

INSPECTION REPORT

ULVERSTON VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL

Ulverston

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112385

Headteacher: Mrs Karen Hanks

Lead inspector: Roy Hedge

Dates of inspection: 1 - 5 November 2004

Inspection number: 271768

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1282
School address:	Springfield Road Ulverston Cumbria
Postcode:	LA12 0EB
Telephone number:	01229 894140
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Jane Mason
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive of 1291 pupils (which is above average), with a sixth form of 236 students. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Standards on entry to the school were average for year groups who have been entered for national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations. More recently admitted year groups were above average. Very few pupils are of ethnic minority heritage, and none has low knowledge of English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The school is designated as a specialist college for mathematics and computing. It has been awarded Investor in People, Sportsmark and Artsmark status. There are slightly fewer pupils than there were at the time of the previous inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2932	R Hedge	Lead inspector	Work-related learning Personal, social and health education
9424	J Cassidy	Lay inspector	
10782	H Moreton	Team inspector	English
1994	H Olds	Team inspector	Geography, citizenship
27585	K Hounslow	Team inspector	Science, physics
31673	J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
11044	J Hedge	Team inspector	English literature, special educational needs
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History
17201	V Harray	Team inspector	Physical education
30702	P Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics
24894	C Petts	Team inspector	Design and technology
3843	G Cooper	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
20215	J Mellor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, French
30818	M Pope	Team inspector	Religious education
17015	L Denholm	Team inspector	Psychology
31981	E Forster	Team inspector	Art and design

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school giving good value for money. Standards on entry to Year 7 have been average until the last three years, since when they have been above average. Pupils **achieve well** in their earlier years in the school and in Years 10 and 11. Standards are **above average** at the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. The provision the school makes, including the quality of teaching is **good**. Leadership is **good** and management is **satisfactory**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Achievement in music and religious education is very good. There are no subjects in which pupils underachieve.
- Sixth form provision is particularly strong. Teaching and learning are very good.
- Data about pupils' progress, taken from test and examination results as well as teachers' assessments, are not analysed thoroughly enough. Analysis is not made available to staff in a way which encourages them to identify underachieving pupils or ineffective provision and take remedial action.
- There is very good provision for extra activities beyond the normal curriculum, especially in physical education and music.
- Behaviour is not managed consistently enough by faculties or tutors, with the result that some younger boys disrupt lessons and hinder their own learning and that of others.
- Teaching is not checked and managed with enough consistency or rigour to drive up the quality of learning.

The school has made **good improvement** since the last inspection. Achievement levels have been maintained. Teaching is better. Most issues raised in the last report have been effectively addressed: standards in ICT and art have improved, management is better. Performance data are still not used effectively enough to drive up achievement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	B	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	B	B	

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

Pupils achieve well because teaching is **good**. **At the end of Year 9 standards are above average.** Overall, Year 9 standards represent **good achievement**, especially in science, where standards are well above average. Girls do better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school because of good teaching and support. Standards are below those in schools whose pupils reached a similar standard in national tests taken at the end of Year 6, except in science but well above schools with a similar proportion of free school meals.

Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11. **At the end of Year 11 standards are above average and achievement is good.** Pupils achieve well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Achievement in music and religious education is **very good**. Standards in the sixth form were **above average** in 2002 and 2003. Achievement in the sixth form is good, particularly in English language and literature, physics, French, religious education and music.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, develop well in response to the school's provision. The rich programme of visits, links with foreign countries and extra-curricular activities plays a significant part in promoting moral, social and cultural development. The requirement for daily worship is not met and opportunities for raising

pupils' spiritual awareness are frequently missed because this provision is unplanned. Although the school has a significant number of younger pupils, particularly boys, who find it difficult to concentrate seriously in lessons unless teaching is strong, attitudes and behaviour are generally good. The school is largely free of tension, of racial or other harassment or bullying. Attendance is **above average** and pupils are punctual to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good throughout the school and very good in the sixth form. There is very good teaching of science, religious education and music. Pupils of all backgrounds and particular needs learn well. There are no subjects or stages in which teaching is unsatisfactory, although there is some inconsistent management of the behaviour of younger boys in lessons, as a result of which standards slip. The school offers a **good curriculum** and a particularly broad and exciting range of other activities beyond the normal provision, particularly in music and sport. There are good arrangements across subjects to provide for pupils with special educational needs, so that they learn and achieve well. There is good care and support for pupils and the school relates well to parents, other educational institutions and the community. All of these strengths play their part in establishing pupils' good achievement overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. The leadership of the new headteacher is **good**, and she is perceptive in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and planning for improvement. The impact of management is satisfactory, though there is not enough consistency and rigour in procedures for managing behaviour, using assessment data to identify underachievement and ineffective provision and in checking on and improving the quality of teaching. The governing body is satisfactory in most of its work of supporting the school and holding it to account. A very large budget deficit, which had built up over the years, is being recovered well, within a sound plan agreed with the local education authority.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think well of the school and of the provision it makes. The school is held in high regard in its community. Pupils particularly appreciate the quality of teaching and support they receive.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the recording and analysis of data about pupils' progress and make conclusions available to staff. Senior managers, teachers and pastoral staff should then use these results to
 1. ensure that underachieving pupils are supported in their efforts to improve and
 2. identify areas of weakness in teaching and learning and take steps to make improvements;
- improve the procedures in faculties and the tutorial system for managing poor behaviour to ensure greater focus and consistency;
- introduce consistent and rigorous checking on the quality of teaching in order to take steps to improve learning across the school;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the requirement for daily worship is met;
- ensure that the requirement for religious education for the sixth form is met.

THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 236 male and female students studying a wide range of Advanced level (A-level) GCE courses and a small number of students following vocational courses. About half of students in Year 11 choose to stay on into the sixth form. A small number of students (16 this year) join Year 12 from other schools in the area. Nearly all students complete the course in Year 12 and most continue into Year 13.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall effectiveness is good, as is value for money. Standards are above average overall, and this represents good achievement, given students' starting points at the beginning of their courses. Teaching and learning are very good. The leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher and senior staff is very good and day-to-day management is good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The attitudes of students are excellent.
- There is a very good range of enrichment opportunities beyond the examination courses students follow.
- Provision for religious education does not meet requirements.

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	Very good in both English language and English literature . Students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good. The attitudes of students are very good. Standards are well above average. Very good in French . Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well. Standards in the present Years 12 and 13 are above average.
Mathematics	Good in mathematics . Teaching and learning are good. Students have positive attitudes. Achievement is good. Standards are above average.
Science	Very good in physics . Students achieve very well as a result of excellent teaching and learning. Standards are above the national average but vary from year to year.
Information and communication technology	Good in information and communication technology . Teaching on the newly established AVCE course is very good. Standards are broadly average.
Humanities	Good in geography . Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Geographical investigations are very well considered. Very good in history . Standards at A-level are above average and well above at AS. Teaching and learning are good. Achievement is good. Good in psychology . Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Very good in religious studies . Teaching and learning are very good and are characterised by well-structured and varied lessons. Students achieve very well.
Visual and performing arts and media	Excellent in music . Very good teaching results in very good achievement and above average standards. Relationships are excellent.

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

Support and guidance for sixth form students are **very good**. Tutors know their students well and keep them informed about their progress. Subject teachers regularly review their work, offer advice and set targets. Students are appreciative of the support they receive. Careers advice, including information about higher education, is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership is **very good**. The strong team of tutors is led with enthusiasm. There is a clear sense of direction and high expectations of what students might achieve. Students' progress and personal development are monitored well. Day-to-day management is good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They enjoy it. Nearly all students feel they have made the right choice of subjects. They value the quality of teaching and the feedback they are given and regard their teachers as expert in their field. They say that teachers are accessible and help is always available if they have difficulties with their work. They feel that they are treated with respect and as young adults. Relationships amongst students are good and there is little tension or conflict. Most feel that a good range of enrichment activities is provided. Most students are satisfied with the quality of careers advice. A significant proportion of students responding to the questionnaire indicated a lack of support for personal problems but in discussion students did not agree that this was a concern. They considered that at the start of term a number of students joining the sixth form from other schools were not sufficiently informed about where such help would be found.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good. The best achievement is in religious education and music where it is very good. Girls do better than boys until the sixth form. Sixth form achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- There is particularly good achievement in music and religious education because of very good teaching.
- Boys and girls both do better than nationally, though a few younger boys do less well than they might because of poor behaviour.
- There is no subject in which there is significant underachievement.
- Strong provision results in good standards and achievement in the sixth form.
- Although standards of literacy and numeracy are good, pupils' ability to speak at length about their work in a skilful way is held back by lack of opportunity to do so in lessons.

Commentary

1. Standards as measured by national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003. This represents good achievement by pupils. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 were average for that year group. Standards in English and mathematics were above average in the tests in 2003 and English results at the higher levels improved in 2004. In the current Year 9 standards are above average. In science, standards were well above average in the tests in 2003. Results in English and mathematics 2003 were below average overall in comparison with schools whose pupils were at a similar level in tests they took in Year 6 and results in science were average. Results were above the average of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Since 1999 standards have risen in line with standards nationally. Over the last three years boys' results have been above those of boys nationally in the tests, whereas girls' results have been well above the girls' national average. By the end of Year 9, achievement is satisfactory in geography and ICT, very good in religious education and music and good in all other subjects. Standards of pupils' writing are good, though their speaking and listening skills are no better than average, principally because they have too few opportunities to speak at length about their work in lessons.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (35.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.4 (35.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.9 (36.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 206 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other pupils. Where they are withdrawn from mainstream lessons for special help in the earlier years their achievement is satisfactory. In some subjects where teaching is strong and work is planned to meet their specific needs they do well. In history, for example, teachers have a close knowledge of their needs, give individual help and adapt materials to help with reading and writing.

3. GCSE results were above average in 2003. They were above the average of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and on the average of schools with similar test scores at the end of Year 9 two years earlier. Results over the last five years have improved at the same rate as those nationally. In 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was above average at 55% and rose to 66% in 2004. The results of boys were average in 2003 but those of girls were well above average, in part a reflection of the different standards of boys and girls on entry to the school five years earlier. This represents good achievement, given attainment levels on entry to the school for this year group. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at a similar rate to other pupils. Achievement is very good in religious education and music; good in English, science, mathematics, design and technology and history and satisfactory in ICT, geography, art and design, modern languages and physical education. Girls do particularly well in history. There is impressive work produced in textiles. There is no subject in which achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average in science, religious education, design and technology and music; above average in English, mathematics, history, and modern languages and average in ICT, geography, art and design and physical education. The school met its reasonably challenging target for GCSE points score last year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55 (58)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.7 (34.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 219 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

4. Students' results in 2003 were above average and they improved in 2004. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades of A or B was also above average. This represents good achievement. Standards are well above average in English language, English literature and religious studies, above average in mathematics, physics, geography, history, music and psychology, and average in ICT and French. Given standards on entry to the courses, this represents very good achievement in English language, English literature, physics, French and religious studies, good achievement in mathematics, geography, history, psychology and satisfactory achievement in ICT.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.5 (97.1)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.4 (34.1)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	281.1 (278.8)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 72 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' attitudes are good overall and excellent in the sixth form. Behaviour is mainly good, and excellent in the sixth form. Pupils' personal development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance levels are good.
- There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. As a result pupils develop excellent attitudes to living together in a community and taking personal responsibility.
- By contrast, provision for the development of pupils' spiritual awareness is disorganised and inconsistent.
- Behaviour is generally good, though some younger boys are disruptive in lessons unless teaching is strong.
- Sixth form students in particular have excellent attitudes to the school and to their work. Many take maximum advantage of what the school has to offer them.
- There is good provision for supporting pupils' knowledge and empathy for world culture. Awareness of the diversity of British culture is much less strong.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	1.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

5. Attendance is better than average. The school works hard to ensure this and receives good support from parents. Due to inaccurate use on occasions of the computer-based registration system, unauthorised absences are recorded as high. Careful analysis of attendance during the inspection shows that unauthorised absences are within the normal range.
6. Pupils are generally punctual to lessons. However, because of the dispersed nature of the site, when large groups have to move to activities there is sometimes delay and many pupils arrive late. This is particularly so with the collective act of worship, where the late arrival of pupils reduces the quality of the experience.
7. The attitude of pupils aged eleven to sixteen is good and the attitude of students in the sixth form is excellent. This generally positive attitude makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning. It also means that many pupils and students gain considerable benefit from the opportunities provided by the school to broaden their social and cultural experience.
8. Pupils with special educational needs have good relationships with other pupils and generally very positive attitudes to school and to their work. Some pupils particularly value their access to the learning support base because it offers them a secure environment where they feel confident and valued.
9. The behaviour of most pupils aged eleven to sixteen is good. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and the school tries very hard to make sure all pupils are included in school life. There is a minority, mostly boys, in Years 8 and 9, whose behaviour is unsatisfactory. This sometimes leads to unsatisfactory learning. Most teachers have the skill

and confidence to deal with this, but some teachers experience difficulty. Different methods of behaviour management are practised to greater or lesser effect. There is no coherent approach to this across the school and consequently this problem is greater than it need be.

