

## INSPECTION REPORT

The Friary School

Lichfield

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124422

Headteacher: Mr J Brough

Lead inspector: Mr A Briggs

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004

Inspection number: 271840

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

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### **Terms that may be used in this report**

*Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Those pupils who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the sixth form, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and pupils of all ages at school.*

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

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

*The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is designed to support schools to address the learning needs of 11-14 year old pupils. It operates across all subjects as a whole-school improvement strategy. It provides a platform for professional development across the school through its emphasis on teaching and learning. It supports personalised learning by promoting an approach in which careful attention is paid to pupils' individual learning styles, motivations and needs. Lessons are designed to be varied and enjoyable within a clear structure.*

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1291
School address:	Eastern Avenue Lichfield Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS13 7EW
Telephone number:	01543 510631
Fax number:	01543 510634
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Carré
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Friary School is a popular and oversubscribed school. It is bigger than other secondary schools and educates boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. The sixth form is also bigger than most other sixth forms. The school has 1291 students on roll of which there are 211 students in the sixth form; these numbers represent an increase on those quoted in the previous report. There are slightly more boys than girls on roll. The Friary serves the northern and westerly parts of Lichfield and a number of villages in the surrounding area within the Staffordshire LEA. Most pupils come from an area which, overall, is average in terms of social and economic measures when compared to the national average.

Pupils join the school in Year 7 with above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is above average. Most of these pupils are on the register for moderate learning difficulties. The school is almost entirely white (British/European) and English is the first language for almost all pupils.

In addition to being a community school, The Friary received the 'Careermark' award in 1999, and the 'Artsmark', Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Schools Achievement Award in 2002. The school also gained the Sportsmark and Inclusion Quality Mark in 2003.

Nearly three-quarters of the students continue into post-16 education. It is a similar picture at the end of Year 13 with many continuing into higher education. Students join the sixth form from both The Friary and other schools to follow traditional A-level courses and a range of vocational courses. Attainment on entry to the sixth form varies year to year, but is generally below average. Some Post-16 students access courses at the two local colleges as part of a 16-19 collaboration.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15208	A Briggs	Lead inspector	
9053	V Phillips	Lay inspector	
7118	D Gosling	Team inspector	English; sixth form English; English as an additional language
17808	S Orpin	Team inspector	Mathematics;
33139	M Wilson	Team inspector	Sixth form mathematics; sixth form physics
32367	J Pike	Team inspector	Science
33018	A Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design; performing arts; sixth form art and design
1990	G Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology; sixth form design and technology
31372	R Hardwick	Team inspector	Citizenship and religious education
33002	J Woodhouse	Team inspector	Geography
14490	S Jackson	Team inspector	History; sixth form history
33242	S Wall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; sixth form French
30814	E Coley	Team inspector	Music
27226	R Cribb	Team inspector	Physical education
34157	J Barker	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Limited**

Langshaw  
 Pastens Road  
 Limpsfield Chart  
 Oxted  
 Surrey  
 RH8 0RE

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school has considerable strengths in some areas, such as leadership, enrichment activities and pastoral care. Much of the teaching is good and many pupils achieve well over their time in the school, maintaining above average standards. Overall teaching, achievement and the **effectiveness of the school are satisfactory**. Shortcomings, such as assessment, accommodation and aspects of management result in some pupils not achieving as well as they could. Value for money is sound.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The curriculum is broad, greatly enriched by extra-curricular activities and extended through very good links with the community and other schools and colleges
- The clear vision of the headteacher and the high quality of his strategic planning is valued by all and is driving the school forwards
- Inconsistent expectations of behaviour and some teaching that lacks inspiration result in some pupils losing their concentration, responding lethargically or discouraging those who want to learn
- Managers do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning rigorously enough
- Teaching makes insufficient use of assessment information to show pupils how to improve and to help in planning lessons
- The school cares very well for the welfare and health and safety of pupils
- In years 10 and 11, pupils do really well in performing arts and music, and sixth formers achieve well in most subjects

**Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.** All of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been tackled successfully, with the exception of providing a daily act of collective worship. Above average standards have been maintained.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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' achievement is satisfactory overall.** Pupils arrive with standards that are above average and maintain these standards so that they are still above average by the end of Year 11. The results of Year 9 tests were above average, though not rising as fast as national figures. The achievement of boys and girls is similar. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are particularly gifted and talented achieve as well as their classmates. Pupils have underachieved in history over time and do so in citizenship because insufficient attention is given to the subject. Levels of literacy and numeracy are above average, while skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are average. GCSE results in 2004 were broadly similar to those of 2003, when they were above the average for schools where pupils had similar Year 9 results. In the sixth form, standards are average. Students achieve well, given their below average standards on entry. Sixth form examination results have not improved as rapidly as national results in recent years.

**Pupils' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in the main school but a small number of pupils are allowed to disrupt the learning of others in lessons where teaching is weak. Sometimes, pupils make fun of others who are keen to work. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good in the sixth form. Attendance is above average and punctuality is satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory overall**, with much that is good. In general, teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to pose challenging questions and give clear explanations. Where teaching offers pupils a variety of approaches that engage them actively, such as in physical education, it is especially effective. However, there is too little exciting and inspirational teaching and too many teachers accept low-level disruption from some pupils. Teaching in performing arts and music in Years 10 and 11 is very good and pupils do really well in these subjects. Learning is unsatisfactory in citizenship because not all teachers cover the required work. Marking of pupils' work is often unsatisfactory and does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Teaching in the sixth form is good.

The curriculum is good. It is broad, wide-ranging and provides a good combination of vocational and traditional courses, and satisfactory work-related learning. There is a very good range of extra clubs and activities, particularly in sport and performing arts. Resources are good but accommodation is unsatisfactory and in some subjects has a negative impact on pupils' learning. The very good links with the community and with local schools and colleges have a positive impact on learning. Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is very effective and arrangements for providing support and guidance are satisfactory.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory overall**, with good leadership by the headteacher. As a result of the strong leadership and clear strategic vision of the headteacher and the new leadership team, the school is making the most of its strengths in sports and the performing arts. School self-evaluation is not always rigorous enough in identifying weaknesses and this leads to some inconsistencies in teaching, learning and behaviour. Subject leadership is generally effective and management satisfactory. They are both very good in performing arts and physical education, but unsatisfactory in citizenship. Governance is very supportive and good overall, even though the governing body does not meet its statutory responsibilities for citizenship and a daily act of collective worship. Leadership and management are good in the sixth form.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are pleased with the school. They feel that their children enjoy school and are making good progress because teachers expect pupils to work hard. They are happy with the arrangements for settling into school. They have some concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and the way that the school keeps them informed and the inspection team generally shared these concerns. Parents are also concerned about the extent to which the school seeks their views. Inspectors judged communication with parents to be good. Pupils are positive about their school. They feel it is a well-run, good school to be at and teachers expect them to work hard. Some feel they are not treated fairly by all teachers and their views are not always valued enough. This view was not shared by the inspectors. Pupils are clearly fed up with some teachers who allow a minority of pupils to misbehave in lessons.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Ensure managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously to ensure new ideas and initiatives are used to bring teaching strategies up to date and make lessons more interesting and exciting
- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave and that they celebrate success so pupils are not embarrassed to do well
- Improve the quality of pupils' learning by implementing consistent assessment procedures and marking of work so pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve

and in the sixth form

- Provide better guidance for students when choosing courses in order to improve examination success

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure pupils are taught citizenship and have a daily act of collective worship

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE FRIARY SCHOOL

A bigger than average sixth form drawing students from a similar area to the main school and providing a range of GCE and vocational courses

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school has a good sixth form that is cost-effective. Teaching is good and students learn and achieve well as a result. A good curriculum provides well for the needs and aspirations of most students through an effective consortium of partner schools and colleges. A major strength is the very good range of enrichment activities that contribute well to students' personal and social development. A number of students find the AS courses challenging and do not continue to the second year.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Effective leadership and management ensure that students' progress is well monitored and supported by sixth form tutors
- Good quality teaching contributes to students learning well
- A well established college link course for one-year sixth form students enhances learning and progress
- The school has not been able to encourage more students to take courses that maximise their potential

### 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	<b>English: Good.</b> Good teaching and assessment lead to students achieving well. The subject is well led and standards have been maintained above average. <b>French: Good.</b> Good teaching promotes good learning. Standards are above average and students achieve well.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Teachers have good subject expertise and students achieve well.
Science	<b>Physics: Satisfactory.</b> Although standards are below average, students achieve satisfactorily compared with their attainment on entry.
Information and communication technology	There was no focus subject in this area
Humanities	<b>History: Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average. Students achieve soundly in relation to their attainment on entry, but their organisational skills are weak and they sometimes fail to hand in work. <b>Religious studies: Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and students now achieve well. Standards are in line with those nationally.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Design and technology: Good.</b> The product design courses are well taught and enable students to achieve well.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Art and design: Good.</b> Good teaching and learning enable students to achieve well. Effective leadership is helping to raise standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Physical education: Good.</b> Teachers have good subject expertise. Standards are average and so, in comparison with their attainment on entry, students achieve well.
Business	There was no focus subject in this area
Health and social care	There was no focus subject in this area



Curriculum area	Evaluation
General education	There was no focus subject in this area

*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'.*

Most other subjects were sampled. Students were achieving satisfactorily or better in all the lessons seen.

