement have improved from their values in 2003 and 2004.
- Pupils achieve well in English, art and design, and physical education.
- Standards in literacy across the school are broadly average though significant numbers of lower attaining pupils have poor writing and speaking skills which hinder their achievement and reduce their standards of work.
- Pupils have below average standards of mathematical competence; they cope with the basic mathematical demands in subjects but rarely develop their abilities.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall.
- Standards of work in citizenship are well below average due to poor leadership and management.
- Standards in media studies, in the sixth form, are above average and students achieve very well.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well in English literature and in business studies.

Commentary

1. Although end of Year 6 national test results indicate standards that are well below average on entry, other tests indicate standards are more typically below average; the below average proportion of pupils with special educational needs supports the latter interpretation. The last inspection report, just over two years ago, judged standards on entry to be below average and this inspection confirms that view.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (31.8)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (33.8)	35.5 (35.4)
science	n/a (30.4)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 129 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. As the school became effectively a new one from September 2002, national data is not available in the normal form by which trends in the school's performance can be determined. Statutory targets, those set by the school and ratified by the local education authority, were met for English and for mathematics in 2004 but not for science. Inspectors can confirm that, by Year 9, standards in English are improving

and are currently broadly average; test results in 2004 were below average but better than in 2003. In mathematics, standards of current work are below average by Year 9 and are similar to standards indicated by national tests in 2004 and in 2003. In science, standards of current work by Year 9 are below average but better than the likely well below average test results in 2004, themselves weaker than test results in 2003. Staffing is now much better in science. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well in English, and satisfactorily in mathematics and science. Overall, standards in Year 9 are currently rising, but remain below average overall, indicating satisfactory achievement in relation to standards at entry.

3. Standards and achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are broadly reflected across all other subjects by Year 9; standards in most are below average but pupils are achieving satisfactorily. In addition to English, standards in art and design are average and pupils are achieving well. Pupils are also achieving well in physical education, though standards remain below average overall; they start school with well below average standards in this subject. Standards are now average in ICT but pupils achieve satisfactorily by Year 9 rather than well due to staffing issues in the past; work is now showing signs of significant improvement, helped by good resourcing as well as the new head of department. Pupils are achieving poorly in citizenship as planning for it is poor and little work relevant to it is evident.
4. The standard of work produced by most pupils with special educational needs is below and sometimes well below national averages across all years. Pupils with such needs in Years 7 to 9 are taught in very small groups, which enhances their learning opportunities because of their almost individual attention; consequently they achieve well. Some older pupils are identified for specific courses to meet their needs, including the Prince's Trust group and some of the vocational education courses with work-related placements. Learning support assistants are effectively used to help pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The involvement of the local authority's Inclusion Service and support provided by the special educational needs advisor have made a valuable contribution to improving the effectiveness of learning support assistants. The fortnightly meetings led by the school's special educational needs co-ordinator have further enhanced assistants' involvement in planning for improving pupils' attainment and assessing and evaluating pupils' progress. Learning support assistants provide extra help for pupils having difficulty with literacy and/or numeracy. The progress units in English are led by a team of four teaching assistants. The proposed reorganisation of the banding system (grouping pupils by ability) will affect the numbers of pupils in special educational needs classes and will provide a greater opportunity for pupils to achieve in a wider variety of subjects. The present system prevents some pupils achieving as well as they could as the varying abilities of pupils across subjects are not always well enough catered for by teachers; a significant minority of pupils have poor writing and note taking skills whilst rather more do not develop mathematical competencies sufficiently.
5. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. The majority of these pupils are not at an early stage of English and are attaining similar standards to their peers. Of the small number of pupils whose English is at an early stage, most achieve satisfactorily due to additional specialist help and well-targeted support in the classroom. However, whilst new arrivals who had already acquired literacy in their own language make rapid progress, others who have been in the school longer but who arrived before acquiring literacy in their own language do not achieve as well. This is because their English has not been monitored any differently from that of any other pupil and has not matured well; this is now being addressed.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	29 (33)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.0 (31.0)	41.4 (40.6)

There were 122 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- GCSE results in 2004 were well below the national average overall, well below in the proportion of pupils attaining 5+ A*-C grades, and average for the proportion attaining 5+ A*-G grades and 1+ A*-G grades. The proportion of A*-B grades was very low compared to the national picture. No statutory targets were even close to being met and the overall result was weaker than in 2003, mainly because the number of pupils who attained no results at all rose. Historical data indicates that around 47 per cent of this school's pupils should attain 5 or more A*-C grades rather than the 29 per cent who were enabled to do so in 2004; the national average is currently 52 per cent. The statutory target of 48 percent in 2004 supports this view and the target for 2005, 43 per cent, is in line with it. Inspectors agree that the proportion should be between around 44 and 48 per cent. Surprisingly, analysis shows that, overall, pupils did as well as might be expected in the 2004 GCSE results. This analysis is based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002; as pupils certainly did not do as well as they should have done, then they must have underachieved in 2002.
- The local education authority analyses all results by gender and by ethnicity though such analyses are difficult to decipher; girls tend to do better than boys; pupils of British Asian ethnicities better than pupils of other ethnic groups. Inspectors agree with these broad analyses though there is variation across key stages and subjects; for example, the difference between the performance of genders increases in Key Stage 4; girls are currently achieving rather better in English whilst there is little difference in mathematics and science; pupils of Asian ethnic groups do particularly better in science.
- In 2004, English language results were below but not too far from national average results; English literature results were actually above average but not all pupils took the examination. Mathematics results were below average but better than many other results and better than those in science. Most pupils took a single GCSE qualification in science, which is not the case nationally and comparisons are difficult; the third who took the dual award attained below average results overall but the proportion of B-C grades was average. Subject results which really brought down the overall school picture were the very low results in French, which was taken by almost all pupils, and well below average results in history, geography, design and technology and music. In contrast, art and design results were above average; this subject was taken by almost half of the pupils. Drama results were close to average.
- Current work in Years 10 and 11 is better than that which examination results in 2004 describes; better staffing, leading to better teaching, is the main reason for this but middle management has also improved and the school's assessment system is getting better use and allows underachieving pupils to be identified. Standards are below

average overall but pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards in English are average and pupils achieve well; standards in mathematics and in science are below average and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards in most other subjects are below average but pupils achieve satisfactorily in them. Standards in art and design have improved further and are above average; pupils achieve well. Standards in ICT are average overall and more pupils are now following an ICT course, which suggests standards will rise further. Standards in physical education are now average; pupils achieve well. Standards in French are well below average, rather than the very low indicated by last year's examination results, but pupils achieve unsatisfactorily due to the several years of unsatisfactory provision they endured; teaching is now satisfactory. Standards in history are below average, but much better than last year and pupils are achieving satisfactorily thanks to good teaching; achievement is still hindered by their previous experiences. Standards in citizenship remain well below average and achievement poor. A significant minority of pupils still have weak literacy skills and this hinders their progress in mathematics, science, history and geography in particular. Weak numeracy skills hinder graph work in ICT.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.2 (n/a)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.5 (n/a)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	176.7 (n/a)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 6 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

10. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is variable, ranging from below to above average; it is typically below average overall for the range of courses taken.
11. Last year, 2004, was the first year in which students' post-16 results appeared on any analysis. Standards overall by Year 13 were well below average though the few students involved appear to have achieved broadly satisfactorily from their performance at GCSE in 2002. There were rather more examination entries for AS level examinations. Twenty-two students were involved and 84 examination entries made; 23 entries were unclassified and consequently standards were well below average and students achieved unsatisfactorily overall. Most subjects had some unclassified entries; English literature, media studies and drama did not. General studies had 21 entries but 8 were unclassified; information technology had 14 entries, 6 were unclassified. GNVQ foundation level ICT had 4 entries and all passed, three with merits; this is a GCSE standard examination.
12. Standards of the limited amount of work seen are broadly average overall and students are achieving satisfactorily. Five subjects were inspected during the inspection though few lessons could be seen of some due to timetabling; several other subjects were sampled and work was scrutinised. Some classes had very small numbers in them, making comparison of standards with national ones not very meaningful. Standards in English are below average and in media studies above average.
13. Standards of literacy are broadly average though students in business studies lack confidence in expressing views and their writing skills are not well developed. Numeracy skills are below average and there are no formal means of improving them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory; the attitudes and behaviour of sixth form students are good. Attendance and punctuality are both unsatisfactory. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In lessons, when teaching is good, the majority of pupils are interested and display good attitudes to learning.
- The majority of pupils behave well in and around the school but a significant minority of pupils misbehave at break-times and lunchtimes.
- Good relationships exist in the classroom.
- Pupils and students willingly take on responsible roles when they are available.

- Too many pupils do not attend regularly or punctually.

Commentary

14. In lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Their attitudes and behaviour reflect the quality of teaching. If teaching is good then the interest and cooperation of pupils follow; relationships between staff and pupils are good and sometimes very good. When teaching is satisfactory or weaker, then pupils' work rate sometimes reduces and they show a lack of concentration and focus, a few pupils become restless and teachers have to remind them frequently to be on task. When supervision is less restricted, such as at lunchtimes, most pupils queue sensibly in the dining hall and either play football or walk around the buildings chattering to their friends. The library is also popular with pupils and good numbers use the facility well. However, there is a significant number of pupils who show a lack of respect for adults and ignore requests by staff. These pupils sometimes display inappropriate behaviour that is not sufficiently challenged. The school recognises this and has put in place some work-related opportunities in Year 10 to cater better for disaffected pupils.
15. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good overall. Few incidents were seen where teachers or learning support assistants needed to intervene because pupils were not concentrating. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are dealt with through the pastoral system at the present time. It is planned that pupils with behavioural difficulties will also become part of the special educational needs co-ordinator's responsibility as the role is developed.
16. In the inspection questionnaires, 80 per cent of pupils who responded felt that pupils did not behave well and 87 per cent felt that bullying and racism took place in the school. Pupils spoken to felt that there had been a notable improvement in behaviour recently. Nearly all parents who responded to the questionnaires consider their children like school, but also thought behaviour was not good enough.
17. Pupils respond positively to the few opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example, they enjoy being library monitors and take the role seriously. The school encourages pupils to become drama and sports monitors and Year 8 pupils are able to experience office duties. Each form has a representative on the school council, but the council is underdeveloped and takes less responsibility for its own management than is common; the school recognises that further development is needed. The council feels that it has had some success in the school in improving the environment of the cafeteria and the quality of food that is served. The council also requested a reward system for pupils making an effort and pupils have welcomed its recent introduction. The bronze, silver and gold certificates are valued.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	406	27	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	20	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	108	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	41	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	5	1
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	28	2
No ethnic group recorded	22	0	0

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

18. The number of exclusions in the last full school year was above average; the number of permanent exclusions was close to four times the average. Attitudes and behaviour now appear to be improving due to systems the school has put in place and, significantly, because of better staffing.
19. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory and below the national median. The school contacts parents on the first day of absence to ensure that it receives a reason and consequently the rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Some pupils have very low attendance rates and the school constantly strives to improve their attendance. Staff work closely with outside agencies and the families of pupils, to stress the importance of good attendance on achievement. Unfortunately, not all parents value the education of their children and do not support the school in making sure their children attend regularly. Although the school has reduced the number of pupils arriving to school late in the mornings, there are still too many who do not arrive on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.1	School data	0.9
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

20. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development receives positive support from work they do in certain lessons, such as English, art and physical education, as well as from their participation in extra-curricular activities such as the school council, or their work as prefects. Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall. Assemblies encourage pupils to consider various aspects of morality, to look at the lives of good role models and to have the confidence to act with principle, but they provide few opportunities for reflection. The 'thought for the day' is often perfunctorily treated in form tutorial time. Most pupils are able to distinguish between right and wrong and have respect for others' viewpoints and beliefs. Pupils raise money for charities at home and abroad. They show care and consideration for the welfare of those who are less fortunate than themselves. Nonetheless, the standard of behaviour is not always satisfactory. Many pupils are unhappy with the attitudes of a significant minority of their peers who disrupt lessons and interfere with others' learning.
21. Most pupils have friends and they form good relationships with peers of different ethnic origins. Pupils develop satisfactory understanding of their own and other cultures, although the school does not make as much use as it might of its varied and vibrant ethnic makeup. English, design and technology and physical education offer good opportunities for pupils to explore the underlying values of cultures in British society and the wider world. There are visits from professional theatre companies and opportunities for social development through extra-curricular activities.