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	1005	83	0

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

10. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. Opportunities for social development are excellent.
11. Pupils are encouraged to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness through the exploration of values and beliefs in religious education and to understand the feelings and beliefs of others in personal and social education classes. In music and in science teachers help pupils to respond to the creative impulse and to develop a sense of empathy with others. In many other lessons opportunities are missed. This is because there is no common view of what spiritual development is or how the curriculum can contribute to this aspect of pupils' development. The school has made a positive response to the previous report and now has a thoughtful policy for collective worship. This has yet to be implemented effectively. Not all assemblies include an act of collective worship and the "Thought for the Day" is not observed consistently. Spiritual development therefore remains unsatisfactory, in this respect at least.
12. The school is positively inculcating in pupils principles which enable them to distinguish right from wrong. Moral development is very good. The school code of conduct guides action in lessons and around the school and teachers are fair and consistent in their application of it. Pupils are encouraged to act according to their principles and to develop a sense of concern and responsibility for other people. They show practical moral concern through their enthusiastic support for a wide range of local and national charities which they choose themselves and for which they organise fund-raising events. A letter to the people of Beslan, responding to the recent tragic events in the school there, and expressing a determination to work for international understanding was signed by a very large number of pupils. Many opportunities are taken in music, science, physical education, religious education and history, to relate the content of lessons to moral and ethical issues. Though a small number, mainly boys, do not always think about the consequence of their actions, most pupils are developing the ability to make responsible moral judgements and to act in accordance with clear moral principles.
13. The social development of pupils is excellent. There are many opportunities for them to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Their response is very positive. The school council provides experience in representing views to the school management and the local authority. Collaborative work with external bodies, as for example the "Safer Ways to School" initiative, gives them the opportunity to learn how to be active and effective citizens. Links with local magistrates and participation in mock trial competitions further their understanding of social rights and obligations. An innovative feature of this provision is the wide variety of responsible positions that are advertised and for which pupils are encouraged to apply. Peer-mentors and peer-mediators, sports, music and drama leaders, study buddies, prefects and paired readers provide opportunities for significant contributions to the corporate life of the school and encourage the development of socially mature and responsible attitudes. For some of these posts pupils receive in-house training and some have acquired qualifications in school to take philosophy classes in neighbouring primary schools. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and affiliation to Amnesty International encourage respect for others and the capacity to work together for common goals.

14. The cultural development of pupils is good. There are some innovative features of this provision. Notable among them is the link with the Secundaria Tecnica School in Mexico City. Through visits, exchange schemes and email pupils have been able to make direct contact with their peers in Mexico and broaden their cultural experience. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities which give them enriching cultural experiences. Music and religious education make strong contributions to this provision. Pupils also have opportunities for visits to theatres, galleries and concerts. In history and geography they are introduced to a range of cultural traditions. In modern languages they have opportunities to visit France and Germany. However, there are not enough opportunities for them to experience and celebrate the cultural diversity of modern British society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils do well because teaching is good, the curriculum provides a rich variety of experiences, there are good links with parents and the community and leadership by the headteacher is good. There are good standards of care for pupils, though the monitoring of pupils' progress and behaviour is inconsistent.

Teaching and learning

Overall pupils learn and achieve well because teaching is good. Sixth form teaching is very good. The assessment of pupils' work and its use to promote their progress is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is at least good in seven lessons out of ten, as a result of teaching which is good or better. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching.
- Sixth form teaching is very good. Teaching is very good in more than four out of ten of these lessons and good or better in over eight out of ten. As a result, learning is very good.
- Music teaching is very good at all stages.
- In a small proportion of Year 8 and 9 lessons boys are not managed well enough. As a result they do not learn enough and sometimes prevent others from learning.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils in lessons are good. In most lessons teachers manage to create an ethos in which pupils are motivated and learning can flourish.

Commentary

15. Teaching is good at every level of the school. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching and the general quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 179 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (4%)	56 (31%)	70 (39%)	41 (23%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

16. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs working in the learning support base to improve their language skills is satisfactory. They work at a steady pace but lessons lack the challenge, variety and stimulus of mainstream English classes. Generally, across the whole subject range, teaching is good. Most teachers are well informed about pupils' individual needs, though there is little evidence of useful individual targets in most subjects. In some subjects such as music and history learning is good because teachers adapt work carefully to meet pupils' individual needs. In other subjects such as design and technology less is done. Learning support assistants are effective in promoting

learning through the help they give, especially where the teacher structures the lesson in such a way as to enable this to happen. In history and modern languages in particular, support assistants are well briefed in advance of lessons so can prepare effectively, though this is not always so in other subjects. The school's highest attaining pupils in Year 11 are clear that they have generally been intellectually stretched and challenged in most departments.

17. Teaching of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 is good in all three core subjects. English teachers work with skill and enthusiasm. Pupils learn well because teaching is well planned and lively. In mathematics there is equally good planning of lively lessons. There are good levels of intellectual challenge and stimulus, as a result of which pupils learn well. Science teaching is also good. Teachers know their subject very well indeed and plan pupils' learning very well as a result. Science lessons are intellectually challenging because teachers have high expectations of what their pupils might achieve. The main strengths in teaching include excellent subject knowledge, very high expectations, and very good planning. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been implemented well in many subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science and is promoting better learning.
18. In some science lessons a small minority of younger boys, mostly in Year 8 lose concentration and behave poorly. As a result, their learning, and sometimes the learning of other pupils, is disrupted. These boys respond poorly to all but the strongest teaching. In geography, in an all-boys group they were not managed well enough to sustain satisfactory learning. In other lessons though, in history for example, where tasks were appropriate and challenging and discipline was strong they learnt well.
19. In almost all lessons, though, teachers relate to pupils very effectively and establish an ethos in the classroom where good learning is the norm. In the main, lessons are calm and productive because teachers plan carefully and are skilful at managing their pupils. There are no subjects in which teaching is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

20. Sixth form teaching is very good. Students speak very highly of their teachers and of the extra help they receive. Sixth form lessons are interesting and challenging. Teachers are expert in their subjects and employ a range of successful methods. A-level physics teaching, based on innovative and exciting methods, is excellent. Students learn very well.

The curriculum

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is very good and encourages a broad and balanced education, as a result of which pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of curriculum to meet pupils' needs is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum is carefully costed and is systematically monitored and reviewed.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good with very good rates of participation.
- Participation in the arts is very good, with music and drama providing an excellent range of performance opportunities.
- Participation in sport is very good, with excellent opportunities for orienteering regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Accommodation is often drab, is poorly maintained and does not provide enough stimulating learning environments to raise standards further.

Commentary

21. The curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities to suit the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. All statutory requirements are met, although citizenship is insufficiently embedded across the curriculum as yet. Since the previous inspection the curriculum is now systematically monitored and reviewed and is accurately costed. The two-week timetable is efficiently managed. Improved provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9 has successfully tackled underachievement with the National Key Stage 3 Strategy now successfully embedded in the curriculum. Across the curriculum, though, there is too little use of ICT to promote learning. Good practice in supporting literacy and numeracy is not sufficiently established across curriculum areas.
22. The very good provision for older pupils is characterised by careful attention to the needs of all. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, pupils in Year 10 may choose to study an additional foreign language, more than one technology subject, vocational courses or a work-related programme. The establishment of vocational options organised within a faculty and a work-related-learning optional programme reflect the school's commitment to vocational education in the curriculum. A strong feature of the Year 10 and 11 curriculum is the very high quality of support for learning outside the school day, including a wide range of visits, extension classes, and work in the community, shows and performances.
23. Provision for personal, social and health education is effectively planned and the taught programme deals successfully with issues such as health, drugs and sex education and provides well for pupils' personal development and careers education. However, registration time at the start of the day is not well used.
24. Opportunities for enrichment for all pupils are very good, with music and orienteering providing excellent opportunities for pupils of all ages to participate to a very high level. School orienteering teams have successfully competed at national and international events over a number of years. Orchestras and bands regularly play at regional community events by invitation. The school's special status as a maths and computing college plays a part in the enrichment programme. Links with primary schools have been enhanced by the school's computer-aided design and manufacture provision and the beliefs, philosophy and ethics programme.
25. More systematic monitoring and review of the curriculum provides a more secure basis for curriculum innovation than at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum is now well costed and a clear planning cycle for development has been established. Vocational developments are closely targeted to meet the needs of pupils and further raise achievement. Work-related learning programmes successfully raise confidence and self-esteem, providing pupils with the personal qualities valued in the workplace. Access to opportunities for all pupils to prepare for the next stage of their education or for employment is satisfactory.
26. Provision for pupils with special education needs is satisfactory. Pupils receive good support in lessons from learning assistants. Good care is provided by mainstream teachers in lessons, though planning for lessons does not always guarantee that the work is appropriate for pupils at all levels of attainment. While good access to the whole curriculum is provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9, a small group of lower-attaining Year 7 pupils is withdrawn from English lessons, reducing opportunities to experience a broad and balanced curriculum. These pupils do not have access to the rich curriculum provided by a strong English department.
27. Teachers are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Well qualified, experienced and committed staff bring much expertise to their teaching. Recent staffing cuts as a result of a deficit budget have been competently managed. Support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and contribute well to lessons. Overall, the quality of technical support is good, although inadequate time is available for workshop support. Resources for learning are good despite spending restrictions. The school has made significant investment in ICT over the last two years and the ratio of computers to pupils is in line with national averages. The

school library provides an excellent resource. The well qualified librarian ensures that a wide range of resources meets the needs of subjects.

28. The overall quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory. While the school has gained some new and refurbished accommodation as part of the move to a single site, much of the old accommodation identified in the last report remains drab. Too little has been done to provide a range of stimulating learning conditions. Care and maintenance of accommodation are often poor and lack robust management. In food areas standards of hygiene are compromised by poor cleaning. Recently upgraded tennis and netball courts are unusable during wet weather as a result of defective drainage, and ventilation in some ICT rooms is inadequate.

Sixth Form

29. The sixth form curriculum provision is very good. Well-planned opportunities are provided and the school offers a wide range of options at AS and A-levels. Although students are able to choose a number of AVCE options, vocational programmes are not extensive. Clearly, budget restrictions limit the options that the school would wish to offer. However, the school recognises the value of greater collaboration with other local post-sixteen providers. As a direct result of specialist school status, further mathematics and use of mathematics successfully complement AS and A-level programmes, though there are inadequate opportunities for previously unsuccessful candidates to repeat GCSE mathematics. The beliefs, philosophy and ethics provision allows sixth form students to gain a qualification to support successful joint work with primary schools. All students follow a general studies course in Year 12 and some in Year 13. Provision for religious education does not meet requirements.
30. Recruitment to the sixth form is good and a significant number of students progress to further education or employment at the end of Year 12. Many students progress to higher education at the end of Year 13. All Year 12 students study for the European computer driving licence as a means of embedding and extending ICT skills. Numeracy and communication skills are less systematically developed. As in the main school, the curriculum in the sixth form is enriched by a wide range of learning opportunities outside the classroom. Students play a full part in the running of the school at school council level and by observing governing body and local council sub-committee meetings.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are generally good, though assessment information is not analysed and used effectively enough to support pupils' progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are safe and secure in school and there are good standards of care for individuals experiencing difficulties.
- Procedures for using assessment information to monitor pupils' progress are not effective enough.
- There are good induction arrangements to enable a smooth transition into the school and the sixth form.
- Support for sixth form students is very good.
- There is some lack of support and guidance for pupils whose behaviour stops them from learning; this arises because of inconsistencies in the management of behaviour between departments and years of the school.