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Sixth form tutors provide good quality support and guidance to students. The sixth form rightly prides itself on being open to all students and endeavours to give effective support in all courses. However, the fairly short induction does not enable some students to re-evaluate realistically their course options and some subjects are better than others in supporting students in terms of their basic skills and study techniques. There are a considerable number of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly in the areas of community and voluntary service, in which students are positively and actively involved. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is good. Target setting and review procedures are good and are being further developed.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Leadership and management are good** with strengths in day-to-day management and the development of good personal support systems. Those responsible for the sixth form work well together and have organised valuable partnerships with other institutions. Student academic monitoring is good and effective procedures ensure good attendance. Management recognises the need to continue to actively develop a coherent provision for students aged 14 to 19 and provide alternative routes to higher education and employment.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very positive about the sixth form and the support they receive from the sixth form leaders, tutors and subject teachers. They greatly value the range of activities and opportunities to take responsibility and appreciate being consulted and treated in an adult way. They appreciate teachers taking time to offer individual guidance and help when necessary. The strengths they have identified are justified.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are above average. Many do well to maintain those standards by the time they leave Year 11 and do better than pupils in similar schools at GCSE. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, because a significant number do not achieve their full potential. Competence is above average in the basic skills of language, literacy and mathematics, and average in ICT.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in performing arts and music in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching
- Pupils underachieve in citizenship because of unsatisfactory teaching and weaknesses in the curriculum
- Sixth form students achieve well based on their individual starting points
- Pupils with special educational needs and those that are particularly gifted or talented achieve as well as their classmates

#### Commentary

1. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average in English, well above average in mathematics and above average in science. Mathematics results are strongest at the highest levels, while those in English are weakest. Results overall were above average and the trend in improvement was below that seen nationally. Girls did better than boys in English and boys did better in science and mathematics. Early indicators show that results improved in 2004.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33 (33)	33 (33)
Mathematics	38 (37)	35 (35)
Science	35 (35)	34 (33)

*There were 207 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. By the end of Year 9, standards currently are well above average in mathematics and, above average in other subjects with the exception of science, art and design, design and technology, history, ICT, religious education and physical education where they are average. Standards in citizenship are below average. Pupils achieve well in all subjects except English, science, art and design, history and ICT where they achieve satisfactorily and in citizenship where they underachieve. Boys and girls achieve similarly. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as particularly gifted and talented achieve as well as their classmates.

#### **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	58 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38 (38)	35 (35)

*There were 228 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

\* National comparators are not yet available for GCSE results in 2004.

3. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and similar to those noted in the previous report. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 was good. The proportion of pupils who left with at least one GCSE pass was in line with the national average but below average when compared to similar schools. The trend in results was in line with the national trend. Overall, results in 2004 appear similar but are currently subject to an appeal and remarking of the English examination.
4. The standards seen in Year 11 were very high in performing arts and well above average in music. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of art and design, ICT and religious education where they are average and history and citizenship where they are below average. Pupils achieve very well in performing arts and music because the teaching is inspirational and dynamic. Achievement is satisfactory or better in all other subjects with the exception of history and citizenship, where it is unsatisfactory.
5. How well pupils achieve is affected by several factors, not least the quality of teaching. Many pupils achieve well in lessons and over time because teaching is well focused on how to help each pupil learn to the best of their ability. Where teaching has weaknesses, for example not matching work to the needs of groups within a class, pupils do not achieve as well. Other shortcomings, such as unsatisfactory assessment, poor behaviour management and the nature of some of the school's accommodation, also have a negative impact on some pupils' achievement.
6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. They meet the targets in their individual education plans and improve their social as well as academic skills. Pupils who are gifted and talented also achieve satisfactorily.
7. Girls and boys usually achieve as well as each other, although boys did particularly well in the 2003 GCSE results. Girls generally work harder than boys to complete coursework. In some subjects, teachers do not encourage the boys as much as the girls, resulting in lower achievement of boys and some disruptive behaviour.
8. Standards of language and literacy are above national expectations. Many pupils are very confident speakers but weaker writers. They read with good understanding and are able to find information using appropriate reference materials. Higher attainers enjoy reading and have a wide taste in their personal reading. Standards of numeracy are also above average and pupils get lots of opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other situations. Skills of using ICT are generally average.

### **Sixth form**

Because of the open-entry policy to the sixth form, overall attainment on entry varies from year to year, but is generally below average. Standards by the end of the sixth form are average. Students are achieving well overall, mainly as a result of good and very good teaching.

### **Commentary**

9. Results in 2003 were broadly average but lower than the previous year. Results in 2004 were similar. Results vary year to year because of the entry policy. However, there has been a declining trend over the last three years.

### ***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	90.4 (95.0)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.1 (38.4)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	258.6(277.0)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 108 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

\* National comparators are not yet available for GCE results in 2004.

10. Of the subjects inspected in detail, students attain above average standards in English, mathematics and French. Standards in art and design, design and technology, religious studies and physical education are average. Standards are below average in physics and history. The standards attained by girls are slightly better than those of the boys. Students' achievement is good in all the

subjects inspected in detail with the exception of physics and history where achievement is satisfactory.

### **Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory, which is a secure foundation for personal and academic achievement. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Personal development is good, fostered by high quality care and provision for spiritual, social and cultural awareness that is good. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although most pupils behave well, immature or bored pupils sometimes disrupt individual lessons unless teaching is stimulating, preventing others in the class from learning and achieving all they can
- The attitudes of many pupils are good, particularly those in most top sets and in groups where teaching is strong, which helps these pupils to do well
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about interesting practical work and extra-curricular activities
- Pupils respond well to high quality pastoral care, which boosts the confidence of the majority well

### **Commentary**

11. Behaviour is often quite good, although in lessons where teaching is weak or dull, behaviour sometimes slides into unacceptable disorder. This irritates those aiming to do well. For example, one pupil said, “I want to work with a whole class, which wants to learn”. Inconsistent expectations of teachers result in mixed messages. In less successful lessons, the culture of ‘*it’s not cool to be clever*’ overrides the willingness of pupils to try to work. Well-behaved pupils are frustrated and feel unfairly treated when the “form gets lots of detentions because our teacher can’t see who was causing the trouble”.
12. Despite these weaker aspects of behaviour and attitudes, most pupils behave well. They respond cheerfully to good-humoured comments, a clear example from staff and positive encouragement to behave well in and out of lessons. In classes where teaching is consistently good, especially in higher sets, pupils are keen to work hard and do well. Some pupils described how teachers make learning fun, “They use new techniques so that we behave and learn and they can let us have a bit of freedom.” This contrasts with less enthusiasm in some lower sets and classes where teaching is dull and pupils are bored. Ineffective class management adds to the disenchantment with learning. Almost all pupils thoroughly enjoy practical work that is meticulously planned to meet their different needs and keeps them interested in what they are doing from start to finish of lively lessons.
13. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds are keen, not only on interesting practical work, but also on chances to take part in many rewarding activities outside lessons. Pupils who make the most of the many clubs and enriching experiences offered are helped to develop their personal qualities, gifts and talents very successfully. Pupils said, “The extra-curricular activities are very worthwhile and well run.... the games teachers really teach you good skills....I think the theatre is good and really influences people like me who enjoy drama.” Pupils are very enthusiastic about being at the school and are pleased it is applying to become a performing arts and sports college.
14. Pupils come to school regularly and are usually punctual unless the school buses are late. However, movement between lessons is not very brisk. Although narrow corridors and lack of space make delays inevitable in places, pupils sometimes dawdle to lessons if they expect them to be boring.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.2
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.*

15. The school recognises that more pupils have difficulty with self-discipline and listening carefully than used to be the case. It works particularly well on a one-to-one basis with those identified as having specific emotional and behavioural difficulties, including a short attention span, and with individuals at risk of exclusion. Its very good links with specialist units and staff help with this. It has a relatively low rate of exclusion and uses procedures wholly appropriately. A temporary increase in exclusion rates resulted from a well-considered decision to re-emphasise the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

**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	1212	37	3
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	7	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0

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

16. Pupils’ personal qualities develop well, particularly their ability to get on well with others, self-confidence, and wider understanding of the value of different opinions and experiences. This is partly because almost everyone trusts in someone on the staff, which helps boost confidence. “I moved into this school in Year 10 and I really needed a lot of help and that is what I got. I really appreciate it,” commented one pupil. Pupils’ grasp of what is right and what is expected of them within the school community, though satisfactory, is less well developed than other personal qualities. Inconsistencies in classroom management, such as too little praise or attention to the rights of the silent majority, blurs the focus on pupils’ responsibilities to each other, including everyone’s right to learn. When pupils have golden opportunities to be moved or reflect on meaningful questions, they rise admirably to the challenge. In a stunning Year 8 assembly, pupils were spellbound by the description of a spectacular Greek sunset, its pitch-black, silent night, and how this evoked the Christmas story, as candlelight and song illuminated darkness.

**Sixth form**

Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good, which helps students to achieve well. They make good use of chances to work with younger pupils, which helps them to mature and take responsibility well.

**Commentary**

17. Students enjoy their chosen subjects and appreciate being taught in fun and interesting ways. For most, motivation is strong. As one student said, “We have good relationships with most teachers so there’s a good atmosphere in which to learn.” In better lessons, students thrive on varied teaching styles and interesting activities. They thoroughly enjoy interesting practical work, for example in performing arts, where students also felt encouraged to express their own views and feelings.