Sixth form

22. Students have good attitudes to learning overall. Staff and student relationships are very good. Although in the inspection questionnaire almost all students agreed that they like being in the sixth form, attendance is unsatisfactory overall and many students do not arrive at school in time for tutorials at the start of the morning.
23. Students are given opportunities to develop as role models for younger pupils. They contribute to the running of the school council and help to organise a local democracy week. Students train as peer mentors and younger pupils feel they are approachable if needed. Students attend a training course to assist in delivering drugs education and organise a school performance to highlight the dangers of drugs. Students develop their leadership skills in carrying out duties as prefects in sports but are not involved in helping to improve behaviour at lunchtimes. The school recognises that the role of prefects needs further development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and the partnership with parents, other schools and the community are all satisfactory. The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall; they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is poor in citizenship and within personal, social, and health education (PSHE).
- Teaching and learning are good in English across all years, in art and design, history and physical education across Years 7 to 11, and also in geography and in music in Years 10 and 11.
- The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall.
- Teachers encourage younger pupils, in Years 7 to 9, and older students, in Years 12 and 13, well.

Commentary

24. Examination results in 2004 were indicative of unsatisfactory learning overall, and poor in some areas such as science, history and French. The situation at present is much better; teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall; they are satisfactory in science and in French, good in history. The principal factor in these significant improvements is staffing. The school has managed to employ permanent teachers who, in the main, can do the job. Staff development has helped too, both at middle management level and for classroom teachers. Most heads of department are more effective in their roles so standards are better monitored; classroom teachers are more aware of what makes a good lesson.
25. Though more than half of the lessons seen were good or better, this was a lower proportion than that seen nationally. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons within Years 7 to 11, seven per cent, was similar to and no higher than the national average. Some of these lessons were taught by teachers new to the school or profession. Most involved unsatisfactory behaviour by pupils. Unsatisfactory attitudes were brought into the class rather than being a result of what the teacher was doing. However, inspectors judged pupils' attitudes to learning to be good, occasionally very good, in over half of lessons seen.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 119 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13 (11%)	61 (51%)	39 (33%)	5 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.

26. Staffing problems in the past have contributed to the poor position of citizenship education and PSHE; temporary teachers have not developed them and permanent teachers have not trained to teach such work better. Learning in these subjects, as revealed through work scrutiny, is poor. No lessons were seen as they happen on Friday morning, but pupils' work was scrutinised. There was little of it and it was of limited quality. Citizenship was not seen as a feature in any lessons observed. The lackadaisical approach to the Friday PSHE lesson revealed through pupils' work is also seen within the 15-minute form time at the beginning of the day; the 'thought for the day' is too often just briefly mentioned and some teachers dismiss pupils early. Opportunities for teachers to monitor pupils' work and to raise standards in literacy and in numeracy are missed.
27. In contrast, teaching and learning are good in English, art and design, history and physical education in Years 7 to 11, and in geography and music in Years 10 and 11. English, art and design and physical education have not suffered so many problems

with staffing over the years and their examination results in 2004, ranging from a little above the national average to a little below the national average, show that good, consistent, teaching delivers appropriate standards for this school. Subjects with good teaching overall have consistently better planning and teaching methods, and make better use of resources to help learning be interesting and achievement to rise. Most subjects make no better than satisfactory use of teaching assistants; physical education and art and design make good use of them and pupils learn better because of it. Many subjects use homework to support learning only satisfactorily; English uses it well across the years, geography, music and physical education use it well in Years 10 and 11; pupils' independent learning is fostered in these subjects. Teachers' subject knowledge is now good overall; satisfactory in design and technology, ICT, and French, very good in physical education. Pupils are now being taught better than when they experienced many supply teachers with doubtful expertise. Teachers tend to encourage pupils in Years 7 to 9 rather more than those in Years 10 and 11; this may be due to new teachers having more influence on younger pupils than older ones who have had a variety of temporary teachers and improvement in this facet of teaching is likely.

28. Very good lessons were seen across a range of subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and design, drama, French, ICT and physical education, and about evenly split between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Very good lessons were exemplified by very good use of interactive whiteboards to put across ideas and stimulate pupils; very good implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to plan lessons and test out their effectiveness; very good peer evaluation of work to involve pupils better and give them more ideas; very good relationships which fostered high levels of attention from pupils; a high level of challenge fostering pupils' thinking; enthusiasm from the teacher which communicated itself to pupils; or combinations of these elements.
29. Assessment is now satisfactory; it was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. The deputy headteacher, with significant help from the local education authority, has worked hard to master an ICT based assessment management system and has succeeded in introducing it into the school. Heads of department are using it to track the performance of pupils, some more than others, but certainly more consistently than in the past. Termly progress reports are now generated and sent to parents; pupils falling 'below the line' are picked up by heads of department. Heads of year will soon take a more formal hand in this too. Assessment is particularly strong in physical education across all years, art and design in Years 10 and 11 and, to an extent, history in Years 10 and 11 too. Pupils' understanding of how best to improve their work is unsatisfactory in geography across all years and in science in Years 7 to 9.
30. Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall. Teachers make good use of learning support assistants but there is still some inconsistency in teachers' approach to providing appropriate resources for pupils' specific needs. In physical education and in history support is good, and teachers and learning support assistants work effectively as a team; pupils are able to participate fully in lessons and respond well to the effective planning, adapted resources and support provided. In good lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning and work well without direct intervention. Relationships with teachers, learning support assistants and peers are good; pupils work cooperatively and support each other. Where teaching is only satisfactory, it is often because insufficient use is made of learning support assistants and teachers do not adequately plan for pupils' specific needs.

31. There is still a lack of appropriate work set for pupils in some subject areas. The quality of marking and assessment of pupils' work is good in the small lower attaining classes taught by the members of the learning support department; pupils' work is assessed and targets are set and praise given for effort and visible improvement. Guidance is given to help pupils achieve higher targets. Pupils' individual education plans are well written with clearly identified targets and provide advice and strategies for teachers in meeting those targets. Learning support assistants are participating in National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 training and are also involved in whole-school training. The fortnightly meetings now held by the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that they are actively involved in the planning, preparation and assessment of special educational needs pupils.

Sixth form

32. Timetable restrictions and inspection days meant just 15 lessons were seen in the sixth form. They ranged from satisfactory to very good and were good overall. This confirmed judgements made on the basis of students' work seen and the opinions of students themselves. Teaching is undoubtedly helped by the small class sizes which, in lessons seen, ranged from one student in A-level biology to 8 in English and in media studies; the average number was 6. Class sizes would have been a fraction larger if all students had been present; attendance in lessons ranged from full to something less and was 87 per cent overall. Only four subjects were fully inspected as no students pursued mathematics at the time of the inspection; several other subjects were sampled. Two of the subjects inspected, English and media studies, were the most successful in 2004 examinations and teaching in both is good. Teaching is also good in business studies and in biology. Two lessons were sampled in ICT and teaching was satisfactory in both; teaching is uninspiring.
33. Very good lessons involved students very well in learning and integrated resources, books or otherwise, into well-paced work. Careful marking of students' work provided clear guidance to help them improve. Media studies, taught by English staff, had lessons which encompassed all these features. Satisfactory lessons lacked pace and enthusiasm and were saved by students' willingness to get on with their work; they learnt but could have done better; ICT lessons epitomised this kind of teaching and learning.
34. Most students appear to use the very good accommodation and computer provision to get on with private study and learn independently or with peers. However, they have a lot of study time and their use of it is not monitored, consequently some spend part of it in the recreational area. Independent learning appears good overall.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, where it is poor. Opportunities for enrichment through activities outside lessons are satisfactory. Staffing and accommodation are unsatisfactory in the main school but good in the sixth form. Resources are satisfactory in the main school, but good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision is good for English and physical education, and for cross-curricular ICT.

- The deployment of staff is unsatisfactory and does not meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Provision for citizenship is poor throughout the school, and does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study.
- The number of vocational options and pathways available in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
- The sixth form curriculum is very narrow and does not meet the needs and aspirations of most of the pupils in the main school.

Commentary

35. There is a satisfactory breadth of curriculum opportunities in Years 7 to 9. However the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the needs of some pupils and so is unsatisfactory. The provision of ICT across the curriculum has improved considerably, and is now good, as is the curriculum provided to pupils in both physical education and English. Significant issues around citizenship and personal social and health education, noted at the time of the last inspection, have yet to be addressed. The scheme of work for PSHE, which includes citizenship and careers education, lacks detail and robustness. This important area of learning is poorly co-ordinated. All other requirements of the National Curriculum are met, though the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not. The number of vocational options available to pupils in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
36. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum, and has been strengthened by the inclusion of drama for all pupils. The addition of dance to the physical education curriculum, taught by an external specialist, has added a new dimension to the educational experiences pupils receive.
37. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is largely academically based. In addition to the 25 academic subjects plus PSHE, there are three vocational options available for pupils, two delivered on site as vocational GCSEs, and one off site. This small proportion of vocational subject is much less than is usually found in most schools. Some pupils, for whom the traditional curriculum is not appropriate, attend extended work experience placements for part of their school time. This time varies from pupil to pupil. In a newly developed alternative, 12 pupils in Year 10 considered to be "at risk" are working with the Prince's Trust, within the community, building personal confidence and self-esteem.
38. Whole school provision for careers through the personal, social and health education of pupils is inadequate. Too little time is given to the subject and the school has an over-reliance on the Connexions service, whose careers advisor gives good support to pupils identified as benefiting from individual assistance. The advisor holds a weekly drop-in centre at lunchtime but not all pupils are able to avail themselves of this opportunity. The careers library is well stocked and the resources are good but there is no computer at present with dedicated use for careers; this will shortly be purchased.
39. Opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through activities outside the normal school day are satisfactory overall. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in a very good range of sports and games activities, both internally and against other schools. The school has access, through growing collaboration, to the Tirabad outdoor education centre. The English department takes good advantage of the literary and dramatic experiences on offer close to the school. Other cultural opportunities are too

often missed. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in further academic learning in science, mathematics, history, ICT and physical education, in after-school lessons run by these departments.

40. Staffing is unsatisfactory overall. Though most subjects have access to sufficient staff, deployment of them is often inefficient as experienced staff in, for example, mathematics and science, are still used to teach very small numbers in the sixth form whilst classes in the main school have split teaching or less experienced teachers. The provision of teaching staff is good in history, science, physical education, modern foreign languages, art and design, and business studies. In art and design and physical education there has been a stable situation for some time with fully qualified and experienced teachers. History now has two qualified specialists and the situation is much improved since the last inspection. Business studies is well provided for with two specialists with industrial and business experience. There have been significant recruitment difficulties over several years and the school has worked hard recently to overcome these. These recruitment problems have seriously affected some departments: the science department now has a fully qualified staff for the first time for several years. Design and technology staffing is still unsatisfactory following a succession of supply teachers over previous years, but now has a new head of department in place. These factors have clearly affected the continuity and quality of teaching in many areas, and this has held back the overall achievement of pupils.
41. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Most departments deliver their lessons in satisfactory dedicated classroom accommodation. Accommodation in the mathematics block is good. However, in science two of the laboratories are too small, leading to overcrowded conditions, and there is a lack of storage space in art, and in design and technology. There is too little indoor space in the physical education department, and it is of inadequate quality. The department has no dedicated classrooms, and theory lessons often take place in the school hall. All departments are able to access the very good 'laptop room' for ICT work and a second room is currently being completed in the humanities area. Space in design and technology is satisfactory overall, but some workshops are worn and outdated, and provide inadequately for graphic products work. There are insufficient hard play areas for pupils; in consequence they roam far over the extensive fields, making it harder to manage them at lunchtimes and bringing mud into the school.
42. Resources are satisfactory overall. ICT provision is satisfactory and improving. The learning resource centre has improved significantly and its manager works well with pupils to help their learning. Availability of interactive whiteboards for teachers to use is variable but getting better. Teachers are making good use of them and more require them. Resources have improved in design and technology, where they are satisfactory and now include access to computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM). There has been a large investment in books in French. Private study and homework in science are hindered because textbooks are not issued to pupils. Resources for mathematics are good.