Commentary

31. Pupils and parents are clear that there are good standards of care and that the school is a safe and secure place. Form tutors and teachers know their pupils well and try hard to meet their needs. Tutors stay with their groups from Year 7 to Year 11. There is a deal of inconsistent practice across year groups, though, and on the whole tutors and year heads play too little part in supporting pupils' progress, which is seen to be primarily the responsibility of departments. This inconsistency also leads to some lack of rigour in managing the behaviour of challenging pupils, again seen as the first-line responsibility of departmental staff. As a result some poor behaviour, principally by boys in Years 8 and 9 has not been tackled promptly and firmly, with the result that their progress, and that of others, has been hindered.
32. The school is not good enough at analysing results of national tests and examinations and teachers' assessments. The use of such analysis to enable the identification and support of underachieving pupils is therefore inconsistent across the school and generally underdeveloped.
33. Arrangements to ensure that pupils move smoothly from primary school into Year 7 are good, including those for pupils with special educational needs. The generally strong relationships with primary schools help considerably. Pupils visit the school in Year 6 and staff are active in visiting Year 6 pupils to prepare them for the move.
34. The school has a good relationship with Connexions staff, which results in pupils gaining good access to careers advice. As part of the personal and social education programme there is further, more general advice on choosing options and on moving to the next stage of education after Year 11.
35. Care for pupils who are identified as having special educational needs is good. Caring relationships are established in the learning support base and in the school generally.
36. Pupils and sixth form students alike value the good extent to which the school seeks and listens to their views. There is a lively school council which acts as the main channel for pupils' views. The school listens carefully to these views which are frequently acted upon.

Sixth form

37. Support and guidance for sixth form students are very good. Students speak highly of tutors' efforts on their behalf. They are kept fully informed about the progress they are making. Tutors and subject teachers regularly review their work and targets are set for them. There is good careers advice including information about higher education. They have very good study facilities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents are good; links with other schools and the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has excellent links with partners in the community.
- Parents are involved in a range of activities.
- There is an active parents' association.
- Questionnaires are used to obtain parents' views and the school responds well.
- There are productive links with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

38. The school is well thought of and actively supported by parents, and there is a vibrant parent and teacher association which actively supports the school. Parents receive a sound range of communication from school and are well informed about most aspects of the life of the school. There are newsletters written in magazine style, letters, telephone contact and home visits. Pupils' planners are used by parents to track homework and facilitate messages between parents and tutors. The school works hard to engage parents. Some parents, for example, raised concerns about homework policy. The headteacher revised it, sent it to those parents for comment and modified it further.
39. Bi-annual reports on pupils are generally informative, although there is no indication of National Curriculum levels in the first report each year. Parents' evenings are well attended and the school uses such contact time to elicit views (using questionnaires) and deal with problems. Complaints are dealt with promptly and well. Parents report that they feel welcome and are willing to contact the school if they need to.
40. The school has strong working relationships with other educational and work-related learning providers. Pupils are carefully matched to work experience placements in the community. In a few cases pupils who find difficulty in coping with the normal curriculum have extended placements, a practice which has kept many pupils in education.
41. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed and the school is in regular contact about particular issues. Parents of pupils for whom statements of special educational need are maintained are invited to annual reviews.
42. Primary school pupils and staff regularly visit and are visited for lessons in core subjects. Sharing of specialist skills, equipment and facilities and contributions to staff training in other local schools are good.
43. Transition arrangements for Year 7 intake groups are good and involve new pupils, parents and teachers from primary schools. A two-day visit at the end of summer term for the autumn intake allows insights into school life and dispels worries before the holidays. This has received strong support from pupils, staff and parents. Similarly there are effective working relationships with local colleges who receive pupils on their courses.
44. Inspectors met members of the local community who play a part in pupils' education. Sponsorship and fund-raising have benefited the school and local community. Community use of school premises, notably through an on site adult education centre, has resulted in additional facilities such as computer suites. Music is a particularly prominent and remarkable feature of the school, which has done much to enhance its reputation through concerts for the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. The new headteacher's good leadership, along with good support from governors and key staff, has ensured the continued improvement of this effective school. Management is satisfactory, though there is some lack of whole-school co-ordination of important aspects of provision. The largely new governing body has made a sound start.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good leadership from the headteacher.
- There are good plans in place to carry the school forward, including plans agreed with the local education authority to recover a large budget deficit.

- Procedures for managing pupils' behaviour are inconsistently applied across faculties and year groups.
- The quality of teaching is not checked with sufficient consistency and rigour.
- Test and examination results are not thoroughly analysed, then used to promote achievement.

Commentary

45. Many of the school's governors, including the chair, are new. Even so, they have made a clear-minded start. Many have a sharp awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are supportive and determined to carry the school forward. The school has accumulated a considerable budget deficit over recent years. Comprehensive and effective plans, agreed with the local education authority are in hand and the school is on course to recover the situation. There is sound financial scrutiny. Governors have a good, businesslike relationship with the new headteacher and bursar. The governing body is kept fully informed about finance and is playing its proper part in planning for the future and scrutinising the implementation of the recovery plan.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,691,393	Balance from previous year	- 661,620
Total expenditure	4,917,265	Balance carried forward to the next	- 887,492
Expenditure per pupil	3,809		

46. The new headteacher is providing good leadership. She communicates a clear sense of purpose and high aspirations. In this she is a good role model for staff and pupils. Strategic planning, expressed through the school's development plan is good and shows a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in current provision. The headteacher is well supported by key members of staff.
47. The necessary reduction in staffing levels as a result of the considerable deficit budget has been well managed, though the impact on staff workloads has been uneven and some have been more severely affected than others. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and to creating an inclusive school, meeting the needs of all pupils.
48. Management of the school is satisfactory. There is, though, a lack of consistency and rigour in some aspects of school life. The management of pupils' behaviour, for example, is organised through both the departmental and pastoral structures and there is some lack of clarity and consistency. Sharper structures of line management of this area are necessary to deal rigorously with such issues as the occasional but persistent poor behaviour by a number of boys in Years 8 and 9 which sometimes leads to lessons being disrupted. Similarly, there is unsatisfactory and inconsistent practice across faculties in the effectiveness of procedures to check on and improve the quality of teaching and in the use of assessment information to identify and rectify underachievement. The work of heads of faculties and departments and year heads is not co-ordinated sharply enough. Information about how well pupils have done is not analysed and disseminated in a way which promotes its effective use to monitor how well the school is doing. The result is that there is a lack of coherence and evaluation of such things as the achievement of boys, and the impact of single gender groups on achievement, for example in geography. Self-evaluation is not rigorous enough. For these reasons, whilst leadership is good, management is only satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to continuous professional development and several staff are actively engaged in educational research. Induction programmes for new staff are good, as is the school's contribution to initial teacher training

Sixth form

49. Leadership is very good. It is based on enthusiasm, a clear sense of direction, a good grasp of the issues and the strong leadership of a committed team of tutors, under a recently appointed head of sixth form. Students' personal development and progress are monitored well, though the use of assessment data to support this process is not widespread. Day-to-day management is good.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning is **very effective**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The area is well organised through a specialist faculty.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
- More pupils could benefit from vocational courses.

Commentary

50. Work-related learning is mostly organised through a specialist faculty, which encourages good organisation and the potential for future growth. The school has long experience of running work-related examination courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have been able to choose Applied GCSE courses in health and social care and manufacturing. Although numbers of participating pupils are small, results have represented good achievement. Applied GCSE courses in leisure and tourism and ICT have now come on stream. Teaching and learning in these courses are good. Further expansion of the programme should be considered as soon as resources allow.
51. Pupils whose needs are not met by the usual curriculum can choose an alternative which focuses more strongly on preparation for work. They continue with core subjects of the curriculum within school and their programme is supplemented with college and workplace experience. They speak highly of the course and most continue after Year 11 with vocational courses. They are very well taught and the course is well organised. A very small number of pupils who experience acute difficulty in normal schooling have individual programmes consisting mostly of work placement.
52. The careers education programme, organised as part of provision for personal and social education, is effective in preparing pupils for making choices about their destinations after Year 11. As well as the taught elements of the course, pupils have access to individual careers advice through the Connexions service. They speak well of the service they receive. All pupils have the opportunity for work experience towards the end of Year 10. The school's positive position in its community means that local employers are sympathetic to requests for assistance and are willing to talk to pupils, accept them on work experience and participate in mock job interviews.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, 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

- Standards are above national averages by the ages of 14 and 16.
- The quality of learning and teaching is consistently good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- There is insufficient use of computers in lessons.

Commentary

53. In the 2003 national tests for Year 9 pupils, standards were above average and above those found in similar schools. Girls' attainment in English is better than that of the boys. The unvalidated test results for 2004 show that the difference in attainment between girls and boys has been reduced. This is because of the strategies followed by the department including the use of texts that are more 'boy friendly'. The test results for 2004 show that some more able pupils did not attain the standards of which they are capable. Standards of Year 9 work seen in lessons during the inspection are in line with the above average standards indicated by the test results.
54. The GCSE English language and literature results for Year 11 pupils in 2003 were above the national average. Girls at Ulverston outperformed girls nationally and were also much better than the boys in the school. The boys performed poorly in the English literature examination when compared to boys nationally. The 2004 results in both examinations show improvement especially for boys in English literature. The gender gap has closed considerably because of the positive action taken by the department, including closer attention to the choice of the non-fiction texts. Although the more able pupils performed very well in 2003, as they had done in 2002, and in both examinations, the 2004 results show a weaker performance, with far fewer pupils attaining the top grades of A* and A.
55. As standards on entry to the school are average, achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This is because of consistently good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English lessons, receiving the appropriate in-class support. Some Year 7 pupils are withdrawn from all their English lessons; they make the same good progress as all other pupils but their experiences are neither as rich nor as varied as their peers.
56. The overall quality of learning and teaching is good. Some very good lessons were observed, taught by different teachers. The best lessons in all years share a clear sense of purpose and direction. Lesson pace is brisk with learning objectives made clear. Teachers convey their very good subject knowledge with energy and enthusiasm. Class routines are very well established. Behaviour of pupils is good. There is a positive learning environment in classrooms. This is complemented by excellent displays of pupils' work and the welcoming ambiance in the English area. The National Literacy Strategy is well established. There are good examples of collaborative activities. The assessment of pupils' work through marking and testing, especially in their writing, is thorough. Very clear guidance is given so that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. Insufficient use is made of computers to support teaching and learning.

57. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction in the faculty. Planning is underpinned by detailed reviews of standards. This provides clear information on strengths and weaknesses, and these are acted upon.
58. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better. The department is self-critical and reflective and the potential for further improvement is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Overall planning for the development of language and literacy to promote learning is satisfactory in other subjects. It is very good in religious education, where there is effective use of writing frames, key words, glossaries and worksheets designed to meet the various needs of pupils at different levels of attainment. It is also good in history through effective preparation for the writing of essays and in the use of poetry to stimulate pupils' interest. It is less good planning in other subjects.
60. Pupils' writing is generally good and they are able to write for purpose and in the appropriate style and format. Reading skills are good and pupils are able to read with understanding and reflect on the texts they encounter in lessons. Their speaking and listening skills are satisfactory but there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to listen and to speak in lessons, including in design and technology, history and modern foreign languages.
61. Staff training on literacy across the curriculum has taken place but some subject teachers are not fully aware of the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' standards of English. There is no clear overall strategy to develop literacy across the school.