18. In some lessons, students sit passively for too long without the chance to ask or answer questions. As a result, students' understanding of the subject is not fully developed and they do not show skills of independent enquiry. A few students are less dedicated to their work because teaching has not captured their interest or helped them to meet the challenges of advanced study.
19. Students relish the chance to work with younger pupils to help with reading and personal problems, including how to deal with bullying, for which several are specially trained as mentors. They take the lead in performing arts and sports activities, which gives them very useful experience of setting an example, using initiative and taking significant responsibility. The team of prefects is involved actively in gathering and sharing views on improvements to school life, particularly through the school council.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with much that is good, particularly in the sixth form. The curriculum is good overall and opportunities for enrichment are very good. The quality of support and guidance for pupils is good in the sixth form and satisfactory in the main school and has a positive effect on personal development. The school works very well with the community and with other schools and colleges to support pupils' achievement. Links with parents are good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with much that is good. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in performing arts and music in Years 10 and 11, leading to very good achievement
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in citizenship and, as a result, pupils underachieve
- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge that they use effectively to contribute to pupils' achievement
- Planning of work that meets pupils' needs and provides challenge is a strength of a number of subjects, but is not consistent throughout the school
- Teaching in the sixth form is often high paced and well matched to the needs of students
- Most teachers do not make effective use of assessment information to improve pupils' learning
- Too little teaching is exciting and inspirational, using the most effective learning strategies

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 160 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	32 (20)	66 (41)	53 (33)	9 (6)	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.*

20. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory in English, science, art and design, history and ICT. It is good in all other subjects apart from citizenship, where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in performing arts and music. It is satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, history, ICT and religious education. In all other subjects it is good except for citizenship, where it is unsatisfactory.
21. Most teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and pass this on well to the pupils in their charge. When teaching is most effective, teachers prepare their lessons really well, very good resources are used, activities are varied and pupils are required to be active in their own learning. The pace of learning is high and pupils achieve much better than expected. Pupils greatly appreciate the lessons that actively engage them in interesting topics, such as those in performing arts, physical education and music. They respond very well to imaginative quick-fire question and answer sessions, and vivid use of humour, as evident in a Year 11 psychology lesson, which sparked intellectual curiosity very well and gave a very clear framework for pupils' revision.

22. Pupils achieve very well in performing arts and music because of the high quality teaching they receive. In performing arts, for example, lessons incorporate a variety of exciting tasks and teachers' passion for the subject is passed on to the pupils in a way that inspires them and pushes them to greater heights. In these lessons, there is a valuable emphasis on improving communication skills. This includes non-verbal work as well as speech.
23. Most teachers have good relationships with pupils and know them well. Pupils' views are highly valued and all are encouraged to contribute. This results in pupils learning within a secure and caring environment. They are given the confidence to ask questions without fear of ridicule or embarrassment. Many staff give time outside the normal school day and this is appreciated by the pupils. In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and also how pupils should behave. Consequently, behaviour is managed well, because activities are interesting and keep the pupils so busy they do not have time to mess about. However, too many teachers have low expectations of how pupils should behave in lessons and accept low-level chatter as the norm. They do not challenge the pupils and frequently end up talking louder over the chatter in order for the pupils to hear them. This has a negative impact on learning and many pupils are fed up with this regular disruption to their learning. There are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons in order to share more effectively the skills and good ideas that different teachers have to offer.
24. Although much of the teaching is good, there is relatively little top-quality teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11. Pupils are rarely inspired to work incredibly hard. This is because not all teachers have kept up to date with the latest learning strategies, and senior leaders have not made sure that the newest and most effective teaching methods are being used throughout the school. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, it is characterised by teachers not focusing on what and how pupils learn. Teachers talk too much and lessons become dull and fail to capture the interest of the pupils. Whilst the vast majority of pupils quietly get on with their studies, some pupils become bored and misbehaviour soon follows. Teachers do not always inform pupils what learning is to take place or evaluate what has been learned. They do not always match work closely enough to the needs of pupils, for example, those pupils who are particularly gifted and talented. Learning is unsatisfactory in citizenship because important aspects of the subject are not being taught consistently. Much of the teaching is dependent on individual teachers' own interest in the subject and does not ensure all aspects are covered.
25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and results in pupils learning as well as their classmates. Additional intervention programmes are well developed by the support team and pupils are clear about their targets. Good advice on learning strategies is provided by the learning support team through classroom support plans. When teachers make use of these, work is well matched to pupils' needs and extra resources are provided. In other cases, pupils do less well because planning has not taken account of the expert guidance.
26. Assessment is unsatisfactory. An assessment policy is in place to provide guidance to departments on what is best practice in assessment. However, this provides flawed advice on marking, resulting in unsatisfactory procedures being adopted by teachers when assessing pupils' work. Consequently the development of constructive, helpful marking has not taken place in some departments in Years 7 to 11. However, other departments have already developed useful diagnostic comments in their marking. Overall this has resulted in inconsistencies across the school's provision for assessing pupils' work thoroughly and constructively. Teachers have not yet developed a detailed understanding of the standards expected in Years 7 to 9 in terms of the different National Curriculum levels and sub-levels. However, there are some pockets of good practice, where both teachers and pupils converse well in terms of sub-levels.
27. Marking is inconsistent. In some lessons, pupils are made aware of the progress they are making and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Only in a minority of subjects do pupils know how well they are doing in terms of the level they are working at. The majority of pupils do not have this indicated in the marked work they receive. Much marking is nothing more than a tick or a cross. In some subjects, teachers take time to write helpful and informative comments that clearly indicate what a pupils needs to do to get better, and this helps them to make better progress.

28. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a satisfactory impact on teaching. In most lessons, teachers make the purpose clear and begin with a brisk starter activity that makes pupils think and focuses their attention on the lesson to follow. However, in some lessons, pupils are too passive and the methods used do not provide suitable challenge for pupils' differing levels of attainment. Also, there is generally too little opportunity for pupils to review their learning, especially when the final part of the lesson is rushed. The full impact of the strategy has yet to be seen.

### Sixth form

The quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. Procedures for and use of assessment are satisfactory.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3)	8 (20)	24 (60)	7 (17)	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.*

### Commentary

29. Teachers know their subjects well. Lessons are well structured and effectively planned. They proceed with a brisk pace and allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. Teachers have a good knowledge of the course requirements and students are aware of what they need to do to achieve a specific grade. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions. Students respond well to questions and contribute using a good range of vocabulary as they volunteer suggestions.
30. Whilst satisfactory, some less effective teaching was seen in physics. Work is not closely matched to the students' needs and students have not yet developed strong independent learning skills. Teachers do not get students to prepare for topics in advance of a lesson.
31. Overall, assessment is satisfactory in the sixth form. Constructive, diagnostic marking is more prevalent in the better sixth form lessons. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing students' work across most departments although there are some inconsistencies, but not on the scale seen in Years 7 to 11. Teachers use data with students to advise them on their progress and this helps students to know, in most cases, what are the next steps that they have to take to achieve their target level or beyond.

### The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. There are well-planned, broad and balanced learning opportunities for all pupils. The extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly in sports and arts, is a very strong feature. Provision for citizenship in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory. The quality and quantity of resources are good but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' learning is enriched through the very good extra-curricular provision
- The school has addressed the needs of Year 10 and 11 pupils well through the pathways and work placement programme
- The modern languages curriculum is very good
- The provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory and the school does not meet its statutory duty to hold a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils
- The accommodation in the main school is unsatisfactory, which has a significant impact on some subjects
- The well established college link course for one-year sixth form students enhances learning and achievement
- A small number of students do not complete A-level courses because they are better suited to vocational programmes that are not available within the school



## **Commentary**

32. Pupils benefit from a very good range of activities in which they can participate outside lessons. Physical education, the performing arts and art give gifted and talented pupils very good opportunities to work at higher levels. The pottery link with a well-known company and work with an artist in residence, together with the many concerts and the excellent core provision of sport for Years 10 and 11, are very good examples of this.
33. The curriculum has good breadth and balance. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a wide range of GCSE courses. The programme of work-related learning is sound. A satisfactory programme of personal, social and health (PSHE) education includes modules on careers, drug abuse and sex education. The links with the Connexions for careers and curriculum support are very good. The provision for a work-focused group in both Years 10 and 11 is a very successful innovation, which reduces some pupils' examination load and provides them each week with two days at local colleges and one day's work experience. The curriculum for modern foreign languages offers a choice of three modern languages in Years 8 and 9 and continuing study of a language for all pupils beyond Year 9.
34. Citizenship is not planned carefully enough. Pupils in the same year group receive substantially different experiences, both in quality and quantity. Much of what is taught is due to individual teachers' interest rather than a systematic approach across the school. The school fails to meet its statutory duty to have a daily collective act of worship for all its pupils, which reduces the opportunities for developing pupils' personal qualities, although assemblies led by the headteacher during the inspection were highly spiritual and of outstanding quality.
35. The number and expertise of the teachers meets the school's needs well. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and there is a good balance of youth and experience. Non-teaching staff make an important contribution to the life and work of the school and are well matched to its needs. However, there is a shortage of language assistants in modern foreign languages.
36. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, as the school has a shortage of six classrooms; and insufficient toilet facilities and storage. In addition, several of the existing classrooms are too small and this limits the use of ICT. The lack of four mathematics rooms has had a significant impact on standards in the subject, and science teaching has also been affected by lack of available laboratory space at times. The lack of soundproofing in the music rooms was an issue raised in the last inspection and is still to be resolved. Most subjects have, to a lesser degree, been affected by the lack of space. Resources are generally good and in history they are very good. The library is well used and well organised. Pupils are able to access computers regularly in the library and report that they like working there. There is however no designated area in the school for a careers' library.

## **Sixth form**

The sixth form curriculum is good and appropriate to the needs of most students. There is a very good range of out-of-school activities which considerably enhance the learning experiences of students. The partnership of local sixth forms has a positive impact on students' learning. Whilst some vocational courses are offered, the take-up by students is low.