Sixth form

43. The sixth form came into existence in 2002. It was assumed that most pupils from Year 11 would stay on into the sixth form, which would grow quickly to "around 200" students. The school elected to offer a curriculum that would be an extension of that found in Year 11, which is mainly academically based. The expected numbers of students did not materialise, and the sixth form now has a curriculum which clearly does not meet the needs, ambitions or aspirations of most pupils in Year 11. The already small sixth form is shrinking; Year 12 is smaller than Year 13. Some subjects,

such as biology, have very few students, and aspects of the curriculum that require student interaction are weak. The sixth form curriculum offers few subjects, still follows a largely academic pathway, and lacks opportunities for enrichment. The school operates a flexible entry policy to the sixth form, and now finds that, for many students, courses are too difficult; around one third of the AS level entrants in 2004 gained an unclassified grading, which means that they failed. Students have little opportunity for general enrichment and no timetabled provision for organised physical activity, though some students do avail themselves of the sports hall at lunchtimes. Key skills and religious education are covered as part of the general studies course in Year 12. However, inadequate literacy and numeracy skills are apparent amongst some students and there is no formal way by which they can rigorously improve them; the option to drop in to a Year 11 mathematics class is not taken seriously and is not appropriate. All students are offered work experience but not all take up the opportunity.

44. The school is presently looking into developing new courses, using alternative teaching strategies, and rearranging time allocations, to address these issues. The school is also seeking to link with sixth forms elsewhere so that students share courses between several sites. There appears to be some confusion between courses shared with other schools in the borough and courses which may be shared with sixth forms outside the borough. There are obviously complexities in timetabling, staffing and transport which need working through.
45. The teaching demands of the curriculum now on offer are met well by knowledgeable staff. Standards in English and media studies are average, and students in both these subjects achieve well. Accommodation for the sixth form is very good, and a purpose built block provides a good environment for both taught lessons and private study. Learning resources available to sixth form students are good, and these include a modern media room and a dedicated computer suite. The sixth form social area is comfortable, well maintained and treated well by students.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, the care provided for the welfare of pupils is satisfactory. Provision of guidance for pupils through the monitoring of their work and the setting of appropriate targets is satisfactory and for students in the sixth form it is good. Support for pupils' and students' personal development is satisfactory overall. Procedures to identify risks to health and safety are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pastoral support in tutorials at the start of the day is unsatisfactory.
- Guidance about further study provided through the Connexions service is good but guidance provided through PSHE is unsatisfactory.
- Good support is provided for sixth form students in lessons.
- The traffic from the private health club based on the same site is a danger to pupils.
- The school council is not used as a forum to allow pupils to contribute to whole school decisions.

Commentary

46. The school has suitable procedures and arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils. Risk assessments have been made; child protection procedures are well understood by staff and arrangements for first aid are satisfactory. The school supervises pupils outside lessons, but not enough staff are available to ensure incidents of misbehaviour by a minority of pupils are curtailed quickly. The safety of pupils out of classes is a problem to the school; cars, from the health club based on the same site have to travel through the grounds on a narrow road that is in frequent use by pupils and students. The school has been alerted to other health and safety issues that risk assessments have not yet dealt with.
47. The pastoral system is becoming more cohesive. Heads of year are now working as a team and have a base and administrative support. School policies and procedures for, for example, managing behaviour are at least now commonly adopted amongst heads of year. However, common practice still has to cascade to form tutors. Not all form tutors use their time with pupils in a constructive manner, for example, to set a good start to the day through some short focussed discussion, spelling or mathematics test. Some tutors dismiss pupils as soon as registration is completed; pupils then wait about until lesson one starts. The 'thought for the day' is a perfunctory performance with very few tutors using the time to discuss and expand on the subject to help pupils broaden their understanding of how their actions relate to the message within it. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection.
48. The inspection questionnaire returns and interviews with pupils indicate that most pupils feel there is an adult they can talk to who knows them well, but a significant proportion feel that there is not. Inspection found that various groups of pupils with particular identified needs do have additional support. An intervention manager was appointed in September 2004; the manager works with pupils in Years 7 to 9 to help them raise their academic achievement and also works closely with those who disrupt lessons. The intervention manager also listens to and mentors younger pupils with problems they need to talk about. The school has plans to expand this provision to older pupils. An advisory teacher, funded by the local education authority, gives good individual support to pupils who have a Traveller heritage background; the teacher helps them to improve their attendance and raise their academic aspirations. The Prince's Trust initiative is helping a group of pupils, including those with low self-esteem and those in danger of 'dropping out', to improve their key life skills and raise their self-expectations.
49. The school has put in place a comprehensive assessment system which provides teachers with information needed to track the academic progress of pupils and identify when they underachieve. Inspectors saw this system satisfactorily in use; heads of department are in the main managing it well but more teachers need to consistently use it. Pupils, overall, satisfactorily understand how well they are doing and broadly how to improve, but short term targets are not used often enough. Heads of year do not monitor pupils' academic progress significantly yet but will increasingly do so as access to the computer-based system improves and training has taken place.
50. The Connexions advisor provides good careers advice for pupils identified as benefiting from individual advice and help. The advisor helps Year 9 pupils choose options to study; a drop-in session, one day a week at lunchtime, extends advice to more pupils. Whole school advice on careers is provided through PSHE lessons. Whilst none were seen during the inspection, it is clear from planning that the quality of these sessions is unsatisfactory. The school has purchased and introduced a computer-based interactive careers and education guidance package that is accessed

online. This enables pupils to do their own research on careers, and the qualifications and courses available which may lead to them.

51. The school council discuss issues such as the quality of food in the cafeteria and organise fundraising events for charity and discuss issues such as uniform. Through form representatives pupils can raise issues for debate but the council offers few opportunities for pupils to become significantly involved in shaping the school's future. The school recognises that the forum of the school council needs further development and that it could provide a significant element of citizenship education, which is currently inadequate.
52. The school has satisfactory induction procedures for prospective Year 7 pupils at all feeder primary schools. Primary pupils are able to experience lessons such as drama, mathematics and science, Year 11 pupils help the younger pupils settle by getting to know them before they start school. This fosters close relationships between them.

Sixth form

53. Overall, students receive good guidance in the sixth form. Teachers and students form good relationships in lessons as classes are small and individual assistance is available. Although the choice of subjects to study is limited, once chosen the monitoring of students' progress and guidance on how to improve their work are good.
54. Students can pursue individual research on careers in a well-stocked library. However, almost half of the students who replied to the inspection questionnaire do not consider guidance by staff on careers after they leave school good enough.
55. Students are involved in the management of the school council and many of them work as peer mentors and prefects, but students feel that their responsibilities are limited and the majority who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school does not seek and value their views enough.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with its parents. Satisfactory links are in place with primary schools, with colleges and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents say their child likes school.
- Links with the community are developing.
- The school supports learning in two local primary schools.
- Information to parents in pupils' annual progress reports is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

56. The number of returns from the parents' inspection questionnaire was low; in most, parents stated that their children like school. A few parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of some pupils, particularly at lunchtime; inspectors agree that a minority of pupils cause disruption from time to time in lessons and that some are unpleasant at lunchtime. A high proportion of pupils live some distance away from school and this

has an adverse affect on the number of parents willing to support the school in a variety of ways. The school does not have a parent teacher association, which would enable the school to consult with parents and to organise social or fund-raising events. The school is hoping to introduce an association in the near future.

57. Information provided to parents is satisfactory overall. Curriculum booklets inform parents of subjects to be taught and the school prospectus is useful. There is clear guidance on the school's complaints procedure if parents are not happy; newsletters are regular and informative. There are three reports a year about pupils' academic progress; two interim reports contain grades and a full report includes teachers' written comments. The statutory full report does not contain sufficient specific information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses within subjects. The governors' annual report to parents does not contain all the information it should, for example the accessibility plan and national GCSE results, though national requirements for such reports will soon change.
58. The school is beginning to develop links with the community. The fact that most pupils come from outside the local community does not help matters, but it is hoped that a new vicar will help foster links through the local church. The school is involved in the 'Safer Datchet' programme with the two local primary schools. Close curriculum links are also in place and pupils visit from Year 4 to experience ICT, mathematics and science lessons. The school is actively involved, along with the church, in improving the local village green. Satisfactory links have been established with local businesses that, through the Education Business Partnership, provide work experience for pupils. Staff at a local computer business also act as mentors and provide work placements.

Sixth form

59. Links with businesses, further education establishments and the community in the sixth form are satisfactory. Some students give up their free time to help in the community as Millennium Volunteers, an initiative aimed at helping students to widen their social experiences. Students visit and receive visitors from nearby universities, and appropriate resources are in place to enable students to make an informed choice on higher education or college destinations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both satisfactory in the main school; they are unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Governance is unsatisfactory for the main school and for the sixth form. The sixth form is in its third year of operation and leadership and management of it have been hindered by an incorrect assessment of its need. In the main school, citizenship does not meet statutory requirements and a daily act of collective worship is not observed. The information in the annual report does not meet requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The main school has improved sufficiently to lose the designation 'serious weaknesses' given at the time of the last inspection despite the significant changes which also occurred to the school at the same time.
- The sixth form has not developed in the manner forecast for it, nor is it ever likely to; consequently it is inadequate.

- The headteacher shows a clear sense of purpose which has been hindered by staffing difficulties and the creation of the sixth form; the low key approach, so far, by the diocese has also slowed down some potential improvements.
- School planning has led to better management though more still needs to be done.
- The leadership of special educational needs provision is very good and management of it is good.
- Leaders are good role models for other staff and pupils; the headteacher takes on a significant teaching workload and does it very well.
- New staff are inducted well into the school and the professional development of all staff is well managed.
- The management of the sixth form and difficulties with staff recruitment are key barriers to improvement.
- Links being fostered with other school sixth forms by an assistant headteacher and by the diocese may lead to a sustainable sixth form.

Commentary

60. Though the school is in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead it does not 'fit' with much of the educational provision within it; this is based on middle schools and 13-18 secondary schools. Pupils from the two primary schools who do not go on to selective or private education elsewhere may attend this school but 80 per cent of pupils come from the neighbouring borough of Slough, from over 20 primary schools. This context may explain why the school, according to managers and the representative of the local education authority, was largely neglected prior to the OFSTED inspection of November 2002. Just prior to this, in September, the school also changed status and became a voluntary aided Church of England school. At the same time a sixth form was created, following on from several rejections for the proposal in preceding years. Though the school changed status in September 2002 it was not closed and reopened. The headteacher had retired so a new one, a former deputy, was appointed; other staff remained broadly the same; the governing body was disbanded and re-constituted the following January, some 'old' governors joining the new governing body. The diocese maintained a 'hands-off' stance which has continued until the present; there is no indication within the school that it is voluntary aided or linked to the Church of England.
61. The clear sense of purpose of the headteacher and senior management team has successfully brought about some important improvements and ensured pupils achieve satisfactorily. Since 2002, when the school had serious weaknesses, there has been satisfactory progress overall and good progress in some areas. Teaching is now better; it is satisfactory overall. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good; it was poor before. The use of assessment systems continues to improve and is used at least satisfactorily across subject areas. The learning resource centre, the library, is now a good resource and is well used. Though pupils continue to arrive late and attendance is unsatisfactory, the situation is better and procedures to pursue these problems more rigorous. National requirements for ICT and for design and technology are now met; resources for ICT are very much better and a very recently appointed head of design and technology is systematically improving its organisation. The headteacher has been effectively supported by advisory help and consultancy provided through the local education authority. Leadership improvement grant money, from central government, has helped improve middle management. Very recently appointed and better staffing has started the improvement of provision in subject areas.
62. The special educational needs co-ordinator, appointed in September 2004, is building an effective team. She has responsibility for the 'alternative curriculum provision' within

the school, and is a member of the leadership team She teaches lower ability groups as well as 'mainstream' classes, providing a very good role model for other teachers in the preparation and planning for individual pupils' needs. The special educational needs handbook provides an effective reference point for all who teach pupils with special educational needs though this needs to be reviewed to consider developments which have taken place. Pupils with special educational needs are now appropriately monitored. Individual education plans are now informative and are reviewed regularly. The team of learning support assistants are developing their skills and have good relationships with pupils and work closely with teachers to support pupils. The link governor for special educational needs is well informed and receives regular reports from the special educational needs coordinator.