Modern Foreign Languages

Provision for Modern Foreign Languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are below national average, especially for boys.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a strong team of committed teachers who are well led and managed.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
- Teachers use information about the pupils' performance to help them to improve.
- The full potential of ICT is not exploited.

Commentary

62. Results for pupils aged 14 in 2003 were well above average though they were not so good in 2004. GCSE results in 2003 were below national standards in French and well below in German. There has since been some improvement but girls continued to outperform boys and the gap widened in 2004.
63. In Years 7 to 9 standards of work seen were above average in both French and German. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 manipulated language to produce tourist brochures about their town including historical facts. Average-attaining pupils in Year 8 successfully used revision skills in preparation for a test, and lower-attaining pupils understood requests for directions and responded. In Years 10 and 11 standards of work are above average in French and average in German with some above average extended writing.
64. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good for both boys and girls. In Years 10 and 11 it is good in French and satisfactory overall in German with some good achievement where teachers' expectations are high. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when supported by teaching assistants, and gifted and talented pupils achieve well with more challenging tasks.

65. Teaching and learning are good in the majority of lessons and sometimes very good. The most striking features of the good teaching are well- planned lessons and the variety of tasks included. There are high expectations of pupils and good working relationships. Posters on the classroom walls support the learning of structures. In one French lesson the presence of the school owl created an experience of awe and wonder as well as challenging pupils to write descriptions using dictionaries. Regular assessment allows pupils to know clearly their standard of work and how they can improve. Opportunities for work with ICT are planned but need to be extended.
66. The faculty is well led and managed. Teachers work well together and there is a strong sense of direction. Examination results are carefully analysed and strategies for improvement implemented. A policy for checking the quality of teaching has been developed and the underachievement of boys is currently under review.
67. Learning is enhanced by a range of visits to France and Germany including contacts with schools. The European Day of Languages was celebrated and pupils attend performances of visiting theatre companies. Displays of these events and of pupils' work are in corridors and classrooms. The faculty makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural and social development, but it does not highlight sufficiently its work in citizenship.
68. Since the last inspection a series of staffing difficulties has led to lack of continuity. With a more stable team the faculty has been able to make satisfactory progress and careful planning has resulted in solid improvements.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, especially girls who do very well in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11.
- The management of the department is good, with thorough and clear documentation.
- Teaching is good, leading to good learning.
- Where immature behaviour is not challenged effectively teaching becomes unsatisfactory.

Commentary

69. In 2003 the results of national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average, though pupils made less progress than the average of similar schools nationally. The difference between the standards reached by boys and girls was not significant. The GCSE examination results taken at the end of Year 11 were also above average. Here, however, girls performed significantly better than boys. Pupils' attainment overall on entry to the school is average but girls' attainment on entry is better than boys' attainment. The GCSE results represent a considerable widening of that gap. Higher-attaining pupils gained a smaller proportion of top GCSE grades than national averages. In 2004 the results at the end of Year 9 were in line with the 2003 results. The GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 were also broadly in line with the 2003 results. The gap between boys' and girls' results narrowed slightly. Higher-attaining pupils obtained a significantly greater proportion of top grades than those obtained in 2003.
70. The achievement of pupils is good throughout the school. Pupils, especially high attainers, are stimulated by a very good enrichment programme of extra-curricular activities and are also helped by effective setting procedures. Pupils with special educational needs are helped by being taught in small sets and sometimes by learning support assistants. Where provided, such classroom assistants work effectively in tandem with class teachers. Pupils with special educational needs and talented pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 11 girls' achievement is better than boys' achievement and the department needs to find ways of improving boys' achievement so that it matches the impressive standard set by the girls.

71. Teaching is good. Most lessons are held in attractive specialist classrooms with recently installed interactive whiteboards. Here, the combination of new technology together with very well planned lessons stimulates pupils and enhances learning. Teachers have very strong knowledge of the subject and most lessons challenge pupils strongly. Time is used well, especially in those lessons split into three parts, in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are co-operative, interested and engaged in their work. Homework is set and marked regularly. Some pupils, notably in Years 10 and 11 have weak numeracy skills that inhibit progress. Where immature behaviour, often by boys in Years 8 and 9, is not challenged effectively there is unsatisfactory teaching leading to inadequate learning.
72. The leadership and management of the department are good. Overall, the department is strong and cohesive. The handbook, schemes of work and other documentation are comprehensive, clear and available. Procedures for assessing pupils are good. Examination and other data are used to analyse performance and to set targets for pupils in Years 7 to 9. These targets are made clear to pupils and help pupils to understand how they are progressing. There are very good and highly effective links with local primary schools. The head of department has clearly identified areas for improvement, such as in the area of data analysis, and is making great strides to implement these changes. Procedures to check on the quality of teaching are not yet fully formalised. Also, although there are useful discussions about aspects of teaching within the department, there is a need to spread best practice more effectively amongst the mathematics staff.
73. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in many areas. Pupils' use of computers is much improved, standards of numeracy are better (mainly in Years 7 to 9), assessment procedures are now more thorough and pupils' achievement, especially that of girls, is a lot higher. Overall this represents very good improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. The previous inspection noted that the school had yet to develop a whole-school numeracy policy. Since then such a policy has been developed although it has yet to take effect across the school. Nonetheless, there is good practice in some areas. In both science and geography pupils can interpret a whole range of graphs and can analyse data perceptively. Also, pupils are generally confident in the use of formulae, although some in Year 10 have difficulty because their numeracy skills are weak. In other areas of the school the picture is less good. In design and technology there is a lack of consistent practice and clear weaknesses – in particular in the area of estimation. In ICT there appears to be no formal strategy at all for supporting pupils' numerical skills. This is an area that needs improvement.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results for pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above the national average.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well due to good teaching.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is insufficient use of assessment to set targets and raise standards.

Commentary

75. Standards for pupils aged 14 in 2003 were well above average when compared with both all and similar schools. Average point scores have been well above the national average for the last three years. Pupils aged 14 achieve better results than would be expected based on their results when aged 11. GCSE results are usually well above the national average except in

2003 when they were only above. In 2003 there were some staffing problems which have been resolved so that 2004 results are again well above the national average. Pupils achieve GCSE results above what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9.

76. Most pupils' above average numeracy skills help them to obtain the highest levels and grades. Their investigative skills are well developed. The department provides very well for gifted and talented pupils through science short courses run by the Open University. All pupils have many opportunities to widen their scientific experience through a wide range of activities offered by the department. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because teachers and support assistants work so well together. Pupils' standards in ICT are satisfactory. They have many opportunities to use data logging equipment and computers.
77. Overall the quality of teaching is good. The main strengths in teaching include excellent subject knowledge, very high expectations, and very good planning. There are only a few pupils, particularly immature boys, who can cause teachers some problems. Pupils do not have a good knowledge of the level or grade they are working at. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information for target setting. It is unsatisfactory that, due to whole-school policy, Year 9 pupils' levels are not reported to parents prior to these pupils' choosing their options.
78. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. Teamwork is very strong despite staff's specialising in one of the three separate science subjects. Less-experienced teachers receive excellent support and are already making a valuable contribution to this successful department. The curriculum time for Year 10 and 11 pupils has recently been reduced, making it difficult to cover coursework and revision so thoroughly. The double award co-ordinated course is suitable for the higher-attaining pupils. Middle and lower-attaining pupils, however, would benefit more from modular courses which tested them immediately after the topic had been taught. The technicians are efficient, supportive, and make an important contribution to the work of the department. Risk assessments need to be written which are matched to the teachers' experience and the particular pupils involved. Chemicals that are not now used or should not now be in school must be disposed of.
79. The accommodation and the provision for ICT are much improved since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is not used to best effect across the subjects of the curriculum because subject teachers do not take full advantage of the school's facilities.
- The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been implemented very well.
- The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There is a need to provide pupils and staff with safe and secure email addresses.
- There is poor ventilation in some ICT suites.

Commentary

80. In 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average, 2004 teacher assessments remain at a similar level and better are than the DfES milestone target. In the 2004 GCSE Applied ICT double award coursework and examination, pupils attained results that were well above the national average. In the GCSE ICT short course results were below the national average. Standards seen in Year 9 and by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Pupils understand the concepts taught in their ICT courses and many produce coursework of a good standard.

81. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils confidently operate computers, use a variety of software applications and research using the Internet. They make good progress in lessons; they build on sound previous knowledge and understanding in a range of activities such as Year 9 writing web pages and Year 8 web searching. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory; pupils understand the concepts and apply skills taught in their course and most produce coursework of a satisfactory standard.
82. Teaching and learning are good overall. When teaching is satisfactory or better, teachers have a good command of their subject, demonstrations are clear and their teaching strategies fully engage the pupils. Behaviour management is effective. Teachers effectively use a full range of resources, including interactive whiteboards. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Assessment systems are developing and have a positive impact on the quality of coursework. Pupils are given advice on their work and how it can be improved through wall displays and written comments on their work. Attitudes to learning are generally good and the working atmosphere in lessons is positive, which further improves the effectiveness of teaching.
83. The leadership of ICT is very good and there is a clear strategic vision of how ICT is to be developed throughout the school. There is good use of the results of assessment to inform, identify patterns and act on them to improve achievement. Day-to-day management of the faculty is good. Pupils and teachers do not all have secure email addresses.
84. The recently refurbished accommodation is satisfactory, but many rooms lack adequate ventilation. Some suites are too small to accommodate whole groups of more than 25 pupils. Resources are good and the number of available computers meets requirements. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been thoroughly implemented. The faculty is well supported by a network manager, ICT technician and school web manager.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Provision of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Although the number of computers is better than the national average, many subjects face problems trying to access them.
86. The National Curriculum requirements for ICT in subjects are not being fully met. Whilst there has been an audit of cross-curricular ICT in the school, and many departments include ICT in their planning it has yet to be fully implemented. Very good work is taking place in mathematics, where there is exciting use of interactive whiteboards, in science where wireless laptops are connected to the school network, in design & technology where there is thoughtfully planned work in computer-aided design and manufacture.
87. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection; the school and faculty have successfully addressed all the issues raised in the report.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, although too few girls study geography beyond Year 9.
- National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are above average but GCSE examination results are not high enough.
- Teaching is good, enhanced by the very good use of geographical enquiry, though boys are not always managed well enough in Years 8 and 9.
- Assessment is not used well enough to inform pupils about how to improve their work.

Commentary

88. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are similar to those found nationally. By the end of Year 9, pupils, regardless of gender or ethnicity, reach above average standards. In Years 7 to 9 pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They apply well an increasing range of geographical skills. From Year 7 pupils shade and annotate local maps clearly to illustrate their journey to school. Fieldwork opportunities are good. The high quality of pupils' work is displayed to celebrate their achievement. In Year 9, higher-attaining pupils consider issues of global wealth and poverty maturely. They respond well to class discussion, write at length and develop good graphical and cartographical skills. However, in some groups average and below average pupils and those with special educational needs are given too few opportunities for independent learning and do not always achieve as well as they should. There is adequate use of ICT.
89. Standards by the end of Year 11 are near to the national average. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were a little below those found nationally. In some groups where boys outnumbered girls, it was the girls who got the better grades and showed a greater attainment gap than nationally. For the boys entered, geography was one of their better subjects. In 2004, the GCSE examination results were below the 2003 results. Boys achieved similar results to 2003 but the few girls performed much less well. However, in the current Year 11, pupils gain a very detailed knowledge and understanding of physical geography and the management of hazards. All pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve very well because the teaching is very good. Nevertheless there are inconsistencies in Year 10 where lower-attaining pupils, particularly boys, find urban case studies less interesting and the teaching less stimulating. Overall their achievement is satisfactory in view of their prior attainment.
90. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. There are examples of very good teaching. In these lessons pupils benefit from experienced, enthusiastic and well-informed teaching. The better lessons are very well planned to present the subject in an interesting way. Brisk, probing questions encourage pupils to participate and to test their understanding. The work set is well-structured to extend their subject knowledge. However, when the teaching is not strong enough to control boys' disruptive behaviour the low level tasks set are inappropriate or the teaching relies too much on the textbook. These pupils are not motivated enough to learn as well as they should.
91. The leadership of the department is good and the management is satisfactory. There is a clear understanding of what needs to be done. However, departmental planning is short term. The schemes of work lack user-friendly guidance on how to incorporate national strategies and to make better use of the available assessment data to better inform teaching. Single sex groups in Years 8 and 9 are designed to raise the achievement of boys and encourage more girls to study geography. Pupils prefer this arrangement. Girls enjoy the subject more and achieve well whilst boys remain more difficult to motivate. There are too few opportunities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching.
92. Improvement since the last report has been satisfactory.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good teaching, leading to high standards of attainment.
- The head of department offers excellent leadership within a dynamic team.
- The "Philosophy for Children" approach permeates the work of the department, creating an ethos of enquiry.