## **Commentary**

37. A good range of A and AS-level courses is offered and recent developments enable students to study from a selection of 20 courses and work-related programmes. There is a clear personal and social education programme, in which citizenship is a strong element. Students receive helpful advice on entry into higher education and progress into other areas, with strong support from the Connexions officers on site. However, a small number of students start GCE A-level courses for which they do not have sufficient previous experience. The school does not currently provide many vocational subjects, to meet the needs of all students.
38. A very good range of enrichment opportunities enhances the sixth form curriculum. Students are fully involved in the arts life of the school, such as the high quality music and drama productions. They participate well in sports, particularly working on the sports leader award with Year 7 pupils, training them in rugby and football skills. A very large number of Year 12 students have taken advantage of the full work experience programme available. Students are very involved in charity

fundraising work within the school and the community. There are regular links with two local special schools where a high proportion of students do voluntary service. Link arrangements with the local college and employers are also good. The well established college link course for one-year sixth form students is a particularly successful feature of the curriculum. Half of the Year 12 students work as mentors with younger pupils in tutorial time. Various visits are undertaken including a Medlink trip for would-be doctors, theatre visits and university trips. Several students participate in Open University programmes.

39. There is a good match of the teachers to the needs of the curriculum. Accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory, as the groups of students in lessons are smaller than those in the main school. However, in practical subjects such as art, science and music, facilities are having a negative impact on students' opportunities. This is particularly seen in theory lessons for physical education that are conducted in the canteen. Students also have difficulty in finding quiet areas for private study time, because of the lack of rooms.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school gives a high priority to taking very good care of pupils. Matters of welfare, child protection, health and safety are dealt with very well. Pupils receive satisfactory advice based on checks on how well they are doing. Pupils' views are taken into account in a satisfactory way. Improvement in how the school cares for its pupils has been satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school pays very good attention to pupils' welfare so they feel very well cared for and have confidence that someone is there for them if they are in trouble
- Access to general advice is good, but guidance given to individuals about their progress is inconsistent
- Impartial guidance on future course and work options is generally good
- Induction is good and so pupils settle in well

### **Commentary**

40. One of the school's strengths is the way it seeks to care for all its pupils, regardless of differences in background and capabilities. For example, a pupil who receives support wrote, "I think this school is very kind, giving and cheerful – teachers give a comment (to support staff) and you can stay on a straight track". Relationships between staff and pupils are generally strong, positive and constructive, and so individuals feel able to ask for help. Pupils think well of the school because they can find someone they trust to talk to and have a system to help them deal with problems such as bullying. As a parent noted, "My son was bullied at another school. He has settled down really well here and I have not seen him this happy about going to school for a long time."
41. The example set by the head teacher and other key staff in talking to pupils in a positive, friendly way encourages them to feel safe and valued. With smiling staff who enjoy a chat at break and take time to build trusting relationships with individuals, including the most vulnerable pupils, the quality of care is at its highest. The school has been slow to make best use of this, and the related goodwill of most pupils, to drive up standards of academic and personal achievement. Here the picture is inconsistent, as reflected in two pupils' views, one of whom said, "I feel trusted and respected by many members of staff." Another's opinion was, "Some teachers don't give you enough encouragement. They think you're annoying if you ask a question more than once."
42. Advice based on checking individual progress is useful because unsatisfactory elements of assessment are outweighed by good general knowledge of pupils' personal and academic needs. Pupils praise good advice and help in particular subjects and from individual staff, although they do not always know how well they are doing or what steps to take to speed up progress. They like the way that most teachers are willing to help with work at lunch time or after school.
43. Pupils receive helpful guidance on future education and careers from teaching staff and those working with the Connexions service. It results in confident choices of what to study next and enthusiasm for courses when they match aspirations particularly well, such as practical, work-related activities for pupils who hope to take apprenticeships.

44. Very good links with local primary schools, a very clear outline in the prospectus of what the school offers and talks for prospective parents, ensure that induction is good. One parent commented, "My son struggled to adapt to senior school in Year 7. All his teachers, but particularly his year head and class tutor, worked with him to ensure the difficulties were overcome. He soon settled". Pupils are also helped to settle by older students.

### **Sixth form**

Care and guidance for sixth form students is good. Involvement of students in school life is good, which reflects the constructive way they are listened to, formally and informally. Students receive good advice in general, both for improving their work and for choosing wisely from future options in study and employment. They have good opportunities to have a meaningful say in school improvement.

### **Commentary**

45. In most cases, students receive enough help to make further progress with their studies, as teachers usually know what they understand and where they are going wrong. A weakness is that teachers do not make best use of opportunities to give the kind of feedback that helps learners to recognise their next steps and how to take them, based on a shared review of grades and personal goals. Students praise the fact that, "...there is help and reassurance when you need it....and...careers advice is readily available." Most feel prepared well to make sensible choices of what to do next. They benefit from lively, direct teaching such as the amusing introduction to the advantages of a gap year, much enjoyed by Year 12 during the inspection.
46. Students have good chances to express their views and influence school life as prefects, in tutor time and within the school council. They have easy-going relationships with individual senior management staff, allowing for informal discussions of anything that concerns them. They take their responsibilities as mentors very seriously. They set a good example and are understandably worried that not all the younger pupils are learning the principles of good behaviour.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Partnership with parents is good. Links with other schools and with the wider community are very good. This area of the school's work contributes well to pupils' personal achievement and has improved well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are pleased with the school and most are happy to work in partnership with it to support their children's learning effectively
- Information for parents, including that in reports, has improved and is generally of good quality, although targets are not always focused sharply enough on the next steps to take with learning
- Links with other schools and the community are very good and provide enriching experiences for pupils and students

### **Commentary**

47. Parents support the school and their children's learning constructively, because, they say, their children are very happy, regularly spending much of their own time taking part in extra-curricular activities such as performing arts and sport. Parents are often well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of subject teaching, but say that they are happy to work with staff in general, who are "...very helpful and willing to give up their own time to help any child who needs that extra attention." Parents' main concerns are with standards of behaviour, marking, homework and frequency of reporting on progress. The inspection confirmed that their concerns about inconsistent expectations of behaviour, marking and setting of homework are justified. One parent commented that their child was not motivated to complete a homework, believing it would not be marked. The school is already taking steps to provide additional information about progress through simple, interim reports.
48. The school does a good job of keeping parents informed about its work through letters home, its web-site and a readable prospectus. Reports usually give a good, clear outline of how well the pupil is doing, subject by subject. Comments and targets are not always linked to best effect to ensure everyone is clear about what action is needed. Targets for modern languages are far more useful and specific than for other subjects, for example "...practise saying new words and phrases aloud

and use these in class,” which relates to the comment, “...more effort is needed when learning new vocabulary.”

49. Very good links with other schools help the smooth transition to and from secondary school. Parents noted that the school’s open evening has a very welcoming feel and visits by staff to local primary schools help to reassure new pupils. Imaginative, constructive links with other secondary schools, and specialist provision for pupils in temporary difficulty, help to ensure that exclusions are kept to a minimum and vulnerable pupils have the support they need. Strong links with local colleges mean that pupils who are disillusioned with lessons have every chance to experience success with learning so their interest in study is rekindled. This was seen in a very good food-studies lesson linked to the shared work-related-learning programme, where pupils arrived early, because they enjoy the lessons so much, talking excitedly about what they were going to cook.
50. A strong network of links with the community plays a key part in very good enrichment provision. The sports centre has a joint use agreement, which is of great benefit to local people. The pool is very well equipped for use with disabled people, which allows pupils to enjoy sessions, such as that in a group survival exercise where all the group, including those with disabilities, hugged one another memorably round a floating support. Impressive links with the local International Arts Festival, the National Arboretum and an internationally renowned pottery enrich pupils’ experiences significantly, underpinning personal achievement well in the way they build pupils’ self-esteem and broaden their horizons.

### **Sixth form**

51. As in the main school, partnerships with parents, other schools and colleges and the community are successful in broadening students’ horizons and ensuring that they make informed choices about what to do after sixth form study. Very good links with local universities through the Compact scheme enable individual students to access courses that they might not otherwise have considered.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the headteacher is good. He has created a vision for the future of the school, which is shared by all. Governance is effective in most respects. Governors are well informed, very supportive and act as critical friends. Leadership by other key staff is effective. The management of the school, and generally of departments, is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher seeks to raise all pupils’ achievement through making the most of the school’s strengths in sports and the performing arts
- School self-evaluation is not rigorous enough in identifying and tackling weaknesses
- The new leadership team has complementary skills and is well placed to drive forward the school’s strategic plan
- Very astute financial management ensures that the school makes the best use of limited resources
- Sixth form managers are effective and highly regarded by students
- Governors do not ensure that all statutory requirements are met
- The pastoral system is very well managed to provide very good care of pupils

### **Commentary**

52. The headteacher is very highly regarded by all those connected with the school, including pupils, parents and the local community. Some features of his leadership are outstanding. For example, he provides an excellent role model, which inspires others. He works tirelessly on behalf of the pupils and staff. His desire to create a specialist school is fully supported. He makes very effective use of his entrepreneurial financial skills in gaining grant funds for the school, and this has resulted in improvements to the buildings and quality of staffing. He is committed to improving the professional expertise of teachers as a means of improving pupils’ learning. A particular strength is his open manner and willingness to listen and learn from others. Some difficult decisions regarding staffing have been taken but some aspects of monitoring teaching and learning lack rigour.