63. Staffing has been a problem for a number of years. This borough is outside the range of outer London pay allowances and would-be teachers do not have to travel far to receive these or the more lucrative inner London allowances. This also applies to overseas teachers; if they are travelling to this country they might as well earn more money within the M25. However, at long last the school has managed to staff satisfactorily; just one post remains unfilled, in design and technology. The positive effects in science and in history, where results were poor in 2004, are significant. French too is improving within Years 7 to 9, though this improvement will have to work through to benefit older pupils. The creation of the sixth form was self-inflicted damage which compounded staffing problems. The school says, "We put the best teachers in the sixth form to give it a chance." This meant that younger pupils had an even worse deal than the temporary and supply teachers were giving them, and the policy contributed to the poor GCSE performances in 2002 and 2003; the effects will not fade out for several more years and only if staffing in Years 7 to 9 remains satisfactory and preferably better than that. A catch-22 situation also occurred due to staff development; middle managers needed training and seven were taken out to receive it – teaching was meanwhile done by supply. Otherwise staff development is well managed and linked to performance management and the needs of the school; central funding rather than departmental funding means priorities can be well addressed and records kept of the effectiveness of such training. New teachers are also well inducted into the school, an important feature when good staff need to be kept.
64. The local Church of England diocese decided not to overtly interfere with the school when it took it on. This has not helped and has delayed some improvements which are needed. The last report said "there is little evidence of consistency in fostering pupils' spiritual development" though it also said "spiritual development is satisfactory". This inspection judges that spiritual development is unsatisfactory; there is almost no evidence of it at all. Neither is the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship observed; the 'thought for the day' taken by form tutors is too often a mere statement of words, and there is no reflection. Governance has to be deemed unsatisfactory due to the combination of these breaches in statutory requirements though inspectors have sympathy with the position of governors; the nature of a voluntary aided school is only just being made known to them and there are no governors from the diocese. This situation will change soon; the school will be linked with a successful voluntary aided school, a former headteacher of one will provide advice, a governor will be appointed or seconded, and a new vicar advised to form effective relationships with the school.
65. If the sixth form is ignored, strategic planning is good in the main school. The senior management team is well focussed on the work in hand and this had led to the improvements identified above. An example is the re-jigging of the pastoral team, best

described as 'inconsistent' from the wording in the previous report. It now has a proper base, administrative support and common goals. Year heads now follow their year through the school and will have an increasing role in monitoring academic performance with the advent of a better computer-based assessment system which includes easy access to records from different points within the school. There is still work to be done to ensure all staff adopt and follow school procedures, from dealing with recalcitrant pupils (there are clear procedures) to when to dismiss pupils from form time; some staff, primarily in Year 10, seem to do this when they like. The lack of a bell system to clearly mark key times in the school day, for example, end of form time, end of break, end of lunch, end of day, does not help ensure pupils, and teachers, act promptly. The school recognises that lack of consistency in following behavioural management strategies is still an issue and a hangover from having too many temporary teachers. The school is investigating another system of behavioural management which enjoys some success in other schools. The curriculum in Years 10 to 13 is not appropriate and planning has been done to modify it in Years 10 and 11 from September 2005 and seek to change it as soon as possible within the sixth form.

66. The school's finances have been effectively managed by a bursar who has now moved on, though a replacement should join the school soon. The school has never had a deficit budget but neither does it have much surplus. The amount spent per pupil, including sixth form students, is above average. The school needs better main school accommodation for technology and physical education, better playground space, and better heating. The cost of the sixth form has hindered improvements in the recent past and has not represented best value. When taking into account the relatively weak examination performances in the last two years, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.
67. Key leaders are good role models for staff and pupils; they are around the school and deal professionally with adults and pupils. The headteacher took on extensive teaching duties for several years. Though this was criticised by various monitors, as it reduced her time to manage the school, it was necessary or pupils' learning in mathematics would have suffered. She has now found it possible to reduce the number of lessons she teaches, which means she can use her time more effectively on school matters. Her teaching was judged very good during this inspection; other leaders also teach mostly well or better.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,619,761
Total expenditure	2,486,375
Expenditure per pupil	3,949

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	35,226
Balance carried forward to the next year	168,612*

*includes moneys designated for the improvement of computer facilities and £99,000 which had to be paid back to the Learning Skills Council when sixth form student numbers did not meet predictions.

Sixth form

68. The sixth form, as conceived for September 2002, was an error of judgement. It was set up as a mostly academic sixth form in competition with the very good provision made elsewhere which pupils were accustomed to going to: sixth forms in Slough and the relatively local college of further education. Predictions of rapidly rising numbers have never been met. There were 23 when the sixth form opened, 46 a year later, and 40 now; 22 in Year 13 and just 18 in Year 12. Only five Year 11 pupils attended the recent sixth form open evening and no Year 11 pupils interviewed said they were considering joining the sixth form, though some might well be.
69. The local education authority invested around a million pounds in a sixth form block. Figures provided before and during the inspection and statements from governors indicated that the sixth form running costs were financially subsidised from income received for the main school. Though this was likely the case, new figures indicate that a revised sixth form timetable means the current sixth form more or less pays for itself. Though staffing has very recently improved, staffing the sixth form still adversely affects provision in science and mathematics, the latter because mathematics teachers are used to teach ICT in the sixth form. It is likely, from past patterns, that school staffing remains precarious overall. As the curriculum offered does not attract very many students, and has weaknesses in addition, the sixth form is not cost effective and is inadequate.
70. The headteacher and senior managers know of the limitations of the sixth form and realise that improvements need to be made. They are exploring opportunities to work with other sixth form providers within the local authority. The diocese, keen to maintain a sixth form, is using its contacts to promote a link with a successful grammar school in the borough of Slough; Churchmead could be a satellite centre offering some niche vocational subjects, for example media studies and visual arts. It is unclear whether all the people pursuing LEA links are in favour of or fully aware of the possible Slough links. The governors of Churchmead are aware of possible developments and are supportive of them. The governing body was actually created one term after the sixth form was opened due to the change of the school's status in September 2002. Consequently governors have had to live with the consequences; nevertheless they could have monitored the sixth form more closely, begun consideration of changes earlier and held all parties involved - school, local authority and diocese - more to account. Governance of the sixth form is therefore unsatisfactory.

71. The leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory overall. A new appointment was made to run the sixth form when it started but this person has taken on a more senior role in the school whilst maintaining post-16 liaison roles and an overview of the 14-19 curriculum. There is a head of sixth form whose role is akin to head of year. Day-to-day management is satisfactory overall though students do spend study time within the large sixth form lounge area. Attendance is monitored and has been 85 per cent this year, including negotiated study leave. Students were missing from sixth form lessons inspected; attendance was 87 per cent overall. In 2004, 27 per cent of AS entries were unclassified in examination results; in other words, they failed. This suggests that either students were not advised correctly before taking courses or were insufficiently monitored and guided during their year in the sixth form. Current monitoring is satisfactory though this is the remit of heads of subject departments, not the head of sixth form. There is no effective leadership or management of those areas of work which should make a school sixth form distinct from attending a college, such as private study and study skills, raising standards in key skills such as numeracy, enrichment activities such as sport, and work placements. There is little money for the frills; basic subject provision is just met by the income generated by the small number of students.
72. The last report indicated that numbers in the sixth form needed to rise. This has not happened and consequently improvement in sixth form provision is unsatisfactory.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a strong liaison with two local Education and Business Partnerships (EBPs).
- All Year 11 pupils have 2 weeks' work experience.
- There is a good range of work-related experiences for those Year 10 and 11 pupils for whom a full GCSE course would not be appropriate.
- There is a limited number of vocational courses offered as part of the normal school curriculum.
- Awareness of how all subjects can contribute to the WRL curriculum is at an early stage of development.
- Arrangements for co-ordinating WRL do not give it sufficiently high priority.

Commentary

73. Some aspects of WRL are well planned by the school. All Year 11 pupils undertake two weeks' work experience for which they are well prepared by the involvement of representatives from the local EBP. Placements are monitored and pupils are expected to keep a diary of their work. This is then used as the basis for follow-up work in school. Close liaison with two local EBPs gives pupils access to a range of 'taster days' throughout the year. These range from horticulture to experience of the air transport industry and pupils are carefully matched to an appropriate course. Attendance on 'Pitstop' courses at a local college has had a beneficial effect on the motivation and attitude of a small group of pupils in danger of becoming disengaged from the standard school curriculum. A health and social care course, run jointly with a local college,

provides a valuable experience for a small group of girls. Pupils' progress is monitored informally through form tutors and pupil support plans.

74. Leadership and management of WRL are satisfactory but, because they are within the remit of an assistant headteacher who has a number of similar responsibilities, development and monitoring of the area have been neglected.
75. The school has identified that WRL needs to have a higher profile throughout all areas of the curriculum and has good plans for development. The school development plan proposes significant changes that would open up vocational opportunities to a wider range of pupils and provide more flexible routes to vocational qualifications. As yet, an understanding of how each subject area can contribute to WRL has not sufficiently permeated the whole curriculum. Subjects such as business studies and leisure and tourism, which already have strong existing affinity with the world of work, make a good contribution to pupils' skills for, and understanding of, the workplace. Because there has been no curriculum audit to identify WRL opportunities, this contribution is not as strong in other subjects and pupils' awareness of work-related issues is no more than satisfactory.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school because of good teaching and good assessment.
- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good.
- The curriculum is well suited and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Good leadership and management have led to improving standards recently.
- A minority of pupils, mostly boys, do not work hard enough and can be disruptive in lessons.
- Teachers do not have the opportunity to observe good role models and to share good practice.
- The department uses literature well to encourage pupils' social and cultural development.

Commentary

76. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Improvement in the last year has been particularly significant, since the department now has a stable, dedicated team of teachers. Standards and achievement are rising after several years' dip; teaching is now good, planning is good and strategies have been put in place to enable most pupils to do as well as they can.

77. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were better than those in 2003, which were below average. The trend over the last three years is one of gradual improvement. Results in 2003 do not agree with the standard of work seen because good teaching and good management are now helping to raise standards to close to the national average. Test results in 2003 were poorer than they were in similar schools because teaching was disrupted during this period. Results in 2004 appear better because both teaching and the curriculum have improved.
78. GCSE results in English in 2004 were close to the national average when compared with those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was just below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was average. In English literature, however, results were above average, with a well above average proportion attaining A*-C grades. When compared with similar schools, GCSE results were better than might be expected. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was particularly high in English literature, while the proportion gaining A*-G grades in both language and literature was as might be expected. Boys' results were lower than girls' results, following the national trend, but are now showing signs of a lessening gap. Results in 2004 are better than in 2003. The trend in results over the last three years is a rising one, because of stable staffing, good teaching and good innovation in the curriculum.
79. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average; pupils achieve well, though girls achieve better than boys. By Year 9 many pupils can speak with interest and relevance, read well, have good word-building strategies and write with enthusiasm and at length. However, spelling and punctuation often show some weakness. Since standards of attainment on entry are below average, this shows good achievement and pupils make good progress.
80. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are average, but are rising well in English language and are above average in English literature. Pupils achieve well in English language and very well in English literature, partly because the department makes such good use of literature in the teaching of language throughout the school, so that pupils are well used to literary analysis and responding well to novels, plays and poems from the time they enter the school. Again, boys achieve less well than girls. By Year 11, pupils can speak with confidence, in general, with a sense of what is appropriate for their audience; they read with some fluency, and many with a good sense of comprehension and skills of deduction. However, spelling and punctuation still vary in quality and hinder language success to some extent. Pupils' attainment is aided well by the quality of teaching, the commitment of the staff and the good resources of the new library, with its ICT area.
81. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because English teachers monitor their progress well and provide work which is carefully graded to suit all pupils' abilities. A strength of the curriculum is the care that is taken in setting ability groups and assigning good teachers to work with the lower ability pupils. Innovative measures have also been put in place to provide extra classes for pupils with special needs, those of lower ability and the most able pupils, thus ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Pupils who may not use English as the first language at home make good progress because they, too, are carefully nurtured by their English teachers.
82. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In Year 9, a very good lesson on persuasive writing demonstrated the good planning and high degree of challenge and expectation which are typical of the best teaching. In contrast, a less successful lesson in Year 11 illustrated the inability at times of teachers to control and manage well the behaviour of small groups of disruptive pupils, mainly boys, thus hindering learning for the rest of the class. A good Year 10 lesson on 'An Inspector Calls' demonstrated the good planning, evident in most lessons, which was clearly seen in the teaching methods used to bring the moral dilemma of the play to life. Teachers provide their pupils with good role models and their firm command of the subject ensures that pupils learn well and are able to think for themselves,

with some independence. Now that resources are being put in place, teachers are using ICT increasingly and at least satisfactorily, enabling pupils to use computers for their own research.