- Pupils enjoy a rich experience of religious education through active learning and links with other cultures and communities.
- The use of ICT to extend learning is very limited.

Commentary

93. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, with pupils commencing GCSE work a year early. All pupils follow either a short or a full GCSE course and results in 2003 were well above average. In the lessons seen and work analysed, overall achievement was very good.
94. Teaching throughout is very good. Teachers' effective use of a wide variety of approaches within very well structured and briskly delivered lessons ensures that all pupils achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and the most able pupils are challenged and inspired by imaginative lessons. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use a philosophical enquiry approach to engage pupils. As a result, pupils can express their ideas confidently and listen to the views of others. They demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of the teachings and rituals of major world faiths and use religious language and terminology appropriately. Their appreciation of the distinctions between Christian denominations is less secure. Outstanding work was seen in Year 8 on the Mexican "Day of the Dead". The school's link with a Mexican community and the pupils' direct experience of the celebration of remembrance enabled them to talk openly and honestly about loss and bereavement. A Year 9 class explored Hindu creation myths in depth through a variety of activities. The pupils were enabled to question the issues surrounding the caste system and to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of reincarnation with confidence and maturity. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils discussed the meaning of New Testament teaching on justice and were able to apply their understanding to international situations. Through their work in lessons and an involvement in a range of activities, pupils are helped to understand important moral and spiritual questions in their own lives. As a result of the teachers' skills and commitment, pupils pursue philosophical questions with interest within an inclusive and positive atmosphere.
95. Pupils' progress is monitored and assessment informs learning through target setting. Teachers implement marking policy consistently and offer very full written and verbal feedback to pupils. Teachers have begun to collate pupils' work into assessment portfolios and they are refining their use of data. The department is vibrant and stimulating displays engender interest in the subject. The pupils involve themselves in a variety of groups and clubs. They enjoy religious education and have respect for the rights and beliefs of others. Religious education contributes very significantly to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils.
96. Outstanding improvement has been made since the last inspection, particularly in terms of standards of attainment, new schemes of work and the introduction of active learning methods. However, ICT is not used within lessons to any great extent and the statutory requirement to provide a programme of religious education for all students in the sixth form is still not met. The leadership and management provided by the head of department are outstanding. She has a clear vision and strategy for further development and is well supported by an excellent team.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management create a very positive ethos for learning.
- Girls' results at GCSE are consistently well-above average.
- Boys' results showed considerable improvement in the most recent examination.

- Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 engages pupils and leads to very good achievement.
- Speaking skills are not as well developed as they could be.
- Lesson summaries are not always well used to review and reinforce learning.

Commentary

97. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were above average at grades A*-C. Boys' standards were below average, though higher-attaining boys achieved well. Girls' standards were well above average, especially at the highest grades. In the most recent examination the standards attained by boys improved and girls' results matched those of 2003. These good results are due to very good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils.
98. Standards in Year 11 are above average. These pupils write well, have a good knowledge of the subject and show that they understand how historians use sources. Girls generally reach a higher standard than boys. Boys' written work is too briefly descriptive and less analytical and their responses in lessons undeveloped. Most pupils can describe the main developments in the period they study and are beginning to understand the interconnection of different factors, but are less secure in expressing and defending opinions.
99. Standards in Year 9 are average. Standards of higher-attaining pupils are above average. Girls generally attain a higher standard than boys because more detailed and better organised written work helps them to revise and retain knowledge more effectively. Most pupils can describe the course of historical events clearly. Higher-attaining pupils write well, using a good vocabulary. Most pupils are weaker at evaluating the interpretation of sources.
100. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. This is because very good teaching enables pupils, many having limited prior knowledge of history, to make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, especially when learning support assistants are present. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers are alert to possible underachievement and actively intervene where needed. Good support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to play a full part in lessons and their achievement is good.
101. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Imaginative methods, such as using poetry and letters from the First World War, engage pupils' interest. Good lesson-planning and very good group management create a positive ethos for learning in which most pupils work hard, sustain concentration and behave well. In some lessons teachers over-explain points and give few opportunities for an exchange of views by pupils. Hurried conclusions to some lessons mean that summaries are too short and the reinforcement of learning is not effective enough. A good range of writing tasks helps to develop pupils' literacy skills.
102. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and often very good. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm encourage pupils to work hard and to remain interested. In some lessons teachers do not take the opportunities provided to open up discussion. The verbal responses of boys in particular are often brief and teachers too easily accept simple answers to questions.
103. The curriculum is very well planned, provides opportunities to learn about a variety of cultures and contributes to pupils' moral and cultural development. Assessment is regular, thorough and helps pupils improve.
104. Leadership of the subject is very good. The head of department has created an effective team, keen to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Management is very good and focused on raising standards further, especially among boys. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Management of pupils and the use of ICT have improved.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership with clear vision, drive and determination to raise standards further.
- There has been consistent improvement in GCSE results over the past five years.
- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11, resulting in high achievement.
- Increasing use of computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM) is leading to improved accuracy and quality of work.
- Drab, often unhygienic accommodation does not provide enough inspiring learning areas.
- There is inadequate technician time to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

105. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are above average as a result of good achievement from a variable base of experience and skill on entry to the school in Year 7. Overall there are no significant differences in achievement across ability groups, although the achievement of a small number of lower-attaining boys in Years 8 and 9 is inconsistent as a result of immature behaviour. Pupils are keen and interested in their work and apply themselves well to both designing and making. Listening skills are satisfactory but oral skills are underdeveloped. Annotation of design work is sound and thoughtfully presented. Graphic skills are sound but refinement and sophistication of freehand sketches and production drawings are insufficiently developed. Systematic use of computer-assisted design and manufacture (CAD and CAM) enhances the quality and accuracy of design and production. Pupils of all levels of attainment work confidently and safely with a range of appliances, machines, power tools and hand tools.
106. Standards in 2003 GCSE were well above average with no difference in the performance of girls and boys. Standards in all subjects have improved over time; 2004 GCSE results confirm this improvement. Standards of the work seen in Years 10 and 11 textiles and resistant materials were very high, with exceptionally high achievement in Year 10 textiles. Graphical skills are secure despite only basic accommodation and resources. CAD is being used increasingly to enhance the quality and content of course work folders, although more sophisticated use of ICT as a learning tool is limited in textiles and graphics rooms. CAM is very successfully used to improve manufacturing accuracy and increase the complexity of final products. Making in all areas is thoughtfully planned with very good attention to material preparation and assembly of a secure technical specification.
107. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, with very good teaching in textiles and graphic products in Years 10 and 11. Basic good practice from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is used to provide a well-planned start, middle and end to lessons but good practice in supporting literacy and numeracy is not sufficiently firmly embedded in teachers' challenge and interventions during lessons. Management of pupils is good, although insufficient emphasis is placed on robust approaches across the whole faculty, underpinned by firm whole-school expectations, to modify immature attitudes to learning of individual boys in Years 8 and 9. Lessons in all practical areas are very well organised. Teachers' subject expertise is very good but work is not prepared carefully enough to suit the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Design briefs and making tasks are appropriate to the needs of pupils. Teaching methods are sound despite inadequate audio-visual and ICT facilities.

108. Leadership is dedicated to raising standards. It is reflective and self-critical with a clear vision for the subject. A strong team of staff know what they are working towards. Evaluation of teaching is embedded in day-to-day work although observations of the quality of teaching are not strongly enough linked to training. Safety monitoring is effective but whole-school procedures to respond to routine care and maintenance requests are inadequate. At times, this compromises standards of safety and hygiene in practical areas. The quality of technical support in food technology and workshops is very good but time allocation inadequate. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in acquiring essential skills and understanding.
- Pupils are developing as independent learners who now produce creative artwork.
- Pupils are well informed about what they have to do.
- Pupils rarely express their own opinions or judgements when writing about art.
- Skills in accurate measuring and scaling up of work are not well developed.

Commentary

109. Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 are average. Pupils arrive with very variable and often weak craft skills and understanding of art. In Year 9 assessment tests, the majority of boys and girls are now achieving at or above the expected national level. GCSE results have improved. In 2003, girls performed better than girls nationally at the higher grades, and boys matched boys' results nationally. In the most recent examination, at a time of staff changes, results dipped. Pupils learn how to observe and record to an average standard in line, tone and texture. They demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of colour in their painting and are developing a familiarity with the art vocabulary via imaginative word games. They are becoming familiar with a broader range of different artists' work and develop an appreciation of local culture and their environment in their homework research. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but there is little purposeful provision for gifted and talented pupils. In the early years, pupils do not visit an art gallery or work with an artist-in-residence and this limits their knowledge of different forms of art. They have limited awareness of the art of other cultures.
110. Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to build on their sound skill-base. However, because practical lessons are restricted to single periods, pupils fail to get into their stride and this hinders the achievement of higher standards. They are now developing well as independent artists. They broaden their understanding of both historical and contemporary art by visiting art exhibitions and this has a positive impact on their own creative work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not able to use computers to research and create art. On the GCSE course, computer work is a strength. Digital cameras are used with flair and computers are used to create animations. Opportunities to set higher standards and to celebrate the achievements of pupils in art are limited across the school by inadequate display facilities.
111. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A strength is the frequent demonstration to the whole class of correct craft technique and the regular individual practical help that is given to all pupils. Pupils are provided with good examples to explain GCSE standards but this is not yet in place in the early years. They are accustomed to annotating their artwork but, when writing about art, the majority restrict themselves to describing what they do and often simply copy text from art books. Spelling is not regularly corrected. Teaching is very caring and supportive, such as when pupils of all abilities are provided with drawing templates to construct a cube. However, this led to pupils failing to develop accurate measuring skills.

112. The recently appointed joint leadership and management team is effective. The scheme of work is well planned and delivered with some consistency. Every pupil is now provided with clear topic guidance sheets and this results in pupils being well-informed about what they have to do. Similarly, every pupil is provided with a clear assessment sheet which is now in use across the team and results in pupils' understanding the level or grade they are working at and what they have to do to improve. There has been significant improvement in the issues raised in the previous report. Teaching is now consistently effective and the standard of work, by both boys and girls, has risen.

Music

Provision for music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement.
- There is excellent leadership and very good management of the department.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are excellent.
- The considerable number of pupils learning to play instruments helps raise achievement.
- The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural and social life of the school.