53. The school has some potentially very effective self-evaluation systems in place, but at present these are not fully developed. The self-review system carried out by the headteacher and senior managers has some clear messages for staff but is not regular enough to have a significant impact. Where it involves looking at pupils' work and observing lessons, it is more helpful in evaluating teaching and learning. However, managers are not always comfortable with challenging weak teaching and ensuring that all teachers are using the most effective techniques and styles to promote good learning. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses paints a rosier picture than that found by the inspectors. The annual review that all subjects carry out is variable in quality. Subject leaders do not have a secure understanding of the review process, or the necessary rigour required. The impact of less successful teaching on pupils' behaviour and achievement is not being picked up. Recent building work has taken some valuable management time and resulted in the headteacher and key staff being in a temporary building separate from the main school. These have been factors preventing them from keeping their 'eye on the ball' and their focus on monitoring teaching and learning was lessened.
54. The school's strategic plan gives a clear vision for the future. The issues identified are appropriate and well structured with clear outcomes so that progress can be monitored. It reflects the school's strength in forward planning.
55. The governors are very supportive of the school. Most know the school's strengths and weaknesses, not just from reading documentation, but also from asking questions, and discussions with subject leaders. The governors have a good range of expertise, which they use well. Although they are not afraid to challenge decisions, they do not yet influence strategic planning, neither is their monitoring of the work of the school as rigorous as it should be. The governing body does not properly ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Some pupils do not receive their entitlement to teaching of citizenship and to a daily act of collective worship.
56. The recently expanded leadership team has brought renewed energy to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning but the impact of this has yet to be seen. The school's data system is providing very useful information for senior managers and teachers, and is helping to identify underachievement. Leadership of subjects is good overall. There is very good leadership in performing arts, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and design and technology, with good leadership in mathematics, geography, history, religious education and art and design. Leadership of citizenship is unsatisfactory. Management of subject departments is satisfactory overall, with shortcomings particularly in the identification of teaching weaknesses and their impact. Heads of year and form tutors provide very good care for pupils, so that personal problems are dealt with effectively. However, monitoring of pupils' academic progress is not effective.
57. The learning support team is well led. Management is effective and has improved since the last inspection. The leadership has been involved both in training for the local education authority and in local schools. As a result of the leadership's involvement in a number of initiatives, and the school's success in including pupils with physical, sensory and general learning difficulties, an Inclusion Quality Mark has been awarded.
58. Performance management is very good. Specific objectives are set for all teachers and these take into account whole school and department needs, particularly weaknesses in pupils' attainment. All teachers have individual training plans, which are analysed and collated by the school training co-ordinator. The management and breadth of training provided are good. All training is rigorously evaluated and there is very good provision for newly qualified teachers. Two areas are underdeveloped: the use of effective practice within the school and outside for training, and the induction of new, experienced staff. These have been identified by the school and plans are already in place to tackle these relative weaknesses.

### **Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4011909
Total expenditure	3871716
Expenditure per pupil	2983

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	286861
Balance carried forward to the next	427054

59. Financial management is very good. The head teacher and the finance committee have a very clear grasp of spending, and of budget issues and trends. The school has been very effective in gaining additional funding from external sources. The control of finances is very efficient, with careful monitoring of spending on projects and by subject departments. A large surplus was carried over from the 2003/4 budget, but this is largely committed funding. The school makes very good use of data provided by the local education authority to compare its spending with other schools, when planning the budget.

#### **Sixth form**

The sixth form benefits from good leadership and management. Governance is effective.

#### **Commentary**

60. Managers of the sixth form are regarded by students as approachable and supportive. The ethos of the sixth form, with its emphasis on personal development and service to others, reflects the positive style of sixth form leadership. Management of student guidance and support is good, with effective systems for monitoring students' attendance and progress. Careers and higher-education guidance are also well managed through good tutor team work and effective links with Connexions, and contacts and entry arrangements with regional universities. A senior pastoral manager is effective in co-ordinating the one-year sixth-form provision and monitoring the progress of the link students.
61. The management of many aspects, such as curriculum planning, are shared between several staff and are overall satisfactory. The school's liberal sixth form entry policy works against procedures to match students to courses carefully enough. Although still at an early stage, the school's 14 to 19 strategy to broaden the curriculum even further is starting to tackle the current need to provide flexible and alternative pathways in the sixth form.
62. The leadership of all sixth form subject departments is at least satisfactory, and it is very good in French and physical education. Governors are very supportive of the sixth form and its work and have a good grasp of where students achieve well. The sixth form is cost-effective.

#### **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

##### **Work-related learning**

The provision for work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Careers guidance is good and there are strong links with Connexions
- Effective work experience helps pupils in Year 10 and students in the sixth form
- The work focus groups in Years 10 and 11 are successful
- Despite strong industry links in modern foreign languages and performing arts, links in other subjects are largely underdeveloped
- Long-term absence is limiting the co-ordination and development of work-related learning

##### **Commentary**

63. The school has, in some respects, a good range of provision though the lack of a work-related learning co-ordinator through illness has limited the extent to which it has been able to monitor and evaluate the impact of that provision. Statutory requirements are met. Teaching is sound on the WRL courses and as a result pupils achieve satisfactorily.

64. All Year 10 pupils benefit from work experience arranged by the school, with the help of the local education business partnership. The work experience is followed up appropriately in subsequent careers education lessons. A number of Year 10 and 11 pupils with special educational needs additionally benefit from weekly work experience which they combine with vocational courses at college and core and work-related studies in school. In the sixth form, nearly three-quarters of pupils have work placements in areas related to their future career aspirations.
65. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have careers and work-related learning as part of their timetabled PSHE programme, while those in Years 10 and 11 have a specific careers education programme taught by specialist careers teachers. These programmes are complemented by very strong links with the Connexions careers service. Pupils therefore have good access to specialist careers guidance and those most needing such help are carefully identified. The sixth form too has access to weekly careers guidance as well as extensive help with university application.
66. Learning about the world of work is addressed satisfactorily within personal, social and health education and careers programmes though the extent to which different subjects develop that understanding through links is more variable. Performing arts have very good links with the local arts employers, particularly with a theatre, where pupils are able to apply their studies to a vocational context. The vocationally related GCSE in ICT by contrast, has few links. Modern foreign languages organise very good work experience for pupils in Limoges in France, though this is limited to Year 12 students.
67. Within the tutorial programme, there is a range of role play and other activities that encourage pupils to develop their learning, though opportunities are missed to follow up such work within the daily morning tutor sessions. Other subjects are effective in helping pupils develop work-related skills, most notably the food-studies option within the Years 10 and 11 work focus group. Through very good teaching and learning, those pupils develop greater self-confidence in their making and personal organisation skills.
68. Senior staff have temporarily shared the responsibilities of WRL co-ordination to ensure satisfactory provision. The school makes good use of non-teaching staff to support provision, particularly in arranging careers interviews and work experience placements.
69. The school is actively involved with others locally, to develop improved provision for 14 to 19 year olds, including that for vocational education. It has yet to establish different pathways, though the development of performing arts at both 14 to 16 years and in the sixth form signals possible ways forward for vocational progression.

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In addition to the focus subjects, one lesson of Spanish was sampled in Year 8. The standards observed were above average, with pupils in this beginners' group achieving satisfactorily. Teaching and learning were good and pupils had very positive attitudes to their studies because of the demanding teaching they received.

#### English

Provision in English is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

  

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Minor disruption in some classes, mainly from boys and lower attaining pupils, is slowing down the pace of learning
- Teachers have good subject expertise and pass this on successfully to pupils
- Pupils have good knowledge of literary techniques and the ability to write well in a range of styles
- Progress in developing spelling, punctuation, grammar and listening skills is slow especially for lower attaining pupils
- The range of resources and activities in some lessons is narrow and this adversely affects pupils' attitudes to learning
- Teachers are well supported by good schemes of work, and by high quality guidance in the department handbook

#### Commentary

##### Examination results

70. Results in the 2003 Year 9 tests were average. Provisional results for 2004 show a significant improvement. GCSE English results were significantly above the national average in 2003 but literature results were below average. The results for 2004 are still under review by the examination board. In 2003, boys and girls received similar results in the Year 9 tests, but girls performed much better than boys at GCSE.

##### Standards and achievement

71. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to write in a range of styles, producing interesting persuasive, imaginative and factual writing. Some of their stories and autobiographical writing are very lively and show a good awareness of the reader. Pupils in the higher sets generally achieve well. Their literary appreciations are perceptive and their writing is accurate. In the below average ability classes, many pupils make elementary spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors and do not use Standard English sufficiently in more formal writing. By the end of Year 11, pupils in the upper sets achieve well, but pupils in lower sets make slow progress with their accuracy and many, particularly boys, do not take sufficient care with their work. Listening skills are weak throughout the year groups. The lowest-attaining pupils who have special educational needs achieve well. They read and respond to some challenging texts, including plays by Shakespeare.



## Teaching and learning

72. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they have a very good understanding of the National Curriculum, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and GCSE syllabus requirements. A good range of oral work is used in nearly all lessons but insufficient attention is paid to developing listening skills. Teachers mark work thoroughly and they set useful annual targets for pupils. The key weakness of teaching throughout the school is that expectations of behaviour are too low. In the lower attaining groups in particular, though not exclusively, low-level disruption in many lessons has a negative impact on the pace of learning. Although some very good teaching is taking place, in some lessons resources are not used effectively and too much use is made of worksheets that restrict the range of pupils' responses. Lessons are well structured, but teachers do not always use the end sessions effectively to find out what pupils have learned and achieved. In the very good lessons observed, there was a fast pace of learning and a variety of interesting activities. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, the use of the data projector and well-chosen tasks led to some very imaginative writing.