83. Assessment is good; teachers use it well to help pupils to improve through sharing information on the standards they are attaining and those to which they aspiring, and for extension classes for all groups of pupils who need extra help. However, homework is not always consistent in its use in helping to reinforce work done in lessons.
84. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is very clear on ways in which to improve pupils' attainment and achievement further. After a period of many staff changes and difficulties, she has welded together a very committed department, who work well together to ensure the progress of pupils of all abilities. She has made many useful and practical innovations to the curriculum, evaluates strengths and weaknesses well and provides a very good role model for other teachers. She monitors the quality of teaching rigorously, as well as reviewing and improving programmes of work regularly. Teachers have had some opportunities to observe other teachers, in order to share the good and very good practice which exists in the department. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development through the extensive study of literature and discussion of the issues raised.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

85. Standards in literacy across the school are broadly average though significant numbers of lower attaining pupils have poor writing and speaking skills which hinder their achievement and reduce standards of work in, for example, mathematics, science, geography and history; weak literacy also affects pupils' performance in French. Support for improving literacy is developing across most subjects. The school has constructed a good whole school policy, under the direction a very capable literacy co-ordinator. Already many worthwhile initiatives have been put in place, such as a strong emphasis on the use of key words throughout curriculum subjects and the use of writing guides and other scaffolding aids in subjects such as science. However, this is not always the case; older pupils following the catering course do not know applicable technical vocabulary. In many lessons, pupils are given opportunities to develop their oral skills and most can express their ideas in lessons with some confidence. Many teachers encourage pupils to read widely, both for research purposes and for enjoyment; the new library and librarian encourage reading for pleasure and for work too. The school's next literacy target is the improvement of punctuation. Already there is an emphasis on the correction of spelling mistakes. Although these measures are now having a positive effect on whole school literacy, there is as yet no monitoring across the school to ensure that all teachers see and follow their role as teachers of English, as well as of their specialist subjects.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Modern Foreign Languages Framework is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- The department is now staffed with a stable team of enthusiastic and committed teachers.
- Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils, whose attitudes are mostly positive as a result.

- Pupils' listening and speaking skills are under-developed because French is not used extensively enough in the classroom and translation is too readily available.

Commentary

86. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, despite standards remaining below average. This is because a number of other areas mentioned in the previous report have been successfully addressed. Detailed schemes of work have been developed and the department has invested wisely in new textbooks. Pupils' use of ICT has increased, the marking and assessment of pupils' work have improved and a range of extra-curricular activities is now offered.
87. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004, whilst still below the national average, were better than those in 2003, which were well below average. The trend over the last three years is one of gradual improvement. Standards are well below average on entry to the school, but by Year 9 they have improved to below the national average. Achievement is therefore good overall. Girls reach higher standards than boys. By Year 9 higher attaining pupils can write accurately in the present tense and can write short sentences using the past tense. Average attaining pupils can also write using present and sometimes past tenses but with less accuracy. Lower attaining pupils can write short phrases under close guidance. Pupils' listening skills are satisfactory due to the frequent use of audio tapes in lessons but pupils' speaking skills are weak. This is because they do not hear a consistently fluent and accurate model of French and have insufficient opportunities to practise the new language in pairs.
88. GCSE results in 2004 were very low compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade in the full GCSE course was particularly low, whilst the proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was well below average. Most pupils took the full GCSE course in 2004, in contrast to the previous year when most had taken the GCSE short course. Results for the full GCSE course in 2004 were significantly poorer than in 2003, when only a small number of more able pupils took the exam. Girls performed better than boys in the full GCSE in 2004, whereas the previous year, boys' and girls' results for the short course had been similar. Pupils performed considerably worse in French than in their other subjects. Results have been erratic due to the pattern of entry.
89. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are well below average and these pupils have achieved unsatisfactorily, due to staffing difficulties when they were younger. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils can use the present tense and a variety of structures accurately in extended writing but their use of other tenses is very limited. Average and lower attaining pupils' written work tends to consist of answers to questions and key phrases, rather than any extended writing. Pupils' listening skills are satisfactory but they are reluctant to speak and their pronunciation is often anglicised. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress due to well-targeted support, as do the most able pupils when given additional tasks. Pupils who may not use English as the first language at home make satisfactory progress because the language is often taught using visual stimuli.
90. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall across all years, but both are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 as younger pupils have not been as adversely influenced by recent staffing problems. The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory or good. One very good and one unsatisfactory lesson were also seen. The National Key Stage 3 Modern Languages' Framework is having a positive impact, with the use of starter activities to focus attention and closing sessions which recap on learning. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their classes and have good behaviour management skills. As a result, the majority of pupils, particularly those in Years 7 to 9, respond positively. The use of grammatical terminology in French, along with the Framework's emphasis on word and sentence building, makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. In the best lessons, pupils are

challenged to explain grammatical patterns, as in a very good Year 8 lesson where higher attaining pupils had to explain the agreement of adjectives. A varied delivery including colour-coded flashcards reinforced the different genders and pupils showed a good grasp of this concept by the end of the lesson. In a good Year 7 lesson, a clear progression of activities enabled pupils of mixed ability to extend their sentences about where they lived. In contrast, however, in an unsatisfactory Year 10 lesson, too much new language was presented with insufficient repetition and practice, with the result that pupils lost concentration and did not understand the work set. Nevertheless, effective use is made of a variety of resources such as flashcards and the overhead projector to engage pupils' interest. The development of pupils' ICT and numeracy skills is satisfactory thanks to regular use of the school's laptop room and references to currency and calculation in French. Pupils' social and cultural development is limited due to a lack of interaction with each other and with French culture.

91. Leadership of the department is good and management is satisfactory. The head of department has developed a strong team spirit and together the department has worked hard to improve the negative image of French possessed by a significant number of older pupils. Schemes of work are now in place but teaching needs to be more closely monitored. Assessment procedures are developing and pupils' awareness of their level of attainment has increased. Greater use of assessment information to inform planning would help to raise achievement further. The curriculum is restricted to just French and the amount of time allocated is below average. Accommodation in temporary classrooms is adequate, thanks to attractive displays which create a positive learning environment.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Helpful comments when work is marked let pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve further.
- A good range of additional activities helps pupils achieve.
- A strong team spirit provides good support to teachers.
- Misbehaviour hinders learning in some classes.
- Pupils have difficulties describing their work orally and in writing.
- Standards of mathematical competence across the curriculum are below average.

Commentary

92. Improvement since the last inspection, and during the last year, is satisfactory. Standards have risen but GCSE results remain below those for English.
93. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were similar to those in 2003, which were below average. Results in 2004 match the standard of work seen.
94. GCSE results in 2004 were below average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was above average. When compared to similar schools, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was as expected whilst the proportion gaining A*-G grades was better than might be expected. Boys' results were better than

girls' results because of more positive attitudes to their work. Results in 2004 are slightly better than in 2003.

95. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils entered the school with standards that were below average. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve better than other pupils because they have more positive attitudes towards their work. Boys and girls achieve equally well. By Year 9 pupils can use simple algebra and present data appropriately. However, they cannot readily draw on previous learning when learning something new. Lower attaining pupils have difficulties with basic arithmetic.
96. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. Again, the positive attitudes of pupils from ethnic minority groups lead to them achieving more than other pupils. By Year 11, pupils understand probability and can use geometry. However, the majority still have difficulties using negative numbers and many are over-reliant on calculators for simple calculations. Pupils have difficulties explaining their work, both orally and in writing, because they have restricted vocabularies and tend to use only simple sentence structure. This makes it more difficult for them to learn by exploring ideas.
97. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The most able pupils make satisfactory progress because the work is more matched to their needs in the groups in which they are taught. Pupils who may not use English as the first language at home make satisfactory progress because they are not at the early stages of learning English and play as much part in lessons as other pupils.
98. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Year 8, a good lesson resulted in pupils learning well about how to solve simultaneous equations because they had to think about their mathematics and try out ideas. In contrast, another lesson in Year 8 was unsatisfactory because there was not enough work for all the pupils so that many pupils had nothing to do for some of the time, leading to unsatisfactory behaviour. This was not effectively dealt with by the teacher. In Year 11, a very good lesson involved pupils exploring how to calculate areas and dimensions of circles. Very good pace to this lesson resulted in pupils learning much more than might have been expected. In contrast, in an otherwise satisfactory Year 11 lesson, learning was far less effective because a considerable minority of boys had negative attitudes and disturbed the learning of others. This was not effectively tackled by the teacher.
99. Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils' work is regularly marked and all teachers write detailed, helpful comments so that pupils know how to improve further. Targets set for pupils are not consistently helpful because some are over-ambitious.
100. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A strong team spirit has been established so that teachers frequently provide each other with good, mutual support. However, pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics as they do in other subjects, especially English. Good links have been developed with local companies so that pupils' learning is enhanced, for example, by participation in competitions. After-school classes help pupils revise for examinations. Monitoring of teaching occurs through examining exercise books but the observation of lessons occurs only on an informal basis. Mathematics make an adequate contribution to the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils but opportunities to develop citizenship are not always taken.

Mathematics across the curriculum

101. Pupils' standards of mathematical competence are below average. They cope with the basic mathematical demands in subjects but rarely develop their abilities. For example, in history, pupils draw graphs of the expansion of the Hitler Youth Movement but do not then interpret these graphs. In science, graphs are drawn but their value is often reduced because pupils do not exercise care in their construction. In design and technology, pupils measure to the necessary degree of accuracy but only after teacher demonstration. Subjects such as art do not have a policy to develop numerical skills even though pupils use proportion appropriately. The school has identified where mathematics is used in each subject in Years 7 to 9 but this has not yet been done for older classes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a team of committed teachers united in their determination to continue to raise standards.
- The system of marking does not give clear short-term targets for pupils.
- There is good teaching by the experienced staff.
- Pupils' skills of self-study are not developed well enough and the lack of textbooks exacerbates this deficiency.
- Accommodation is barely satisfactory and technician support inadequate.

Commentary

102. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The department has addressed the weaknesses highlighted in that report and has made improvements to teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation are now satisfactory and good use is made of ICT.

103. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were worse than those in 2003 but were in line with results in previous years, which were below average. Results declined in 2004, and pupils did not do as well as they ought to have done because of the difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff for a period of two years. Consequently, this group of pupils did poorly when compared with those in similar schools.

104. GCSE results in 2004 were below average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was average. When compared to similar schools, GCSE results were as good as might be expected when taking into account the prior attainment of pupils, though this is misleading because their prior attainment was lower than it should have been. Boys' results were lower overall than girls' results because of boys' generally poorer attitudes but a higher proportion of boys was entered for the double award. The results attained by pupils of ethnically Asian groups were significantly better than those of other pupils. Results in 2004 were poorer than in 2003. The trend in results over the last three years is down, again because of problems in staffing the department.

105. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are higher than those attained in national tests in 2004 although still below average. More stable staffing and better teaching have helped improve standards and raise achievement, which is now satisfactory. By Year 9 higher attaining pupils can discuss their work and answer questions with confidence. Lower attaining pupils are hindered in their scientific work by poor literacy skills and even by Year 9 find great difficulty in producing effective work in exercise books; this means their work is of little use for future reference. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are still below average but work shows standards are improving and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils can present their work well and can discuss it knowledgeably. However, lower attaining pupils find difficulty with abstract scientific concepts. They are interested in aspects of the subject related to themselves and their lives and show good learning in these topics, as seen in a lesson about blood circulation; great interest and enthusiasm were generated by the forthcoming dissection of a heart.
106. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; some good lessons were seen, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well prepared and objectives made clear to pupils. In Year 10, a very good lesson was observed on the topic of sound; the lesson was well pitched to the ability of pupils and there were a good variety of activities. There was a very good rapport between teacher and pupils; the lesson moved swiftly from one activity to the next and pupils were involved at every stage, enjoyed the lesson, and learnt throughout it. In a good lesson in Year 9 on magnetism, the key to success was again a combination of good planning and effective time and class management. The class were all involved from the outset with a lively introduction which used individual whiteboards. The good variety of questions enabled all to achieve some success and at the same time challenged the more able pupils. In all good lessons seen the enthusiasm of the teacher and good working relationships with pupils were paramount. In contrast, a poor lesson seen on water purification in Year 7 was not prepared satisfactorily, the practical work and class were poorly managed and consequently pupils' interest waned, behaviour deteriorated and little learning occurred.
107. Overall assessment is satisfactory. Pupils are given end-of-topic tests and their progress is monitored well by teachers. However, pupils, although they usually know their target grades, are uncertain of their present level of attainment. Although teachers check pupils' work regularly there is no system in place to give pupils short-term targets to help guide an immediate improvement in their standard of work.
108. Leadership and management are good but the head of department's work has been hindered by a period of severe staff shortage until recently. The department is now fully staffed and there is in place a team of staff who work closely together and share a joint commitment to continue to raise standards. However, the introduction of an A-level course for very small numbers of students does take up a very significant proportion of experienced teachers' time away from working with pupils in Years 7 to 11. The effect of this new team is already beginning to show in the improved standards this school year, illustrated for example by the grades attained by Year 10 in their first module test. The department now makes good use of ICT and a good lesson was observed in Year 8 where pupils were using data loggers well to improve their numerical and graphical work. The department enriches the experience of the pupils by arranging a good range of educational visits and runs a thriving science club.
109. Accommodation is barely satisfactory; two laboratories are small and this makes practical work very difficult. There is one full-time and one part-time laboratory

technician but they only work in term time and, although the work they do is good, the overall level of support for the department is unsatisfactory. There are no textbooks issued to pupils and this lack is hindering the development of self-study and homework by pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Resources are good and they are well utilised.
- GCSE results in 2004 were well below average but standards are now better in Year 11.
- More pupils now have the opportunity to study for a qualification in ICT.
- The department makes effective use of the National ICT Strategy in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum are good.