Commentary

113. Standards in GCSE examinations have been well above average for a number of years and the results for 2003 and 2004 reflect this trend. Many pupils achieve the highest grades. The number of pupils opting for music at GCSE is very healthy indeed.
114. Teachers' assessments for 2003 show that standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and results for 2004 show rising standards in Year 9. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards and make very good progress in Years 7 to 9, which represents very good achievement. Year 9 pupils work enthusiastically, composing Christmas songs in pairs and groups showing good understanding of melodic composition over a chord pattern. They are able to compose melodies using sequences and suitable phrasing. Year 7 pupils are enthusiastic performers of graphic scores and use their voices in imaginative ways when composing their own vocal graphic scores. Singing and the use of computers are underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9. In Year 11 pupils achieve high standards of performance and compose in a range of different styles from pop ballads to an effective pastiche of Satie and other composers. They effectively develop melodies above chord structures and use ICT confidently.
115. Overall, teaching and learning are very good throughout the school because of teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, have good pace and key concepts are well explained. Modelling practical work for pupils and giving them opportunities for evaluating their own and others' performances and compositions are occasionally missed. Practical work is not yet sufficiently developed to suit the needs of all pupils. Good use is made of assessment levels and these are recorded in pupils' books. The refinement of assessment so that pupils know how they are doing and how to move to the next level in practical work is underdeveloped. There are very good relationships in the department with pupils enjoying their lessons and working well even when group work necessitates pupils working in dining halls and corridors.
116. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. The department has a distinctive ethos to which the pupils respond enthusiastically. There is a clear vision and a firm commitment to high standards. The department runs its own peripatetic service of thirteen teachers who deliver among them over 300 instrumental lessons each week. This is a clear strength of the department and helps contribute to high levels of achievement. The extra and extended curricular opportunities in music are excellent and standards achieved in the eighty-

five-strong wind band, swing band and other numerous ensembles are very high indeed. The department benefits from a very active Friends of Ulverston Victoria High School Music who raise a substantial amount of money each year to subsidise lessons and tours, purchase instruments, enable sixth formers to teach in primary schools and provide them with free instruments. Numerous local businesses support the music department through sponsorship. The department is very active in the local community and has an enviable reputation wider afield so that many instrumental groups are much in demand to perform at key events. An annual production is staged with the drama department and regular European tours are undertaken. The head of department recently received a prestigious national teaching award. Music plays a key part in the cultural and social life of the school.

117. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with cramped teaching rooms and too few practice rooms to accommodate the large numbers learning instruments or having singing lessons. Classroom instruments have to be given out and collected in each lesson and group work is unsatisfactory as pupils have to work in corridors and dining areas. There is no rehearsal area and little room for developing the use of ICT, especially in Years 7 to 9. Despite these conditions, improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with very high standards maintained throughout the school. The number of pupils opting for music is very healthy as are the extra-curricular activities and the number of pupils learning instruments or singing. Music contributes enormously to the school's ethos and cultural life.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong extra-curricular provision is a vital part of the school and there is international success in orienteering.
- Standards are above average.
- Games, taught by committed specialists, are strong, though sometimes at the expense of other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' attitudes, attendance and participation are good.
- Further refinement of assessment and recording mechanisms is needed.
- The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

118. Overall standards in physical education are above average. GCSE entries have almost doubled and results are above average.
119. Pupils in Year 9 work at an average level. However, the department's assessment and recording mechanisms do not accurately measure this achievement. Pupils with special educational needs work together with their peers and achieve well without any additional support.
120. Pupils achieve well in this subject in terms of physical skill acquisition, particularly in games, where good teaching of basic skills is developed through competitive practices and match play. The school has a good record in local and representative competition and an international reputation for its excellence in orienteering.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour is generally managed well but poor classroom behaviour by a minority of older pupils sometimes hinders learning. Where teaching is most successful, the pace of the lesson is lively and pupils are challenged to push themselves to greater endeavour, as was seen in a Year 9 rugby lesson. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding. Pupils are encouraged and praised as they work and they respond to that recognition of their effort.

More whole-class teaching would promote learning better, for example where learning points and discoveries shared with one pupil, and constituting a fundamental principle, could be shared with the whole class. Some necessary aspects of learning such as key skills and cross-curricular learning have too little focus in planning. Organisation of pupils is effective: pupils know the teachers' expectations of them and respond positively to the orderly learning environment, which allows them to succeed. Where pupils were able to take charge of their learning experience and were given that responsibility, they responded with maturity and enthusiasm, as was seen in a Year 11 soccer option. Teachers, always enthusiastic and supportive of their pupils, commit a great deal of their own personal time and energy to their enhanced development.

122. There is a strong games orientation in the curriculum from Year 9 onwards, which reflects the strengths and interests of the staff. This strengthens, and is in turn strengthened by, the extra-curricular programme.
123. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Assessment of the work of younger pupils has been improved and recording is better, so assessments at the end of Year 9 will be based on clear evidence. Development of ICT in PE has been too slow, in part because of a lack of hardware. Accommodation is good, with two important exceptions. The accommodation for the GCSE theory classes is too small and cramped and the new four-court area is prone to flooding. Both of these working areas are unsatisfactory.
124. Other important features of the subject are the strength in extra-curricular sport. Rugby and association football teams, county representatives in athletics, cross-country, badminton and netball bring distinction to the school. Girls have achieved world championship status for orienteering and the junior boys are, currently, world silver medallists. Links for the gifted and talented programme are in place with the nearby sports' college and there are relationships in place with local sports clubs.
125. There have been improvements since the last inspection. GCSE results have greatly improved. A-level has been established as a successful course. The school has achieved Sportsmark status since the last inspection. Standards of extra-curricular sporting activities have been maintained at local, regional, national and in the case of orienteering, international level. The health and safety issues identified in the previous report have been satisfactorily resolved.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning opportunities are good and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are well informed and there are very good opportunities for them to become active citizens.
- There are new schemes of work for this school year that meet statutory requirements

Commentary

126. Pupils from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds, including those with special needs, achieve above the nationally expected standards by the end of Year 9 and 11.
127. Pupils in Year 7 develop a good knowledge of the school environment and begin to recognise their responsibilities to one another, for example, from the collective talk about how to deal with someone injured on bonfire night. By Year 9 pupils gain the necessary skills to play an

effective role in society. They make good progress and increase their awareness of their responsibilities and duties as citizens. In discussion, pupils can give coherent definitions of citizenship and how the subject helps their personal development. Achievement was good in two Year 8 lessons, for example, where pupils entered fully into the role-play of a mock trial, listening to the case and discussing their verdict whilst in another group pupils discussed the various forms and consequences of bullying. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well to recognise their roles and responsibilities and how to democratically effect change. Pupils develop good communication skills in class discussion and believe the school gives to them a good foundation for taking part in the community.

128. Pupils from Years 7 to 13 are elected to the school council and successfully negotiate for changes in the school. Three school councillors volunteered to attend a meeting with the governors. Although pupils found it 'one of the most boring experiences ever' the representatives have recommended retaining links with the governing body. They suggested the school council should conduct an audit of interests and for pupils with appropriate skills to become associate non-voting governors. Other opportunities exist for pupils to participate in the school and the wider community, from Year 8 acting as receptionist for the school, to older pupils attending local council and charity meetings. The highest attaining pupils benefit from a link with Mexico and the regular cultural exchanges. Pupils are successful in the junior and senior sections of the international orienteering competitions. Pupils' participation in musical activities is excellent and their programmes include many external performances.
129. Teaching, learning and achievement were good in the two Year 8 lessons seen where citizenship was a focus. The teaching was very well informed and pupils learned from the classroom experience of a mock trial in preparation for the national Bar Mock Trial Competition. The school has been very successful in recent years. The series of lessons seen was well planned and help to shape the pupils as citizens who are more responsible and sensitive to others.
130. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school was slow to respond to the demands of citizenship. It is in early stages of development as a discrete subject within the personal and social education programme. Responsibility for the subject was allocated to a teacher this year. She works closely with senior management. Detailed schemes of work are now in place. These are planned to bring together the strands of citizenship effectively. Year 9 pupils are piloting a progress file to be continued into Years 10 and 11. Citizenship has not yet been assessed or reported to parents in Years 7 to 9.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme is planned well to stimulate interest through active learning.
- Requirements for the various aspects of the subject are met comprehensively.
- Teaching is lively and often led by outside agencies.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

131. The programme has been reviewed and substantially re-planned in the last year. There is a determined effort to base lessons on active learning rather than worksheets. During the inspection there was ample evidence of this principle in action. Pupils were experiencing role-plays, large-group sessions involving a guest speaker, as well as more conventional classroom work. Teaching is by form tutors. There are policies in place for sex and relationships education, citizenship, alcohol and drugs abuse and careers education.

132. The course is managed with enthusiasm and ambition and there has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The teaching and learning seen during the inspection were good. The variety of experience for pupils is impressive. In a Year 10 session, for example, a police officer led a lively and interactive lesson about drug abuse. Other pupils were involved in a courtroom simulation. A third group were faced with some of the difficulties experienced by older people and empathised well with problems of sight, hearing and movement. Outside agencies make frequent and good contributions. Pupils mostly respond with enthusiasm and interest. Lessons make a good contribution to pupils' social development.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English language	5	100	82.9	20	17.5	42.0	28.7
English literature	1	100	85.9	100.0	19.1	50.0	39.2
German	2	30.0	28.9	0.0	19.3	30.0	28.9
Mathematics	14	50.0	61.9	28.6	17.1	20.7	22.1
Biology	5	80.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	22.0	20.6
Chemistry	5	80.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	18.0	24.1
Physics	7	71.4	68.6	42.9	14.4	30.0	22.7
Electronics	4	75.0	N/a	75.0	N/a	42.5	N/a
Information Technology	2	100.0	67.0	0.0	10.9	30.0	21.4
History	7	100.0	80.7	28.6	19.5	37.1	28.6
Religious Studies	1	100.0	80.2	0.0	22.6	30.0	29.8
Design and Technology	2	100.0	74.9	50.0	15.1	40.0	25.3
Art and Design	4	50.0	80.1	0.0	23.7	12.5	29.9
Music	2	100.0	86.5	50.0	21.4	40.0	30.7
Sports Studies	4	50.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	12.5	23.1
General Studies	3	100.0	73.9	66.7	17.8	46.7	25.7

Level 3 GCE A Level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English language	8	100	99.4	62.5	36.3	100	80.9
English literature	13	100	99.5	69.2	46.5	96.9	86.5
German	3	100	98.4	66.7	47.9	93.3	84.8
Mathematics	12	100	96.7	58.3	55.6	90.0	88.8
Chemistry	13	100	97.6	53.8	49.0	95.4	84.9
Biology	23	95.7	96.4	50.0	39.2	80.0	78.6
Physics	7	100	96.7	71.4	44.6	91.4	81.7
Business studies	7	100	98.7	42.8	42.9	85.0	80.1
Computing	7	71.4	95.6	42.9	24.6	60.0	69.5
Geography	6	100.0	98.7	33.3	44.5	90.0	84.0
History	15	100.0	99.0	40.0	44.6	86.7	84.6
Religious Studies	8	100	98.8	25.0	46.7	80.0	85.6

Law	8	100	N/a	12.5	N/a	67.5	N/a
Sociology	8	100	97.4	87.5	42.7	110.0	85.0
Psychology	15	93.3	N/a	52.3	N/a	84.0	N/a
Graphics and materials	9	77.8	97.8	0.0	35.0	46.8	77.9
Art and design	9	100	98.6	55.6	50.2	86.7	87.5
Music	3	100	98.8	66.7	38.9	93.3	81.1
Sports Studies	7	100	98.0	42.9	30.9	91.4	75.2
General Studies	21	95.2	94.7	19.0	31.0	70.5	73.1
AVCE Health & Social Care	5	100	68.1	40.0	14.8	180	64.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language

Provision in English Language is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students' attitude to learning is very good.
- The course offered matches students' needs.