## Leadership and management

73. The department handbook provides comprehensive and clear guidance for teachers. Schemes of work are detailed, with a good balance between language and literature and there has been systematic and effective training provided for staff in the past year. The department has acquired a good range of data on pupils' achievement but there is not yet a clear overview of attainment in year groups and rates of progress. Some parts of the department's self evaluation are very good but the evaluations of teaching and achievement are too generalised. The cramped accommodation in the three main English classrooms is exacerbating the disruption in lessons. Standards of attainment and schemes of work have improved since the last inspection but behaviour and attitudes in lessons have deteriorated.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

74. When pupils join the school, their literacy skills are above average and they remain above average as they move through the school, despite some weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The contribution to the development of pupils' language and literacy by other subjects is satisfactory overall. In most subjects, teachers focus pupils on key words. This is effective, especially in physical education, geography and modern languages. Good guidance is given for extended writing tasks, especially in geography and music, and pupils' oral work is being promoted well in physical education. All staff have been trained in literacy across the curriculum and the area is well coordinated. Specific training for six departments has been provided and this is having a positive impact. There is, however, not a sufficiently corporate approach across the school to improving basic skills.

## Modern foreign languages

French is the main foreign language and is taught from Years 7 to 11. German is taught to a group of higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 to 11 and Spanish is also taught to a group of higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 to 10. The focus of the inspection was on French and German.

### French

Provision in French is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and speak French well in lessons
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in response to the interesting teaching they receive
- Pupils have particularly good listening and reading comprehension skills
- Assessment of pupils' written work is inconsistent so pupils do not always know what to do to improve
- Pupils are prepared very well for GCSE examinations and, as a result, do consistently well

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

75. Teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. In 2003, many more pupils than the national average were entered for the GCSE examination and they achieved above-average results. Girls performed better than boys, but in line with the national picture. Results in 2004 dropped because the cohort entered for the examination contained fewer higher-attaining pupils.

### **Standards and achievement**

76. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good range of working vocabulary and have well-developed listening and reading comprehension skills. Oral skills are weaker because teaching puts more emphasis on listening, reading and writing. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a wide, working vocabulary and use a variety of tenses and complex sentence structure in their written French. They have very good listening and reading skills but, as with the younger pupils, speaking skills are not as well developed because pupils have limited opportunities in lessons to use French spontaneously or independently.

### **Teaching and learning**

77. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use French very well in lessons to promote good listening skills and to present a good role model to the pupils. Teaching is rigorous and demanding but, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers tend to dominate discussions to the extent that pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their own oral skills. Lessons are well planned and contain a variety of activities to keep pupils interested and motivated. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are positive and support their learning well. Pupils are very well prepared for the GCSE in Years 10 and 11 and know what to do to achieve the highest grade of which they are capable. The marking of pupils' written work is conscientious, but teacher comments are inconsistent in giving pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

78. Leadership presents a very good role model, is knowledgeable and promotes very good teamwork. There is a clear vision for the future, which is focussed on further raising standards within the department. Departmental documents such as the handbook and schemes of work are comprehensive and useful. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good, with a particular strength being the exchange and work-experience programmes in Limoges. Resources are good, but computers are not sufficiently used to support teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous to identify areas for development and opportunities for the sharing of effective practice. Assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent in giving pupils guidance on what they need to do to improve. Since the last inspection above average standards have been maintained in Years 10 and 11 and standards have improved in Years 7 to 9. Progress on using ICT in teaching and learning has been made but remains an aspect for development.

## German

Provision in German is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use German very well as the language of instruction and to improve listening skills
- Teachers prepare pupils very well for the GCSE examination, consequently pupils do well
- Pupils respond positively to the challenging teaching
- Opportunities to use ICT in teaching and learning are not sufficiently exploited
- Above average standards have been maintained since the last inspection

### Commentary

#### Examination results

79. In 2003, 32 higher-attaining pupils were entered for the GCSE examination and results were well above average. Pupils gained better grades in German than they did in their other subjects. In 2004 results dropped slightly.

#### Standards and achievement

80. By the end of Year 9 standards observed were above average and pupils who started learning German in Year 8 achieved well. Pupils have a wide vocabulary and good skills of listening and reading comprehension. They speak with good pronunciation and are starting to use a variety of tenses in their written work. Standards are variable in Years 10 and 11 because of pupils' differing starting points. They are higher in Year 11 than in Year 10. Pupils have command of a wide range of vocabulary and use a variety of tenses and more complex sentence structure in their writing. Listening and reading skills are of a high order but the pupils are generally reluctant to speak German spontaneously and prefer to rely on written prompts.

#### Teaching and learning

81. Teaching is demanding and interesting, which encourages the pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons. German is used very well as the language of instruction, which promotes good listening skills and presents a good role model to the pupils. Pupils are very well prepared for the GCSE examination. They know their target grades and know what they need to do to achieve their potential. Lessons are well prepared to incorporate a range of interesting activities but opportunities are missed to add extra interest and clarity by using the available ICT facilities. Good relationships between teacher and pupils also help to motivate pupils in their learning. Pupils are well known as individuals and are encouraged to perform to their potential.

#### Leadership and management

82. The same comments apply as for French above. The inconsistencies identified in the assessment of written work in French are not apparent in German.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 interests pupils well so they are curious and want to learn
- Pupils do not always receive sufficient information about how well they are doing or how to improve
- Under clear leadership, standards are rising, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and at times adversely affects teaching and learning

### Commentary

#### Examination results

83. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. In 2004 they were similar. Results at GCSE in 2003 were average. Results in 2004 improved.

#### Standards and achievement

84. Current standards at the end of Years 9 and Year 11 broadly reflect results in 2004. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of areas and volumes of more complex shapes, such as prisms, and are able to make comparisons well. They have a good grasp of algebra and can handle formulae with confidence, being able to find solutions through a range of different approaches. However, they are not as confident at data handling and their skills in exploring numbers, patterns and solving problems are more limited. By Year 11, pupils in some classes have achieved particularly well in using formulae in a variety of ways, predicting outcomes, justifying solutions and analysing distributions. However, in other classes, lower-attaining pupils have a more limited range of understanding of algebra and proving theories about shape. Pupils at varying levels of attainment achieve similarly and there is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

#### Teaching and learning

85. Generally, teachers provide clear explanations and demonstrations, some of which make good use of ICT, to illustrate more complex ideas, such as different transformations. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils feel confident to ask questions, clarify their understanding, or attempt answers. Consequently, pupils are able to contribute, feel more interested and behave well. In most lessons, teachers begin with a brisk mental activity that captures pupils' interest because it challenges them all to think. In the best lessons, this lively pace is continued and pupils benefit from a good variety of activities. In some lessons, however, teachers talked for too long and as a result pupils relied too heavily on them and developed less skill in thinking for themselves. Occasionally pupils did not achieve as well as they should because there was little opportunity for them to review their learning, or this part of the lesson was rushed. In a very small number of instances, the highest-attaining pupils could have achieved more if given additional challenge through different work.
86. In Years 10 and 11, lessons, whilst satisfactory overall, do not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and are not structured as tightly as those for the younger pupils; consequently, pupils do not achieve as well. In the few weaker lessons, the work planned was too easy or uninteresting and pupils were bored and lacked concentration. Pupils' behaviour deteriorated quickly and teachers found it difficult to continue the lessons at a reasonable pace, leading to further

boredom and frustration for those pupils who were keen to learn. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is regular and satisfactory, although there is inconsistency. Too little information is given to pupils to let them know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

### Leadership and management

87. The very clear vision of the best way to teach mathematics and a clear focus on raising standards has resulted in standards improving very well in Year 9, and recent steady improvements in Year 11. Although pupils' achievements and teachers' performance are monitored regularly, the actions taken to improve teaching have not yet fully removed inconsistency.
88. A strength of the curriculum is the very good project work undertaken by Year 11 pupils as a part of their examination course. The newly introduced longer-term planning is well written and beginning to impact on pupils' learning. However, there are only limited opportunities for pupils to use mathematics to identify and solve problems, or to argue and justify solutions, using what they have learned to think for themselves. Teaching and achievement are adversely affected by accommodation in a small number of lessons that take place in rooms that are unsuitable, or too small and cramped for some of the larger groups. Since the last inspection, standards have improved considerably in Year 9, but accommodation is still a weakness.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

89. Competence in mathematics is above average. Nearly all subjects contribute well to numeracy skills. Pupils are able to use a range of mathematical skills across many subjects. They use graphs and manipulate formulae and equations in science and, in geography, they make good use of different approaches to analysing and illustrating data, being able to interpret and make comparisons. In history, graphs are used to show population growth and the number of casualties during World War 1. In art, pupils use their mathematical language to describe and interpret, while in physical education, they are able to use stopwatches, collect and analyse data and apply formulae with confidence.

### SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teachers plan and structure learning effectively, using a range of stimulating activities; some teaching is dull and results in pupils' lack of attention and interest
- Pupils' handbooks support independent learning skills and help pupils to use scientific vocabulary
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are gaining a good understanding of their own learning through the recently introduced 'level ladders'
- Marking is not effective as it does not tell pupils how they can improve
- Disruption to staffing and difficulties in recruiting staff have had a negative impact on management and standards

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

90. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. GCSE examination results were average. Boys performed better in science than in other subjects, with girls performing similarly to other subjects. More pupils, especially girls, gained the highest grades than seen nationally. Results improved in 2004.

### **Standards and achievement**

91. By the end of Year 9, current standards are lower than the 2003 test results because of disruption to staffing of the subject. All pupils can use word equations to explain chemical reactions, with higher attainers able to use balanced chemical equations. They can make predictions about investigations which use their scientific understanding. Higher attainers have above average understanding about parallel and series electric circuits. By the end of Year 11, standards are better than the previous results would indicate. This is because teaching has had less disruption and the recent syllabus is better matched to the needs of all pupils. Higher attainers reach high standards with their investigations. One pupil, for example, based a prediction on above-average understanding of electric circuits, making effective use of various formulae to calculate the effect on temperature of using different lengths of wire. All pupils have a good understanding of atomic structure, with lower attainers beginning to use chemical symbols, and naming atomic particles. Most pupils show secure understanding of science in their predictions and conclusions.
92. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils of different abilities, needs and backgrounds, but in a few lessons, boys are more ready than girls to contribute their ideas orally. Pupils use scientific vocabulary with increasing accuracy, and their literacy and numeracy skills are good. They plot graphs accurately, and by Year 11 use formulae really well to calculate quantities such as current.