Commentary

110. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. A head of department has been appointed and ICT is now taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 11. Resources are now good and well utilised. The department is making effective use of the National ICT Strategy lesson plans in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum. However, arrangements for assessment in Years 7 to 9 remain unsatisfactory.
111. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 9 pupils can use some of the more advanced features of a spreadsheet package, such as 'goal-seek' and 'if' functions, and can devise simple algorithms to control simulations of systems such as the mechanism of a theme park ride. However, the flowcharts they produce for this work are often inaccurate and inefficient, and their planning and evaluation skills show unsatisfactory progress from work in earlier years. Work seen in Years 7 and 8 indicates that standards and achievement are improving. Year 7 pupils can use a storyboard to plan a presentation and can evaluate the finished presentation.
112. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 lessons are average. Achievement is satisfactory. By Year 11 pupils have good knowledge and understanding of system hardware devices, and they enthusiastically use on-line revision packages to reinforce and test their knowledge. They can use a database management package to create a database, devise appropriate queries and export data to a spreadsheet for graphical analysis. However some of the charts they produce are of an inappropriate type and format, for example using a pie chart to attempt to display a very large number of data points whose values show little variation. There is little evidence of the development of pupils' planning and evaluation skills. Only 12 pupils were entered for GCSE examinations in 2004, taking an Applied GCSE course at a local college. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was well below average, but the proportion attaining an A*-G grade was above average.

113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In too many lessons, pupils' achievement is limited by teaching which lacks pace and variety, restricting pupil progress. However, there is a proportion of good teaching in Years 7 to 9. In one good lesson in Year 8, the teacher's confident use of the interactive whiteboard allowed him to deliver a well-paced lesson, introducing the 'goal-seek' spreadsheet function whilst pupils followed his examples and tried out a variety of relevant activities at their own workstations. In a very good lesson in Year 7, the teacher kept pupils' attention and enthusiasm at a high level with a brisk series of activities to introduce the applications of spreadsheets. Pupils made very good progress and their enjoyment of their success was very apparent in their willing and excited participation. These lessons indicate that the department has the capacity to continue the improvement in teaching and learning which has been achieved since the last inspection.
114. Assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because pupils receive insufficient guidance regarding their level of attainment and teachers provide little constructive feedback to them on how to improve their work. Although there has been an investment in an online assessment scheme it is having little impact on improving achievement. Assessment is better used in Years 10 and 11, where it is satisfactory. Pupils' work is accurately assessed against examination board criteria; they are aware of how well they are progressing and are given useful feedback on how to improve.
115. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has led a significant improvement in provision since his appointment. His management of resources is good. The head of department has plans to formalise self-evaluation and to introduce a new course at Key Stage 4 which will better provide for those pupils who wish to specialise in the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

116. Resources for cross-curricular ICT are good and standards of pupils' competence are average overall. The co-ordinator has a good grasp of what is being undertaken in each department. He has also enhanced the quality of work by carefully negotiating the use of the 'laptop room' so that, for each activity, a department has continuity of access so that projects can be completed in a sensible time-frame. Where installed, data projectors and interactive whiteboards are well used. However there is a need for more of these facilities as some departments, such as science, currently lack access to them.
117. Pupils' use of ICT is good in art and design, science and mathematics. It is satisfactory in design and technology and English, and underdeveloped in geography in Years 7 to 9, history and physical education. In art and design, ICT is well integrated throughout schemes of work and there is a high level of pupil interest. In science, using computers for data logging is very much the norm. Reports on practical work are competently produced using word processing and spreadsheet packages. All mathematics groups have one lesson per cycle in an ICT room.
118. The coordinator and the head of the ICT department have a good vision for the development of cross-curricular ICT. They have promoted this vision through their approach to the use of e-learning credits (effectively financial rewards for innovative ideas in the use of ICT funded from a national programme).

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not receive clear information about their standards of work and how to improve them.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, so that pupils make good progress in lessons.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT for learning in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

119. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Fieldwork now gives pupils first-hand experience of geography in Years 7 to 11. Teaching and learning are now monitored, and pupils receive oral and written feedback about their work.
120. GCSE examination results in 2004 were well below average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was very low, although girls achieved an above average proportion of B-C grades. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was low, although all girls gained a grade, which was an improvement since 2003, and better than average for girls. Boys' results were lower than girls' results because a higher number of lower attaining boys chose the subject as an option. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades in 2004 was lower than in 2003, whilst the proportion attaining A*-G grades was slightly better. However, a significant trend cannot be determined over such a short time.
121. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average overall. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are less than nationally expected when they start in Year 7. Girls reach higher standards than boys because they work better. By Year 9, most pupils can describe and explain the effects of human activity on landscapes such as Antarctica. However, lower attaining pupils cannot explain simple physical processes clearly in writing. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Achievement is satisfactory overall; satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11. Girls again do better than boys because they apply themselves to work more consistently. Pupils' achievements are limited by an inadequate level of assessment. By Year 11, pupils use a range of evidence to describe and explain the environmental and economic impact of human activities, such as the growth of tourism in St. Lucia. However, very low attaining pupils cannot, for example, identify the advantages of tourism to jobs and money from a list they are given. While the majority of pupils have good attitudes, a very few do not concentrate enough and engage in inappropriate activities that interfere with their progress and that of other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they receive appropriate support from teachers and teaching assistants.
122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. All teaching shows good planning and good use of time, and illustrates teachers' good subject knowledge. In Year 9, a satisfactory lesson used a good method for developing pupils' literacy. The teacher provided clear guidance on

how to write a formal letter; pupils drafted balanced arguments to the Secretary General of the United Nations about development of Antarctica. In Year 11, a good lesson on migration built on pupils' knowledge and understanding of previous work on population through a challenging starter activity. Pupils acquired a good understanding of the different types of migration, and reinforced their learning by applying it to several examples. Harder work was given to more able pupils. However, in a Year 7 lesson where more able pupils finished quickly, they did not receive additional challenges. Pupils in Year 11 use ICT to report their investigations on the quality of the environment in Slough. They use word-processing to make their reports attractive, and utilise programs well for analysing data, and showing it in tables and graphs. No evidence of ICT was seen in the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

123. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but the use of assessment information is unsatisfactory. Pupils' work is marked regularly, although very few of the written comments help pupils to know how they could improve the quality of their work, and achieve better. There is good practice in setting assessment tasks in Year 9, and drawing attention to National Curriculum levels of attainment, though these were displayed so high on one classroom wall that they were difficult to read. Pupils cannot recall their levels or grades because they do not have a record in their books, and teachers make little reference to them in marking. Pupils miss the motivation that comes from clear individual targets for improvement. This applies to pupils in all years.
124. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been addressed; however, the use of assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work remains an area to be tackled urgently. A new ICT base for humanities subjects will improve pupils' access to ICT soon. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development. This is identified in some lesson plans, although it is not referred to specifically in lessons.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers insist on pupils behaving well in lessons; as a result, pupils learn well.
- Most pupils are interested in their work and many achieve well.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are below average.
- The department is led well; very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

Commentary

125. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Although standards remain below average the many weaknesses in teaching and learning, and in the leadership of the department, have been dealt with effectively.
126. GCSE results in 2004 were well below average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was very low. Very few pupils gained an A or A* grade. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was below average. Many pupils began their GCSE course with standards that are below what is expected nationally, and this was reflected in their final GCSE grade. Results at A*-C in 2004 were similar to those of 2003.

127. Standards seen in Year 9 are below average. Most pupils begin Year 7 with standards that are below, and in many cases well below, those expected nationally. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because they are taught well and are encouraged to think and work problems out for themselves. There is little significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. By Year 9 pupils have sound knowledge about the past and describe events adequately. The highest attainers demonstrate good understanding about why events have happened, and use and evaluate historical sources well. Low literacy levels hinder the capacity of lower attainers to use sources other than for simple information.
128. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average but pupils achieve satisfactorily. The work of a very small proportion is above average. By Year 11 these pupils write well at length, showing good knowledge and understanding. They explain past events well using valid evidence to back up their views. The majority, however, lack depth of understanding and do not use or evaluate historical sources competently; older pupils gained insufficient historical understanding when younger. They are taught well and most show interest and work hard.
129. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are supported well by support assistants and because teachers set appropriate work. The most able pupils make good progress because teachers set them demanding activities.
130. Teaching and learning are good overall; there has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers demand and get high standards of behaviour, so that pupils work in a calm and purposeful atmosphere, and lessons comprise interesting activities which pupils are happy to be involved in. The good relationships which exist between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are willing to concentrate and co-operate and so they learn well. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. In a good lesson in Year 9 pupils were asked to put several long term causes of World War 1 into order of importance. The teacher invited volunteers to use the board to complete a chart showing the order and to explain the reasons for their decisions. In Year 11, in a good lesson, pupils identified reasons why Stalin rather than Trotsky became leader of the USSR. The work was split into short sections so the teacher could check several times during the lesson whether the pupils were learning successfully. A session at the end of the lesson in which pupils had to say whether a statement described Trotsky or Stalin showed they had learned well.
131. The department is led well and managed satisfactorily. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, and is a key factor in the overall very good improvement since then. The relatively new head of department has a clear commitment to raising standards. The impact of his strategies to achieve this has, however, not yet been fully effective. The department now has two specialist teachers so that almost all pupils are taught by specialists. This has contributed to the improvement in teaching, and in pupils' learning and achievement. The scheme to assess pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9, criticised at the time of the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and comments on work are helpful in showing pupils how to improve work still further. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and citizenship education.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recently appointed head of department is instigating rapid improvement and standards are beginning to rise.
- Teaching has improved with better staffing and a shared vision for the subject.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes and are productive.
- Year 11 pupils in textiles produce creative designs drawn from their various cultural backgrounds.
- Staffing difficulties in the past have had an adverse effect on standards and continue to cause problems.

Commentary

132. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. A new head of department has recently been appointed after a period of constant change and use of supply teachers. He is making rapid progress in addressing shortcomings identified in the previous report. Considerable investment has been made in improving resources for ICT including the setting up of a laptop room and provision for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM). The requirements of the National Curriculum are now fully met. There has been some improvement to the workshop environment but space is limited, particularly for storage, and currently there is no suitable area for design work; accommodation for this area is unsatisfactory overall. Teaching has improved with the appointment of new staff and support from the local education authority and school management. One teaching post remains vacant; it is currently filled by an overseas trained teacher on a temporary contract.
133. Pupils enter school with below average standards in the subject. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 are not clear. Work seen in Year 9 is below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily.
134. Examination results in 2003 and 2004 were similar and well below average overall; the proportion of A*-C grades was well below average, the proportion of A*-G grades below average. Compared to their other subjects, pupils performed poorly. Girls' results were higher than boys' in both years with considerably fewer girls than boys choosing to study the subject. Results were undoubtedly adversely affected by the turnover in staffing. No significant difference is discernable between results in the different technology material areas such as resistant materials or food.
135. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average but indicate recent improvement and represent satisfactory achievement for pupils of all abilities. Pupils can use tools and materials safely and confidently. They are acquiring some good practical skills and are productive in practical lessons. Pupils have some understanding of a design process but this is not yet firmly embedded in their work. They understand the purpose of a specification and can write good evaluations of the products they have made. The majority of pupils do not use information gained from their research to help promote design solutions. Sketching skills to show initial design ideas or existing products are weak, and sketches often lack annotation.

136. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are well below average overall because of the legacy of supply teaching in resistant materials and graphic products. Standards are now improving owing to new teachers; all pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards are average in textiles, and higher than in other material areas because of continuity in teaching. Pupils in Year 11 design and make very creative decorative products for the home with designs strongly influenced by their own cultural background.
137. In all technology areas, pupils' design work is weaker than the quality of their making. Products made in resistant materials are very traditional. To achieve better, pupils need to aspire to designing more innovative products which take account of the wide range of materials available for manufacturing. In graphic products, pupils need to ensure that their choice of materials is wholly appropriate for their designs. Considerable variation exists in pupils' ability to work independently. Year 10 pupils in graphic products drawing a shop frontage were unable to move from one stage of drawing to the next. Pupils in the same year worked independently to construct a circuit for a musical toy after initial input from the teacher. Most pupils' coursework folios are a long way from completion even though the deadline for finishing them is close; failure to complete coursework was highlighted in the previous report. Work shows that pupils' literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills are appropriately developed.
138. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. Teachers engage and manage pupils well. They make lessons interesting so that pupils have good attitudes and behave well. Relationships are good and have a positive effect on learning; pupils are productive and lesson time is not wasted. Teachers demonstrate practical skills well and provide examples of good work, both written and practical, so that pupils know what constitutes high standards. Teachers set meaningful homework but the completion rate noted during the inspection was poor. Day-to-day marking is not always regular or rigorous enough to move pupils' learning forward rapidly. Not enough materials, for example pictures and products, are provided to stimulate design ideas amongst pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are supported by teachers and learning support assistants when necessary but teaching materials, for example worksheets, are not sufficiently modified to help them.
139. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall; the head of department began work after Christmas. He has correctly identified what needs to be done. A realistic plan of action linked to whole school priorities to raise standards has been devised. Assessment procedures follow the school policy and are developing well. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of his actions but early indications are very positive. New schemes of work have already been put in place to help improvement and pupils are responding well to more challenging tasks. Teachers are working well together to bring about improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching fosters good relationships with pupils and contributes to good learning.

- Pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Teachers use ICT very effectively and pupils are motivated by it.

Commentary

140. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and most issues raised then have been dealt with. There has been a significant improvement in the way that ICT has been integrated into pupils' work at all levels and pupils now understand the value of computers as an additional tool for extending their art and design work. This has become an important factor in raising interest in art and design and has been particularly important in improving the motivation of boys.
141. GCSE results in 2004 were average. They were not as good as the 2003 results, and this was caused by the poor performance of pupils taking the art textiles option. If the results for art and design are considered separately, they are well above average and have been consistently so in recent years. The uncertainty surrounding the teaching of textiles as an art- or a technology-based subject has caused confusion and has adversely affected art results. Comparative figures show that, overall, pupils achieve better in art than in most other school subjects. The achievement of boys is particularly good.
142. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils enter the school with below average skills and widely varying experience of art. This is evident in the simplistic observational drawing, use of line and application of colour that can be seen in their early work. There is clear evidence of progression throughout the course and, by Year 9, pupils' achievement is good. Higher attaining pupils are able to produce complex perspective drawings, use computer software to manipulate images and develop their initial ideas through a variety of styles and media. However, some lower attaining pupils, mainly boys, do not currently develop sufficient practical skills or understanding of artistic processes to enable them to work independently. Increased use of ICT is helping to overcome this but the predominantly two- dimensional nature of the work at this stage does not engage some of them sufficiently; this will be addressed when a specialist teacher currently on leave returns.
143. Standards of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are above average and pupils' progress and achievement continue to be good. Pupils use sketchbooks as an effective record of research and developing ideas. Many Year 10 pupils are able to evaluate the work of established artists with pertinent annotations and readily adapt styles into their own work. For example, an analysis of the work of Dali, Munch and the Surrealist movement led to a powerful personal interpretation of dreams and nightmares. The work of lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, is well supported by the positive atmosphere of co-operation seen in most lessons. Good progress and achievement are maintained through to Year 11 where, for example, there are examples of detailed development in pastels in the style of artists such as O'Keefe.
144. Teaching is good overall and has some very good aspects. Lessons are structured well and teachers clearly explain expectations to pupils. Pupils are involved in the assessment of their own work through use of some very effective group evaluation techniques. These familiarise pupils with the criteria by which their work will be judged and enable them to work towards meeting them. They also contribute to personal

development by providing good opportunities for pupils to evaluate in a constructive way, make decisions and voice their views, so building confidence. Consequently, an atmosphere of mutual help is fostered that contributes to good learning. Where teaching is only satisfactory it sometimes neglects minor points, such as seating arrangements, which would lead to fewer distractions for some pupils. The best teaching manages disruptive behaviour in an assertive and effective manner. Teachers do not have the benefit of technician help but support from classroom assistants is very effective.

145. Leadership and management are good. Good support for new teachers generates good team spirit. There has been innovative use of ICT in both pupils' work and in teaching techniques. Resources for ICT are now good and general resources, although not generous, are managed well. Good quality displays have raised the profile of art throughout the school.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have promoted good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is improving because of good aspects of teaching and learning.
- Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are still disadvantaged by patchy provision in their earlier years.
- Pupils have undeveloped learning skills, including competence in subject-specific ICT, which limit their independence.

Commentary

146. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The head of department, who is the only subject specialist and teaches all classes, has made significant improvements to almost all the weaknesses recorded in the previous inspection report. Pupils' listening, their use and understanding of technical language and assessment supporting their progress are all better. A new and effective scheme of work which promotes multicultural awareness, better resources, improved accommodation, and a modest growth in extra-curricular activities have all increased pupils' opportunities.

147. Pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 are well below the national average. By Year 9 they are below the national average, although in Years 7 and 8 pupils are working closer to national average levels. Pupils in Year 9 lack skills, knowledge and particularly understanding in music because of inadequate learning during their first year in the school. Standards by Year 11 are also below average, and pupils demonstrate a wide range of capability. Recent GCSE results are well below average overall and in the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades; they are below but close to average in the proportion attaining A*-G grades nationally. Overall results have improved slowly since the previous inspection.

148. Pupils' achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory, although progress in Years 7 and 8 is closer to good. In Year 9, achievement is too inconsistent. Higher attaining pupils do not often realise their potential and unsatisfactory behaviour, lack of co-operation and low productivity sometimes reduce the effectiveness of learning. Achievement by Year

11 is satisfactory. While pupils in Years 10 and 11 also suffered from patchy provision in the past and relatively modest performing standards continue to disadvantage them, they are working well to make up lost ground.

149. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11 is sometimes only satisfactory because of their previous poor experiences and this hinders their achievement. Teaching has improved pupils' learning through better planning, clearer objectives, adapting tasks to meet pupils' different needs, more effective behaviour management, and the satisfactory use of assessment and pupil profiles to inform pupils about their progress. A good range of complementary practical activities supports the development of skills and knowledge and pupils generally enjoy the subject. Sometimes, more capable pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently encouraged to reach for more challenging options, and too many pupils still find it difficult to listen to the teacher, other pupils and musical examples. There are not enough successful strategies to improve learning further by increasing pupils' concentration and productivity, and maintaining their engagement with the lesson when activities change, or as pupils tire towards its end. More emphasis on learning which develops problem solving and transferable skills, including the use of subject-specific ICT, could improve pupils' independence and confidence, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
150. Leadership and management are both good and have enabled significant improvements since the last inspection. Though more remains to be done, music has now gained status and respect in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching by specialists leads to good learning by pupils.
- Pupils make good progress because they behave well and work hard in lessons.
- Good leadership and management are ensuring that standards continue to rise.
- In Years 10 and 11, the time available for pupils' entitlement for physical education is less than normally found in schools nationally.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and a barrier to learning.

Commentary

151. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are rising, schemes of work are up to date, modern technology is being used to support learning, and outdoor facilities have been improved.
152. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2004 were average overall. One fifth of the pupils who took the exam gained passes at A* or A grades. Pupils did much better in physical education examinations than they did in the other subjects they took. Nineteen boys followed the course of study, but only five girls.
153. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils' standards are below average. Standards remain below average overall by Year 9 though pupils have a wider set of skills and better understanding of games. By Year 11, standards are average. Pupils achieve well by Year 9 and Year 11; in Years 10 and 11 this includes both pupils following GCSE physical education and those who are not.

154. Pupils are enthusiastic and prepared to work hard to learn, as was demonstrated in a Year 7 boys' dance lesson when a large group of pupils were willing to rehearse over and over, and eventually to perform a complex and fast-paced street dancing display with style, determination and no little panache. Similarly, a mixed Year 11 GCSE group practised trampoline routines for examination assessment which included twisting front, and layout back, somersaults. These were carried out with tension, good extension and impressive elevation, and were executed successfully by all pupils.
155. Teaching is consistently good and leads directly to good learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers clearly state the lesson objectives at the start of each lesson. Dynamic warm-up activities rapidly engage pupils' interest. In the best lessons, good demonstrations by teachers are supported by concise explanations and additional displays by pupils. All teachers have secure knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and are enthusiastic. They maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons, and work hard to raise levels of pupils' self-esteem. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and are able to make appropriate progress. A good range of extra-curricular activities, both competitive and non-competitive, and fixtures with other schools give many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills, and enable local links to be made.
156. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative. They listen well to guidance, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Pupils work well when not under direct supervision because their teachers expect them so to do. They readily recognise and celebrate achievement. This underlines the good contribution made by the department to the moral, social, and cultural development of pupils.
157. Leadership and management are both good. Teachers are energetic and committed to the pupils and the subject. They support each other well and all want to further improve provision; they evaluate the work of the department well. They are good role models for pupils. Contributions made by the subject to citizenship are noted in lesson plans where appropriate, but are not made explicit in lessons.
158. Indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory; it is generally unwelcoming, and is too small to cope with large groups effectively. Outdoor accommodation is limited. Curriculum time allocation in Years 10 and 11 is less than that found in most schools. All three factors limit opportunities for pupils to learn.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

159. One Year 11 lesson of **business studies** was seen, in which pupils were introduced to the topic of business finance. Teaching was good and pupils' understanding of internal and external sources of business capital was developed in an organised and sequential way. Recent examination results have been below average but represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Current pupils are reaching average levels of attainment.
160. The **catering** GCSE course was sampled. Examination results in 2003 were well below average for the proportion of pupils achieving grades in the A*-C range and average for those achieving in the A*-G range. In 2004 results in the A*-C range were well below average and those in the A*-G range were above average. Two lessons

were seen in Year 10, one a higher and one a lower ability group. Standards of work were well below average overall but represent satisfactory achievement. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall. However, pupils' learning relies too much on the assimilation of copied notes; the range of teaching strategies is limited. Pupils in the lower ability group tackled a sensory analysis task positively but lacked the necessary analytical skills and technical vocabulary to describe food accurately. Pupils in the higher ability group attained average standards. They made worthwhile contributions in a discussion about the use of convenience foods and were able to assess the relative merits of using commercially produced versus home made products in various circumstances. Pupils' interviews revealed that some mistakenly believe that this course is purely skills-based when in fact there is a high theoretical content. Closer guidance needs to be given to pupils when they are choosing options so that they are clear about expectations. There may be a case for including a catering course with a greater practical content to better meet their needs.