Commentary

133. Standards are well above average. Since the Year 2000 every student who has entered the English language Advanced level examination has passed it. All 10 students passed in 2004, with six attaining either a grade A or B. This reflects a similar position in 2003 when five of the eight students attained A or B grades. In 2004, for the first and only time, and as an additional option, 5 students took the combined A-level GCE language/literature examination. All passed, with four attaining a grade A.
134. Achievement is very good. Students usually begin the course with at least a grade B in English language and literature at GCSE. They make very good progress and achieve very well.
135. Although this did not happen in 2004, some students who elected to study the subject as their fourth option then 'cash in' their Advanced Supplementary (AS) grade after the first year of study in order to focus on their other subjects at A-level. All do so having achieved at least a pass grade. In 2003 the four students who did this achieved at least a C grade.
136. The number of students taking the subject varies from year to year. The subject is becoming popular, including with many students who are taking 'non-arts' based A-level courses. In the current Year 12 there are 15 students, while in Year 13 there are 12. Each year some students progress on to study an English language based course, such as linguistics, at university.
137. Standards observed in lessons and in students' work during the inspection are well above average. Students benefit from the very good support of their teachers, who monitor progress and help them improve their understanding. Most students are very motivated, exhibiting maturity. They attend specialist conferences and lectures to develop their subject understanding, and also make visits to the theatre.
138. Teaching and learning are very good. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The ethos for learning is very positive. Students benefit from their teachers' very good

subject knowledge. Teachers encourage all students to succeed and a great deal of individual support is given. Students are expected to work hard and to contribute to debate and discussion. Varied methods are used in lessons. Students are productive. There are often paired or group tasks. Often students work at their own pace on coursework, with effective teacher support.

139. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject co-ordinator approaches the task with commitment. Although she does not teach the subject herself, she is very well supported by two teachers, both of whom are specialists. Staff training and development are good. There is good access to resources to support learning, including computers. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

English literature

Provision for English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, expectations are high and, as a result, students achieve very well.
- Very good standards have been maintained.
- Students enjoy and are very positive about the course.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Accommodation for the subject is poor and inhibits the full range of teaching strategies.
- The Year 12 group is very large.

Commentary

140. Standards in English literature are well above average. In 2003 all thirteen students entered for the A-level examination gained grades C and above; nine gained A and B grades. In 2004 half of students achieved A or B grades. Since the previous inspection the department has usually achieved a 100% pass rate. These examination results represent very good achievement by students who come into sixth form work with above average GCSE results.
141. Overall standards in the present sixth form are well above average, although the present Year 13 is not as strong as in previous years. Many students are articulate and confident speakers who enjoy the exchange of ideas in discussion. They make lively interpretations of the texts they study, developing a good knowledge base and are increasingly able to support their ideas with quotation. They write clearly and accurately, and sometimes elegantly. They draw on their personal experience to comment on character and theme. Their understanding is often sensitive and perceptive. Students' grasp of technical terms develops well.
142. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good, although not uniformly strong. As a result, students achieve very well. Students recognise and appreciate the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and are able to present lessons with enthusiasm and intellectual rigour. Expectations are very high and students have to work hard and at some pace. In a Year 12, lesson on *Othello*, for example, some very challenging and skilful questioning led to a very perceptive consideration of Iago's intentions towards Cassio and of the nature of suspicion and jealousy. Interest and pace are sustained well, and activities are designed to ensure that everyone participates. The best lessons are organised so that there are opportunities for students to work independently. Good use was made in one lesson of elements of the National Strategy for younger pupils to provide a clear structure. Relationships are very positive and teachers have good knowledge of students' individual needs. Work is accurately assessed, and students have a good idea of the level at which they are working. Marking is very good and helps students to improve their work. They value discussing their work in depth with their teacher.
143. Leadership and management of the course are very good and have resulted in a very productive and enthusiastic team, where there is much discussion and sharing of expertise.

Teaching teams are carefully selected so that both men and women teach each group and support is provided for less experienced colleagues. These arrangements work well but in common with the subject lower down the school, more detailed curriculum planning alongside consideration of a wider range of teaching and learning styles would benefit sixth form work. Teachers have a very good understanding of issues in the teaching and assessment of the course and work closely to ensure the best coverage of the examination syllabus and to discuss students' progress. The use of assessment data to analyse achievement is improving.

144. The subject is a popular choice and every year a number of students go on to read English at university. Accommodation for the subject is so small and cramped that the full range of classroom strategies is not practicable, particularly for the present Year 12 group, which is very large. The department organises theatre trips, for example to see *Othello* and *The Crucible*. Year 12 students studying *Wuthering Heights* have visited Howarth to enable them understand the context of the novel to better.
145. The high standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

146. Students have good literacy skills, which support their work in other subjects well. They write fluently and accurately to express complex ideas. Most listen carefully and are articulate and keen to express a point of view. There are opportunities in many areas to improve skills. In physics and in history, for example, students examine and extract information from historical texts. They are encouraged to debate ideas and opinions in religious studies, French and in English literature. They become more confident in making presentations to their peers.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The emphasis on grammatical accuracy results in improvement.
- Listening and speaking skills are improved through the use of French in the lesson.
- Detailed feedback helps students to improve their work.
- The use of ICT is not fully developed.

Commentary

147. The numbers of students entered for AS and A-level examinations are small, so detailed comparisons with national data are not valid, though results are broadly average. These grades represent very good achievement given students' starting point.
148. Standards on both the AS and the A-level course are above average. In Year 12 students develop skills in grammatical accuracy as well as confidence to express their ideas and understand complex text. In Year 13 they can work independently, with a clear focus on examination skills.
149. The achievement of students in both AS and A-level lessons is very good. They begin AS with the higher grades in GCSE and rapidly progress so that they can use French to express carefully formulated opinion and detailed factual information. In lessons they work diligently, with interest and obvious enjoyment, noting vocabulary without prompting. They recall previous work and develop it effectively. In the A-level course students support their class work by reading independently and learning vocabulary. They are aware of examination requirements and work responsibly. They are keen to improve their fluency. Homework

tasks, which vary from short pieces of comprehension work and grammar exercises to extended writing, are completed efficiently.

150. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 12 and 13. Teachers use French effectively, resorting to English only when clarification is required. At the start of the AS course students consolidate and extend grammatical competence. New topics such as healthy life styles are introduced through careful questioning and the development of prior knowledge. Students learn through a variety of tasks and materials which are motivating. Lessons are well planned. Students increase their knowledge of vocabulary and structure as well as their accuracy and confidence in expressing themselves. In Year 13 students are expected to make their own notes from the teacher's explanation, to translate difficult text in a given time limit and to make cultural comparisons using knowledge from other sources. Topics such as the French system of government are presented in a stimulating and encouraging manner.
151. The quality of leadership and management is good. Courses are well planned and there is a good range of learning materials. Teachers adapt work to the needs of students, with a clear focus on examination requirements.
152. Students learn better because of their experience of visits to France. Although they use ICT, the range of possibilities is not yet fully developed.
153. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Careful attention has been given to the transition from GCSE to A-level so that students work with confidence.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Teaching is good - teachers have strong knowledge of the subject at A-level.

- Students' attitudes towards A-level mathematics are positive.
- There is an imaginative range of courses in the sixth form.
- Opportunities to retake GCSE mathematics are not adequate.

Commentary

154. Students wishing to study mathematics can choose from AS level, either as a conventional course leading to A-level or as a stand-alone use of mathematics course, ending after one year. There is also the opportunity to study further mathematics at AS level. In alternate years students can retake GCSE mathematics. This course, however, is not timetabled effectively, resulting in low levels of interest and a small take-up.
155. In 2003 A-level results were above average with boys attaining higher grades than girls. Over recent years, though, boys' and girls' achievements have both been good. As yet there have been no examinations in the new use of mathematics course. The A-level results in 2004 were in line with 2003 results. In the last few years small numbers of students have studied further mathematics to A-level. Those who took the examination achieved very well.
156. Teaching is good. Teachers know the subject well and are confident classroom practitioners. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate and clarify aspects of the subject, notably graph work. Computers are also effectively used by teachers and students alike. Well-planned lessons stimulate and engage students, who learn well as a result. Students respond well in lessons and are committed to hard work. Retention rates are high and very few students abandon the course before the examinations. Learning, both in lessons and in the long term is good and is supported by students' confidence and competence in essential algebraic skills. The school has, over the last few years, provided an

effective bridging course between GCSE and A-level and this has helped to improve and maintain the high standards of algebra. Students are given very effective feedback about their work through marking and discussion. Students strongly appreciate the accessibility and approachability of teachers and value the help and support that is available outside the classroom.

157. Management of the department is good. Documentation and schemes of work are thorough, clear, and accessible. Good use is made of examination data to show trends and to plan ahead. Procedures for the assessment of students are good. Good quality textbooks are well used. Student participation and interest have increased as a result of the imaginative range of courses.
158. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection, when classes were small and progress satisfactory. The number of students taking courses in the subject is now much greater and girls are now much more strongly represented than previously. Students' achievement has improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

159. There is much good practice in geography, especially in the use of statistical analysis when comparing data. Some students, however, struggle with mathematical concepts in physics, especially in Year 13. The mathematics department provides support for students who take physics in Year 12 that might usefully be extended into Year 13. The lack of electronic measuring devices in design technology should be addressed. There is no coherent strategy for improving essential mathematical skills in ICT. In neither subject, however, are students hampered by a lack of basic mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching leads to very good achievement.
- Too few students, particularly girls, take physics.

Commentary

160. Although there is some variation from year to year, overall results at both A and AS level are above the national average. There is no particular trend in results. In 2003, for example, A-level results were well above, the previous year above, and this year slightly below when compared to the national average. The different starting points of students from year to year explain this variation in results. The number of students studying physics is relatively low. Very few girls take the subject, despite the excellent role model presented by the head of physics.
161. Standards of work seen were above average. As a result of excellent teaching, students achieve much higher grades than might be expected, given their GCSE results. Outstanding teaching is underpinned by teachers' excellent subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to their students. Some students' mathematical skills are only just adequate so that at present the physics teacher has to divert normal lesson time in order to cover the mathematics. Three excellent teachers share teaching in the sixth form. In an excellent lesson where Year 12 were applying the properties of quarks to the make-up of particles, learning was very good because of the teacher's innovative and challenging approach. Excellent teaching in Year 13 led to very good progress in a lesson about the

energy equivalent of mass. Very skilful use of historical texts stimulated some very challenging discussion about physics. This same group of students learnt very well about the shapes, rules and conventions for magnetic fields. Outstanding teaching has very skilfully moved students' work from GCSE standard to above average A-level. The atmosphere created in the classroom is similar to a university tutorial.

162. The head of department, who works closely with her colleagues, has very good leadership and management skills. A positive feature of this department has always been to take full advantage of the modular approach and enter students for module tests at the earliest opportunity. Special provision for gifted and talented students is made through the Engineering Education Scheme. Each year a group of Year 12 students carry out a research project with a local electronics company. The quality of the final project reports is outstanding. Although the subject has sufficient resources, there is too little money made available annually to extend the range of resources so that astrophysics and medical physics can be offered as option topics. The department makes very good use of laptops and sensors so that students can obtain and analyse data directly from their experimental work. A laboratory technician supports the work of the department very well.
163. Since the last inspection considerable progress has made in the provision for ICT. Standards have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- The AVCE ICT course extends students' vocational choices.
- Very good online resources are well used.
- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) makes a positive contribution to students' well-developed ICT skills.
- There are some problems with the accommodation for ICT.

Commentary

164. The ICT single award is a new course to the school introduced in 2003 and students have not yet taken external examinations. The AS component of the single award has yet to be submitted for external examination, as the school has decided to manage the entire course as a single two-year course. Although coursework and examined assignments to date indicate students will attain results that are below the national average, projected A-level attainment in 2005 is broadly in line with the national average.
165. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average and students are on target to achieve their coursework and examination predictions. They understand the concepts taught in their vocational ICT courses and many produce coursework of a good standard.
166. Students make good progress in lessons. They acquire new skills, knowledge, and understanding, as for example in the complex features of MS Excel spreadsheets for a hotel booking assignment. Students achieve well and coursework assignments are regularly improved by refining, adding and evaluating completed work.
167. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good command of their subject, detailed knowledge of the AVCE course and their teaching strategies interest and fully engage students. They use a full range of resources very effectively. Their work is thoroughly planned. Assessment and tracking systems are good. Students are given good advice on their coursework and know how it can be improved. Opportunities for independent learning

are well developed. Students effectively manage their own time; the level of concentration and focus on their assignments is good.