### **Teaching and learning**

93. Teaching is not consistent within the department. In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting tasks which break learning into small steps. Lessons often begin with short snappy activities which grab pupils' attention, and prepare them for what will follow. In a Year 8 lesson about bacteria, pupils enjoyed racing against time to list by size a range of objects and organisms. The high-paced teaching ensured that by the end they had learnt much about the conditions bacteria need to grow. Most teachers make good use of ideas from the national strategy, such as sharing with pupils what they will learn, and using stimulating starter activities. They are not so successful in giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on their learning at the end of lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen when teachers had low expectations for pupils' behaviour. Disruptive behaviour is usually the result of dull activities that are not well structured to support learning. Pupils lose interest, misbehave and underachieve. Most pupils show positive attitudes to science, but a number of both girls and boys have a casual approach to learning.
94. Pupils benefit from using the 'pupil handbook', like a mini-textbook, providing pupils and parents with a very useful overview of each unit. Marking of work, however, does little to help pupils improve because it rarely goes beyond ticks or praise; teachers do not always explain the next learning step. Most pupils know their target level or grade, but do not know how to progress further. In Years 7 to 9, teachers have begun to introduce 'learning ladders' which explain to pupils what each National Curriculum level means. This is effective in helping pupils understand how to progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs. They know the pupils well and challenge them appropriately.

### **Leadership and management**

95. The enthusiastic new leadership has vision and has put in place a number of significant developments, linked to appropriate priorities, but more time is needed for them to have full impact. Over the last year, the department has experienced significant disruption because of high staff turnover and considerable difficulty in recruiting new staff. This has led to variation in the quality of teaching and learning. New staff have not received sufficient support. Not enough monitoring is carried out to check on pupils' learning or the quality of teaching, some of which is unsatisfactory. Support from senior management has had limited effect so far. Good use is being made of pupil data to identify underachievement. Pupils use computers for a variety of purposes, including data

logging, modelling, research and presentations. Since the previous inspection, computer resources have increased but standards and achievement have yet to improve.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, examination courses are offered in the applied ICT GCSE. Around a fifth of pupils in Years 10 and 11 take this option, which is equivalent to two GCSE passes at grades A\* -C. Pupils not following an examination course rely on their other subjects to cover the National Curriculum requirements.

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well
- The recent introduction of the national strategy and an examination course have started to raise standards
- The use of computers in other subjects is not monitored enough
- The work of most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not assessed to check how well they are progressing

### Commentary

#### Examination results

96. The applied GCSE in ICT has been introduced over the last two years and there are not yet any results.

#### Standards and achievement

97. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are able to create documents using a range of word-processing skills. Pupils can design business materials such as a restaurant menu and make comments about why they had produced it. Pupils seek the views of their potential audience on their design and layout and explain why they chose particular fonts. The wide variation in ability levels in classes is not addressed adequately, although there is good support for some pupils with special educational needs. By the end of Year 11, pupils following the examination course organise different types of information to produce professional promotional material and carry out the expected range of ICT tasks. For example, they use spreadsheets to record results and databases to record booking information for a hypothetical leisure park business. Pupils are able to analyse and improve drafts of their work. The achievement and standards of other pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not monitored and assessed so, although skills are developed, it is not clear how well.

#### Teaching and learning

98. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject which, when behaviour is well managed, they pass on successfully. Pupils are well prepared for examinations. In Years 7 to 9, pupils respond well when the national strategy is used. In a Year 9 lesson, the interest of pupils was immediately engaged by an effective starter activity, making a good link to number skills. Pupils focused very quickly because the class teacher gave very clear instructions. In a Year 7 lesson, the final part was used effectively by getting two pupils to demonstrate their presentations to the class. They analysed the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen images, leading to fruitful learning by all. Teachers are generally good at circulating around the class, monitoring progress and challenging pupils further. Some teaching was observed that, whilst satisfactory, was less successful because classroom management was not used well enough to focus pupils during whole-class teaching. The

layout of classrooms militates against good classroom management because teachers cannot see all the pupils. Where lessons do not adopt the principles of the national strategy, pupils are less motivated and their attitudes are less positive. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is underdeveloped and, although the school policy is applied, this is inadequate in telling pupils how they are doing and how to improve. Work tends to be marked with ticks alone or with questions such as "How could this be improved?" When such prompts were not followed up by the teacher, the pupils mainly ignored them and so did not learn how to improve their work.

99. In Years 10 and 11, pupils following the examination course benefit from good teaching and assessment which is focused on the examination requirements. However, the learning of two thirds of pupils (those not being examined in ICT) is dependent on the extent to which the planned ICT competence is actually taught through other subjects.

### **Leadership and management**

100. Leadership of the department has begun to implement the national strategy and has built a solid team of specialist teachers. The applied GCSE course has been successfully introduced. However, the leadership and management structure is new. Improvements such as the introduction of the national strategy have not yet had time to be seen in results and have only just begun to raise standards. The mapping of the use of ICT in other subjects is good, but its monitoring is embryonic and is currently a significant weakness as the achievement of most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not assessed or accredited. There has been improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection. The requirements of the National Curriculum are now met when subjects teach as the planning intends. An examination course is available to a minority of pupils and, following large scale investment, the number of computers exceeds the national average for secondary schools. However, these improvements have been rather slow.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

101. Across the curriculum, the ICT experience of pupils, whilst satisfactory, is too dependent on which teachers they have. Some subjects, such as art and music, use ICT to support pupils' learning very well. In Year 7 music, pupils were observed using computers to write compositions about fireworks. A range of subjects, including design and technology, English, geography, history and psychology, have good Intranet-based resources to support pupils' learning. This is particularly good in physical education. Overall, pupils' competence in using ICT is average.

### **HUMANITIES**

In addition to the focus subjects, one Year 11 psychology lesson was sampled. In this lesson, very good question and answer techniques, with a sharp focus on revision strategies and what to do to improve coursework, resulted in very good gains in understanding. Pupils were achieving very well and reaching standards well above average

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned and varied lessons ensure pupils achieve well
- Effective assessment helps some pupils to know the progress they are making
- Regular checking of teaching quality and the sharing of good practice is having a positive effect on standards
- Younger pupils do not have the opportunity to study the environment outside the classroom

## Commentary

### Examination results

102. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were average. Girls did better than boys but, overall, pupils underachieved in relation to their expected grades. In 2004, results were broadly similar.

### Standards and achievement

103. By the end of Year 9, the standard of pupils' work is above average. This shows good achievement since standards on entry to the school in geography are average. Pupils can describe and explain a range of geographical patterns and processes in some detail and can understand how widely-separated places in the world can be dependent on each other, such as the links in the fashion industry studied in Year 9 lessons. They can use a range of map work, graphical and diagrammatical skills. By the end of Year 11, standards are higher than the previous examination groups, mainly because of an improved curriculum. Pupils can present well-argued summaries and draw substantial conclusions supported by evidence. They can use a wide range of skills and identify strengths and weaknesses in their coursework investigations on urban land-use patterns in the Lichfield area.

### Teaching and learning

104. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use this well so that pupils improve their understanding and skills. Lessons are frequently well structured and delivered at a brisk pace to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. However, objectives for what is to be learned during the lesson are sometimes not detailed enough and not enough time is given at the end of a lesson to review what has been learned. Work from previous lessons is used effectively as a way of connecting pupils to new learning. Work sheets are well produced and match the needs of the pupils, whilst a good variety of teaching methods is used to maintain their interest. Important geographical words and their meanings form a key part of lessons. Work is marked regularly with useful comments to help pupils improve. Most pupils know the standard they are working at and their targets for improvement. This helps them to focus on improving their own work. However, assessment of pupils' work in Years 8 and 9 does not fully inform them how well they are doing or which aspects of their work need improving. Fieldwork for younger pupils is underdeveloped and so they do not have enough opportunity to put into practice the ideas and skills learnt in the classroom.

### Leadership and management

105. The new leadership is clear about how the department should move forward and a number of plans are successfully in place to achieve this. Standards are rising because the department has a clear and effective system for tracking pupils' progress and there is regular monitoring of teaching quality. This enables teachers to share ideas about what teaching approaches are effective.

## History

Provision in history is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is committed to raising standards and heightening interest in the subject
- Problems with staffing recruitment and teacher absence have hindered pupils' progress over time
- Teachers make good use of a variety of resources, including computers, to promote learning
- Pupils do not build on their classroom skills enough because homework is not monitored consistently and marking does not always inform pupils how to improve

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

106. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average, and were amongst the weakest in the school. Results rose slightly in 2004, particularly for boys.

### **Standards and achievement**

107. By the end of Year 9, pupils can select and combine historical information and make appropriate use of dates and terms. They know that some events, people and changes have been interpreted in different ways and they can suggest possible reasons for this. However, their factual recall is not always accurate, and quite a few pupils find difficulty in sustaining their concentration over time. By the end of Year 11, most pupils really enjoy history, but many of their answers tend to lack analytical depth. Although ready to follow the instructions of their teachers in lessons, some pupils lack the confidence or commitment required to pursue lines of historical enquiry independently. However, standards are rising and the current pupils are doing better than previous year groups did, but their achievement over time has been unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as their classmates because teachers suitably modify their work. The department is aware of the need to integrate more extension activities to enhance the performance of the highest attaining pupils.