161. One Year 11 lesson of **leisure and tourism** was seen, in which teaching was good and the standard of pupils' work average. This vocationally orientated subject is providing a worthwhile work-related experience for pupils. Recent examination results have been below average but current pupils are making good progress and achieving well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

162. Pupils have one **personal, social and health education** (PSHE) lesson per week, taught by form tutors. External speakers and experts contribute to the work when they visit. No lessons could be seen, as they take place on Friday and the inspection finished on Thursday. However, a large sample of pupils' work was looked at, and subject documentation inspected. Standards of work are below those typically found in other schools. Loose lesson plans exist for different aspects of the PSHE curriculum, but they lack order and organisation. Schemes of work are incomplete though statutory requirements for sex and relationships and drugs education are met. The quality of teaching and learning within PSHE lessons has not been monitored. The progress pupils are making is not known by the school. A similar situation existed at the time of the last full inspection and little progress has been made, in part due to the difficult staffing situation that has existed.
163. No lessons of **citizenship** were seen during the inspection. Many examples of the relatively small amount of work done in PSHE lessons, by pupils from all years, were inspected and staff were spoken to. Improvement since the last inspection is poor. Very little progress has been made since then. There are plans to introduce a short course for citizenship in Years 10 and 11 from September 2005. Currently national requirements are not met and assessment of pupils' understanding not made. Teaching and learning of citizenship within PSHE appear poor from indications in the work scrutinised. In their lesson plans, other subjects do identify aspects of their work which might make a contribution to citizenship, but pupils are not made aware of this; consequently opportunities for learning about being good citizens are missed. There is a school council which should be a practical example of citizenship, but its responsibilities and activities are limited. Some of its members do not know what its remit is. No records indicating achievement in citizenship were available for inspectors to see. Leadership and management of the subject are poor. There is no clear vision of how the subject should develop. Schemes of work are still being written, two years on from the last inspection. There is no systematic method of evaluating the quality of

provision. Guidance and support for the non-specialist form tutors who have to teach citizenship are disorganised and lack clarity, quality, and robustness.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	8	100.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	n/a	19.4
Business	9	66.0	75.3	0.0	15.4	n/a	25.7
Drama	2	100.0	86.6	0.0	19.8	n/a	30.9
English literature	12	100.0	86.2	33.0	16.1	n/a	29.7
General studies	21	61.9	73.6	9.5	16.9	37.5	25.5
History	2	0.0	82.2	0.0	20.8	15.0	29.2
ICT	14	57.0	54.2	0.0	4.2	n/a	21.4
Media studies	8	100.0	87.2	62.5	24.9	n/a	32.8
Physical education	8	50.0	72.2	12.5	11.8	n/a	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	4	75.0	98.9	0.0	39.4	73.3	81.8
Media Studies	4	100.0	99.2	25.0	40.4	66.7	83.5
English Literature	5	100.0	99.4	20.0	44.9	72.0	85.5
General Studies	2	100.0	94.9	100.0	30.5	100.0	72.9

Level 1 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Foundation IT	4	100.0	n/a	75.0	n/a	0.0	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in comparison with their standards on entry to the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- A minority of students makes less good progress because they are too reliant on their teachers' ideas.

Commentary

164. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Stable teaching, good leadership and management and clear planning help students to achieve well.
165. A-level and AS results in 2004 were below average. However, in relation to standards at entry students achieved well overall and a good proportion completed A-level successfully. The standard of work seen during the inspection at A-level and AS level was also below average, though the range of attainment is very wide. Fewer boys than girls take the subject, generally attaining a little less highly, though not significantly so. By Year 13 most students are confident in their knowledge and understanding of the texts they study. They learn to research and plan their essays sensibly. Written work is full and well supported by textual evidence. Students take notes with care and concentration, although they are occasionally too reliant on their teachers' views. The majority work hard, with a determination to succeed. As a result, they achieve well. They study a demanding range of texts with enjoyment and thought.
166. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. The hallmarks of the effective teaching seen were the very good subject knowledge of the teachers, the enthusiastic encouragement and assistance given to students, and wide ranging and interesting teaching methods used. Much is done to encourage students to think and to research for themselves, so that they provide a full, personal response to the texts they study, as well as knowing and understanding them well. This was clearly to be seen in a very good lesson in Year 12, in which pupils were exploring William Blake's 'The Tyger' and fitting it into their understanding of his other poems. This work was not easy for them, but the level of absorption created by the teacher's searching methods was very rewarding and productive. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that activities are varied and absorbing and that students remain interested in their work. Teachers have very good relationships with students, know them well, and are able to tailor work effectively to their individual needs. Teachers also provide students well with a social and cultural background to aid their textual study and general perception of literature. Assessment is very thorough and closely tracks students' progress. Detailed marking gives all students clear indications about the standard of their work and shows them how to improve it.
167. Good leadership and management ensure that students experience the same good quality of teaching throughout the course. They are given a very clear overview of examination requirements and are well informed about the course prior to joining the

sixth form, so that they make rapid progress in Year 12. Texts are chosen well to match the interests of students and ICT is used well for purposes of research and for writing coursework. Accommodation and resources are very good.

MATHEMATICS

168. The school offers students the option of studying A-level mathematics. Currently, no student in the sixth form takes the subject. The school also offers students the opportunity to improve on the grade they gained in GCSE for mathematics. No separate classes are arranged but students are informed that they may join Year 11 classes. No student was observed to be taking advantage of this offer at the time of the inspection. Teachers of mathematics also offer to assist students at mutually convenient times. No work from any student was made available by the school for inspectors to view. Because of the failure to tackle identified need effectively, the school's provision to develop the mathematical skills of sixth form students is unsatisfactory and the school manages this aspect of its work poorly.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations and show very good knowledge of the subject.
- Students have positive attitudes and share the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject.
- Formal pieces of work are marked effectively but students' files are not monitored on a regular basis.

Commentary

169. The school did not enter candidates for GCE A-level biology at the time of the last inspection. Eight candidates, with widely varying levels of prior attainment, entered the AS examination in 2004. This was the first time that candidates had been entered. All pupils passed but none received the higher grades of A or B.

170. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are average. Many students start the course with modest prior levels of attainment. They make good progress during lessons and are currently achieving well. Students in Year 12 have a sound understanding of cell structure and of basic biochemistry. They showed above average practical skills when, for example, investigating the factors affecting the action of pectinase on different fruits. They have a mature approach and demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements for a successful investigation. A high attaining student worked very thoughtfully in designing an experiment to investigate the way in which woodlice respond to light. Appropriate intervention by the teacher and a positive approach by the student resulted in very good progress. The one female student in Year 13 approached a study of human evolution with enthusiasm. A good lesson combined thoughtful dialogue with the teacher and intelligent use of the Internet.

171. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, plan lessons carefully and have high expectations. Relationships are very good and students share teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers are skilled in assessing the needs of each student and giving appropriate support. ICT is used well to enhance students' learning. Tests and formal pieces of work are marked effectively but students' files are not monitored on a regular basis to correct errors and help them to organise their work.
172. Leadership and management of biology, within the science department, are good. The two teachers work well together, providing mutual support. Small numbers, particularly in Year 13, hinder a healthy dialogue between students, and particularly hold back skills related to teamwork and problem solving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

173. ICT was sampled. AS level results in 2004 were well below average; of 14 entrants, 6 gained results that were unclassified; the remainder were mostly D grades, and none were higher. For some students results were as expected, given the low standards on entry; staffing issues likely contributed to students failing. Results in the Foundation Level GNVQ course were above average, with all four students attaining a pass grade and three attaining a merit grade. Standards seen in lessons were average. Students in an AS-level lesson were able to discuss the economic factors driving the development of Internet search engines and the advantages of using automated procedures such as 'wizards' and 'macros'.
174. Teaching and learning in lessons seen were satisfactory overall and students achieved satisfactorily. However, activities tend to be mundane and to lack challenge, as in a GNVQ lesson where students used a graphics package to create a very simple logo. The teacher missed opportunities to enthuse and challenge the students, for example, by encouraging them to discuss the relative merits of some well-known logos before designing their own.
175. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall though the new head of department acknowledges his need for professional development in order to improve his skills and confidence, and thereby the quality of post-16 provision. Staffing has improved since the last report and current students also have a better experience of ICT when younger. Accommodation and resources are very good, especially in view of the small number of students enrolled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on media studies, but a Year 13 lesson of **drama** was also seen. Standards were below average; teaching and learning were satisfactory and students achieved satisfactorily. Both candidates in AS examinations last year passed; there were no A-C grades.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher in charge of media studies is committed to high standards.

- Students are enthusiastic, achieve well and their practical production work is very good.
- Good leadership and management have created a structured approach to the course which ensures students' progression through work.
- Students' levels of general knowledge of current affairs and political awareness are too low and impeding progress.
- The quality of resources available to students is high and enables them to develop their ICT skills well.

Commentary

176. Students usually enter the course with average or above average attainment in related subjects; media studies is not a GCSE subject but most students have at least four grade C GCSE passes. In 2004, all students achieved a pass at either AS or A-level which was either in line with or above expectations based on their prior attainment. They achieved well overall.
177. Standards of current work are above average; good use is made of media terminology and there is a good understanding of media industries and concepts. The very structured approach to the course ensures that students are well taught and achieve well. Practical work is very good as a result of good teaching and preparation, and the very good resources for the small numbers of students participating in the course.
178. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students are taught the basic concepts and skills to enable them to produce work of a very high quality for their practical activity assessment at the end of Year 12. There is a high level of support available to individuals as class groups are small. In Year 13, the more theoretical aspects of the course require a greater understanding of current affairs and a higher level of political awareness than most students possess. Teachers' planning takes this into consideration and the resources provided ensure that students' general knowledge is enhanced as they study the media. Students' independence develops as the course progresses. Relationships within the groups and with the teacher are good and a mature approach to the course is seen in folders of work produced. Students are enthusiastic, especially in the practical elements of the AS level course. They work conscientiously, although there is some discontinuity as a result of absence by some students.
179. Leadership and management are good and have maintained good provision since the last inspection. The teacher responsible for media studies is a very good role model for students. The planning and preparation of resources and the use of suitable materials to extend students' general knowledge encourage their approach to research to be thorough. Marking is positive and assessment accurate and rigorous; teachers' comments are supportive and provide students with good guidance for future development. The course is well managed; resources and course materials provide students with relevant and appropriate textual references to enhance their analytical skills and develop the knowledge of the broader issues within the media. Computer-based and other technical resources are very good and promote the high standards of media presentations which form part of the course. The carefully structured approach to the course ensures good progression from AS to A-level and is reflected in the examination successes of students who have little or no prior knowledge of media studies.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One Year 13 advanced level **physical education** lesson was sampled. Students were taught well and learnt effectively; they made good progress. Eight students were entered for AS level examinations last year; 4 entries were unclassified, 3 passes were in the B-C range.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students are achieving well.
- Although AS and A2 results have been below average, they have represented satisfactory achievement.
- Students have positive views about the benefits of the course.
- Contacts with business and industry are not sufficiently strong to give students enough experience of the real world of work.

Commentary

180. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There is now a more stable staffing situation, greater access to ICT and improved accommodation and resources.

181. Low entry numbers for A-level examinations make statistical comparisons unreliable, but the average points score per student in 2004 was below average, with grades falling in the middle to low range. Despite this, achievement for most students was in line with expectations. Male and female students achieve equally well. AS results in 2004 were disappointing and contained a disproportionate number of D and E grades; 3 entries were also unclassified. Students and teachers have analysed this performance and identified areas for improvement.

182. Standards for the current Year 12 are average and achievement is satisfactory for this stage of the course. A wide range of business management topics has been covered but research for some case studies lacks depth. Students receive good support for developing study skills but despite this, some find the construction and phrasing of discursive essays difficult. Students have a reasonable understanding of concepts such as 'job analysis' and 'person specification' but, as seen in one lesson on human resource management, they lack confidence in expressing their views and applying what they know in new situations. The debate lacked spark and verve but participation improved as students became more familiar with the topic.

183. In contrast, Year 13 students participate readily in lively debates and demonstrate good background knowledge of topics such as health and safety legislation and minimum wage legislation and how they impinge on business management. Writing skills are not as well developed as verbal skills and this affects the quality of extended case studies. Standards are average but, against prior attainment, progress is good and students are achieving well.

184. Teaching is good. Teachers have relevant background experience in the business world and can enliven lessons by setting topics in an appropriate context. Good interaction with students leads to positive attitudes and good involvement with the work; consequently learning is good. Teachers know the subject matter well and, in the best lessons, use a variety of techniques to communicate this at a brisk pace. Students are positive about the benefits of the course and appreciate the help and support that teachers give. Most Year 13 students intend to continue with a business-related course in further education. Teachers have worked hard on techniques to improve students'

independent learning skills, which are now better than at the time of the last inspection but still require further development. Students' work is assessed thoroughly and with clear advice for improvement.

185. Leadership and management are good. There is a good awareness of the department's strengths and weaknesses and a clear path for development has been established. However, there are limited opportunities for students to experience the business world at first hand.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENT

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	5	4
How inclusive the school is	5	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	6	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	5	5
Overall standards achieved	5	4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	5	4
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5	4
The quality of education provided by the school	5	4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	6	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	5	4
Accommodation and resources	3	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	5	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school	5	4
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher	5	4
The leadership of other key staff	5	4
The effectiveness of management	5	4

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