168. Leadership of ICT is very good. Management and deployment of teaching staff are good, resulting in very effective team teaching of AVCE courses. The decision for all students to take an ICT course was bold, but has resulted in all sixth form students having well-developed ICT skills. The recently refurbished accommodation is satisfactory, but lacks adequate ventilation and is uncomfortably hot.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

169. All sixth form students take an ICT course, either AVCE ICT, ECDL or A-level computing with the mathematics department and, as a result, their skills in the use of ICT are effectively and well developed. The use of ICT to support subject teaching is growing within subject departments and there has been considerable investment in hardware, for example in mathematics, science and in art.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, history, and psychology. Philosophy and law were sampled. Nine Year 13 students are pursuing A-level philosophy. There is no group in Year 12. The subject was sampled through one lesson observation and scrutiny of written work. Results in the subject have been well above the national average. The Year 13 group is achieving very well and students are able to discuss different philosophical theories and ideologies with confidence. They are able to analyse and to argue about philosophical theory. Teaching is very good and active learning approaches are used to very good effect. Two lessons of law were observed. In 2003 eight students were entered for A-level. All students were graded. In 2004 nearly twice as many students took the examination and five gained A grades. Students achieve well. In Year 13 teaching and learning were very good. Students discussed non-fatal assault, substantiating their arguments clearly with reference to proven cases.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are successful in A-level examinations.
- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
- Geographical investigation and data-handling skills are very well developed.
- Students appreciate the experienced leadership of the subject.

Commentary

170. A-level examination results in 2003 were above average. In 2002 results were much lower. In 2004 all candidates obtained a grade. Most students achieved well, given their prior attainment in GCSE examinations. The subject is more popular with boys than girls.
171. Year 13 students are already building well on their AS results. Almost all students continued with the subject. Current standards are above those typical for the A-level course. Both boys and girls achieve well; the small number of girls is predicted to outperform boys at the higher levels. Students demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding. In a complex discussion using statistical data they were able to consider the reality of globalisation to determine whether it can be measured accurately. Students changed their views but not all joined in the discussion willingly or recorded their reasons for change. In physical geography students plot and compare the climatic changes following longitudinal lines in West Africa. They consider the climatic impact on the natural and human environment although they were not all able to recall the appropriate graphical techniques.

172. In Year 12, standards are slightly above average at this early stage of the course. Students prepare to submit their coursework assignment following a residential fieldwork enquiry. Individual studies are based on measurements taken from the sand dunes along the Durnon coast or an urban study of Middlesbrough. Students collaborate and compare their results or work independently analysing soils, sand dune profiles or settlement patterns. More able students handle data confidently and make good use of the Internet. They prepare concise introductions and clarify their hypotheses for investigation. A small number of students need teacher support in the organisation and presentation of their study.
173. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Teachers are experienced and have a thorough knowledge of the examination requirements. Academic rigour is established in Year 12 through the teachers' use of probing, challenging questions and individual seminars. Students are well motivated and keen to succeed. They are inspired by the standard of former students' work displayed in the classroom. Opportunities for independent learning are good. Students realise they are well taught and respond accordingly. The rapport between students and teachers is very good. Marking is thorough, and constructive comments advise students how to improve their work.
174. Leadership and management of the department are good. Courses are well planned following a recent change of syllabus. Students' work is competently assessed and appropriate targets are set. Students anticipate their success in examinations. They are very well supported and teachers are readily available.
175. Improvement since the last inspection is good, although the number taking the subject fluctuates and few girls from the school study geography in the sixth form.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained at A-level have been consistently above average in recent years.
- Standards in the current AS course are well above average.
- Very good leadership and management have secured high and rising standards.
- Students are very positive, committed and work hard.
- There are not enough opportunities for open class discussion

Commentary

176. The standard attained by students at A-level in 2003 was above average. Boys' results were better than girls' at the higher grades. All students gained a pass and did as well as predicted. In the most recent examination all students gained a pass, though there were fewer higher grades than in the previous year. The standard attained at AS level in 2003 was well above average. Numbers entered were too small to make any significant comparison of boys' and girls' results. Results in the most recent examination matched those of the previous year.
177. Lesson observations, scrutiny of written work and discussion with students confirms that these above average standards are being maintained. Attainment in Year 13 is above average and in Year 12 is well above average. Students in Year 13 are able to draw upon a variety of sources of information in writing essays which are generally clearly expressed and cogently argued. They are weaker at expressing and debating opinions in lessons. Students in Year 12 have a very good grasp of the main issues which they are studying, for example the various factors which explain the causes of the French Revolution. Many of these students speak with knowledge and understanding when questioned about their work. They are clearly interested in and enthusiastic about their studies. There are many more girls than boys in both years but there is no significant difference in attainment between them.

178. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm and authority. This sometimes leads them to over-explain issues and they do not always capitalise on the very good subject knowledge of students to open up discussion. Teaching is good in all lessons, often very good with some excellent features. For example, a very good lesson in Year 12 used students' research notes, pair discussions and good question and answer to reinforce and develop understanding of the forces at work in pre-Revolutionary France.
179. In consequence of this quality of teaching, achievement is good. Students are very positive in their response to the subject and enjoy what they are doing. Lessons are challenging and students respond well to the intellectual demands made. They are making good progress and becoming more able to think and write analytically.
180. Leadership is very good. The head of department is an enthusiastic and committed teacher who provides very good leadership to her colleagues. Management is very good, focused on improving standards and creating a supportive and challenging environment for learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. All the good features noted then have been maintained and A-level standards have improved.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching draws on strong professional knowledge and personal skills.
- Examinations results are above average.
- Coursework reaches a high standard and is well organised in student folders.
- Not all students are sufficiently assertive.
- Teaching and learning are constrained by limited access to ICT.
- Many lessons are taught in dismal and inadequate accommodation.

Commentary

181. The subject has been running for some five years, with hugely increasing numbers and a good record of success. During this period one student has gone to Oxford to read psychology, and many more are reading psychology at other universities. There has been a 100% pass rate in two of the last three years, with a significant proportion of passes at the highest grades in 2003. At AS level the picture is equally strong.
182. Standards of work are above average. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are attaining similar standards. Students make good use of quantitative methods in the analysis of their data, which derives from imaginative and well designed coursework projects. Scrutiny of coursework and folders suggests that achievement is good.
183. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are challenging and well structured, and students respond to the obvious affection and respect with which they are treated, and achieve well. Some students are rather passive and so do not benefit as much as they might from a course in which a degree of assertion and self-motivation are vital. Psychology is nominally located within the science faculty. Most responsibilities are shared between two teachers who very successfully manage the subject on an informal collegial basis. Monitoring of students' progress is good and coursework well planned. One of the teaching rooms is dismal and inadequate, and neither room has ICT. There is no electronic recording or tracking of data.
184. There was no report on psychology at the last inspection, but since that time numbers have grown, the quality of provision has been maintained, and external results are good.

Religious Studies

Provision in religious studies is **very good**.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because teaching is very good and the teachers use a rich variety of methods, which are very effective in helping students to gain knowledge and understanding.
- Students show real understanding and appreciation of the philosophy of religion and Buddhism and are able to express their views with confidence and genuine sensitivity.
- The subject is very well led and there are effective links with local faith communities.
- Too little use is made of ICT to enrich and extend students' learning.

Commentary

185. In 2003 all eight students who took the A-level examination gained a pass grade, with two gaining the higher grades. The results were below average. The department has worked hard to improve standards. In the current Year 12, twenty-two students are pursuing AS level religious studies and nine are completing the A-level course in Year 13. These students are achieving very well and attaining well above average standards. They show a depth of understanding of philosophy of religion and Buddhism and their files are well organised, with a variety of written work. Essays are well designed and students benefit from structured tasks and a rich variety of stimulus material. Mind-mapping techniques are used to enhance learning and well-prepared tasks lead to high levels of understanding and evaluation. Students write with confidence and make reference to Buddhist teaching and philosophical theories. They talk confidently and enthusiastically about their work. They enjoy grappling with difficult concepts and paradoxical teachings, and demonstrate considerable understanding in lessons. They do not, however, have enough opportunity to make full use of computers to aid their research.
186. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well paced and structured. In one Year 13 lesson on Zen Buddhism, students were actively engaged in a walking meditation exercise outside the classroom and were then expertly guided through a sitting meditation. They were able to differentiate between Rinzai and Soto Zen and could discuss the meaning of a Zen story in a deep and insightful way. The excellent rapport established between teacher and the group engendered a spirit of enquiry. Links with local Buddhist communities have enriched the students' understanding of Buddhist philosophy. In a Year 12 lesson about the Four Noble Truths, students showed that they understood what insights Buddhist teaching offers into the problem of suffering. The excellent relationship between the teacher and the group enabled the teacher to lead a discussion about the subtler aspects of suffering and impermanence very effectively. Teachers give very full feedback to students about their work and offer useful support. Students are shown how to improve their work and appreciate the level of guidance they receive. Year 13 students clearly say they value the high quality of teaching in religious studies lessons - half of the students intend to pursue the subject at degree level. Students have made tangible progress in the subject and feel that they have become more analytical and more tolerant as a result of their studies.
187. The subject is very well led and managed. The teachers involved in the religious studies course work closely together and share good practice. Students benefit from a number of visits and talks from speakers. Many students are actively involved in the Mexican exchange and the philosophy club. They are encouraged to pursue their interest in the subject in a variety of ways, such as offering leadership to other students in the school and in local primary schools.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

AS and A-level product design, graphic products and textiles were sampled and a lesson in each area was observed. Students' work was scrutinised. Teaching and learning are good in graphic products and very good in product design and textiles. Students are developing good independent learning skills in all three areas; they apply design principles successfully to a range of complex briefs and achieve well. Overall standards at both AS and A-level are above average with standards in textiles well above average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on music. Drama was sampled. In the Year 13 drama lesson students were largely working independently on an improvised piece for examination. Discussion during the lesson and review at the end led to improved development of character and better understanding of technical features. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and standards are broadly average.

Music

Provision for music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes very good achievement.
- Leadership of the department is excellent. Management is very good.
- Relationships are excellent.

Commentary

188. Standards at A-level in 2003 were above average and have been maintained in 2004 when most students achieved a grade A or B at AS and A-Level. Progress is very good through Years 12 and 13 and leads to very good achievement. Retention rates are high and numbers of students opting for music are larger than is usually the case; several students come from other schools in the area.
189. Standards are above average, especially in performing and composing. Effective use is made of modelling the work of previous students within different grade bands for composition. In Year 13 students sing confidently their answers to an exercise completing a two part figured bass realisation. They recognise sequences and spot melodic patterns effectively. In Year 12 students show good understanding of fugue and fugal techniques such as augmentation, diminution and stretto and are able to recognise these in different fugal compositions. Students show good understanding of composing, using computers running Sibelius software.
190. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very thorough knowledge of the subject and the detailed requirements for examination courses. They are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and rapport with students is very good. Students are well supported by worksheets and exemplar questions. Assessment is very thorough and constructive; students know where they are and what they need to do to improve. They speak enthusiastically about the teaching and gains in learning they make.
191. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. The department has a clear sense of direction and an ethos, which promotes high achievement. Students can extend their learning in music through a wide range of additional activities at a very high standard. Sixth form students support these activities very well, even when they do not choose to study music. The numerous opportunities for performance together with active encouragement to attend

concerts and workshops leads to a rounded musical education. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Numbers of students opting for music are good. High standards have been maintained.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Two lessons of physical education were sampled. The subject is now well established at AS and A levels. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are above average and students achieve well over the course. They respond well to perceptive questioning and in turn ask probing questions of their teachers. Work is pitched at an appropriate level and students work with evident interest and commitment.

BUSINESS

192. **Business Studies** was sampled. One lesson was observed in which students made a good contribution to discussion about the life cycle of products. In 2003 students achieved well, gaining results which were above average. All students were graded. In the lesson seen teaching and learning were satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

193. One Year 13 lesson in AVCE **health and social care** was sampled. In the lesson seen students had just begun work on a new unit about health promotion. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. All students were successful in 2003 achieving standards that are well above average.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
The effectiveness of management	3	4

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