### **Teaching and learning**

108. Teaching observed was satisfactory. There has been some disruption to teaching over the last few years and this has had a negative impact on pupils' achievement. The best teaching is based on a strong passion for the subject. Teachers possess a good level of subject knowledge and deliver well-structured lessons. Where teachers know and enthuse their pupils, very good relationships underpin firm classroom control. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within the department. Without strong classroom management and lively teaching, behaviour can quickly deteriorate and learning suffers. Teachers provide good opportunities to develop both ICT and literacy skills. However, teachers do not monitor homework rigorously enough so pupils do not get enough opportunities to enhance their skills or develop techniques of independent learning or extended writing. Although teachers are conscientious in checking books that are handed in, and grade levels and assessment criteria are shared with pupils, some marking fails to tell pupils what they need to do to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

109. Leadership is committed to raising standards and fostering a love of history, which is reflected in the very sizeable increase in the numbers taking GCSE history courses. The high quality expertise within the department is shared very well and has resulted in improved teaching. Clear policies and procedures underpin the drive to raise standards. Well-produced schemes of work are in place. Appropriate priorities, including the improvement of tracking procedures and data analysis, are being introduced. A series of staffing difficulties have lowered standards and curtailed the number of historical visits.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

The judgements apply to religious education both as a core subject and as a GCSE examination subject.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership is beginning to raise standards and GCSE results
- The great majority of pupils like the subject because lessons are interesting and varied, but a minority can behave badly when teaching is weaker
- Teachers' assessment of work in Years 7 to 9 does not tell pupils how well they are doing or how to get better
- Computers are not used enough for teaching and learning

### Commentary

#### Examination results

110. GCSE short course results in 2003 were below average. They are an improvement on the previous year. Results improved again in 2004.

#### Standards and achievement

111. By the end of Year 9, pupils are competent in reflecting and reacting personally to religious concepts such as re-incarnation or the impact of personal actions and choices. Pupils in Year 9 produced some high quality analytical work on the eightfold path and compared and contrasted Plato, Aristotle and Buddha in their 'Guide to Happiness'. There was some excellent writing from Year 7 pupils on ultimate questions and imaginative good quality analysis of 'The real me'. Pupils in Year 10 are doing better than those in Year 11 because of the improved scheme of work. In Year 10 there was some well above average work on a Christian view of good and evil. By the end of Year 11, pupils are in line with expectations for this stage of the course but struggle to recall basic terms such as sanctity of life when discussing euthanasia.

#### Teaching and learning

112. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 because lessons are generally more interesting and follow a tighter structure. Teachers' high expectations in a Year 7 lesson led to pupils being challenged to think productively about the great unanswerable questions. Pictures are used creatively to stimulate good discussion about the concept of Karma. In Year 9 an imaginative 'This is your life' task was used to introduce the Buddha through research. In Years 7 to 9, teachers promote stimulating discussions, which extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. In Years 10 and 11, teachers do not always ensure that written work is sufficient in scope and quality to provide a suitable basis for future revision and learning. Computers are not used enough in teaching or learning, although there are isolated examples of good work produced by pupils for homework, which is set regularly. Some learning, especially in GCSE groups is not as good as it should be because some teachers do not manage the bad behaviour of a minority of pupils well enough.

#### Leadership and management

113. Leadership is developing effective teamwork. Teachers engage in very good self-critical analysis that has given rise to key points in the development plan. The department handbook and newly revised schemes of work provide an effective and detailed guide to teachers. The induction of staff

new to the department is good. Strategies are now in place to improve results at GCSE. The department is not yet using assessment methods that help teachers and pupils to plan work, set personal targets and raise standards.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective leadership maintains a strong momentum for improvement and consistently good teaching
- Above average GCSE results and good pupil achievement have been sustained in most course areas
- Pupils learn well because teachers pass on their secure knowledge effectively
- Assessment and recording practice is mostly strong though its use to help pupils improve is weak
- Some teachers do not manage behaviour successfully so learning can be disrupted occasionally

### Commentary

#### Examination results

114. Most pupils take full GCSE courses and a smaller number take a short GCSE course. Results at GCSE have been consistently above national average in recent years in most of the different courses, including resistant materials, graphic products, electronic products, textiles technology and food technology. In 2004, food technology results fell.

#### Standards and achievement

115. Pupils come to the school with weaker than average practical skills and understanding in the subject and quickly make good progress helped by a broad and varied curriculum. In the first three years, pupils begin to appreciate the design process and acquire sound practical skills including those for ICT. The system of pupils rotating round the different strands of the subject in Years 7 to 9 does mean a lack of regular practice with different tools and materials. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make good progress where they receive effective support in completing major project work. In Year 10, pupils have to relearn some of those skills such as soldering, necessary in electronic products, but ultimately pupils develop above average levels of competence in their chosen course option. By the end of Year 11, standards of designing and making are above average. Good use is made of ICT overall and in resistant materials some pupils are using computer aided design software and computer controlled machines to produce accurate, well-presented projects.

#### Teaching and learning

116. All teachers are specialists and able to give constructive advice and support to pupils working through their design and make activities. The well-prepared project briefs used in all years, give pupils a clear picture of the tasks and the way they will be assessed. Less developed are the assessments during a project that help pupils continuously improve their practical and written work. The senior staff teach very well. They have high expectations about behaviour and the quality of pupils' work and consequently ensure pupils take care and produce good quality outcomes. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on mechanisms where the presentation was very well supported by

models of levers and mechanical toys and pupils were able to reflect on and consolidate their understanding of the topic. Less experienced staff are still developing strategies to manage better the minor disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils.

### Leadership and management

117. Leadership is underpinned by drive, clarity of vision and enthusiasm and is very well supported by other teachers with responsibility. The readiness to reflect on and improve practice directly contributes to the good standards that have been sustained since the last inspection. Management systems are good and reflect the conscientious and well-organised approach of the staff. Although the home economics section exists within a wider design and technology department, the close working and harmonious relationships between staff ensure there is a coherent approach to the subject. The shared schemes of work and assessment systems are well documented and teachers and technicians make good use of the much improved accommodation and resources, particularly in the new workrooms. The department makes effective use of ICT both in teaching and learning and in administration. Staff are endeavouring to improve resources for computer-aided manufacture.

### VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The inspection focused on art and design, music and performing arts.

#### Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the best lessons, pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic in response to the effective teaching
- Leadership is reflective and visionary and staff share a commitment to improvement
- Teachers' on-going assessments are not used consistently to plan learning
- The broad curriculum allows pupils to choose from a wide variety of media which enhances their learning
- In Years 7 to 9 pupils have insufficient information about their achievements and how they can improve

#### Commentary

##### Examination results

118. Results have been consistently high for several years. In 2003, GCSE results were significantly above average. Girls' results were better than boys', as is the case nationally but, while girls attained above the average for girls, boys did less well than boys nationally. In 2004, results were much lower because of the particular skills of those pupils. However, a large proportion of pupils gained the higher A\* to B grades in both years.

##### Standards and achievement

119. By the end of Year 9, pupils demonstrate increasingly more advanced drawing skills and their research work is linked to work of the artists they are studying. Most pupils have good quality work and annotations in their sketchbooks and portfolios. Examples include studies of buildings by Gaudi, awareness of different cultural traditions in studies of tribal masks and the use of computer software to repeat patterns and manipulate images. Pupils' use of technical vocabulary to describe their own and others' work is developing well. Some high quality work by pupils is displayed throughout the

school. However, in some lessons pupils did not always make enough progress. By the end of Year 11, thematic enquiry is a strong feature of pupils' work and their investigations result in 'final' pieces of work that incorporate a wide range of materials and processes. Considering the wide range of ability when pupils enter the GCSE course in Year 10, pupils are achieving well because of the imaginative teaching.

### Teaching and Learning

120. Much of the teaching is of high quality and results in good learning and behaviour and positive attitudes, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers offer pupils a broad curriculum and interesting and challenging work. A relative weakness is the inconsistencies of planning and the assessment arrangements for younger pupils. Teachers' expectations are at times too low and the work set does not always take enough account of what pupils have already achieved. In the best lessons, pupils achieve really well because teachers prompt them to give extended answers and keep them alert and involved in one another's comments. The use of assessment information, to match work to pupils' current achievements and help them understand how to improve, is used well in Years 10 and 11 but not used consistently in Years 7 to 9.

### Leadership and Management

121. Leadership is purposeful and ambitious. There is good teamwork and a shared commitment to improvement. The inconsistencies in curriculum planning and in the use of assessment highlight a weaker aspect of the monitoring programme but plans are in place to tackle this.

### Music

Provision in music is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching is enabling pupils to achieve very well
- Pupils use computers well to develop their composition and performing skills
- Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal and social development
- Unsatisfactory accommodation limits the opportunities for group work and independent instrumental and vocal study

### Commentary

#### Examination results

122. GCSE results in 2003 were above average with higher than average numbers entered. Results in 2004 improved significantly.

#### Standards and achievement

123. Pupils are encouraged to improve their capabilities in all aspects of music, but standards are particularly high in composing and performing. The regular use of computers in lessons enables pupils to develop new composing skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a really good understanding of the key elements of music because of the well-planned course of study. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 can accurately identify many technical features of music associated with the Baroque period. Pupils with special educational needs, and those identified as particularly talented, achieve as well as their classmates because teachers prepare well-matched work and give very effective support during lessons.

## Teaching and learning

124. Teachers are excellent musicians and through expert demonstrations, motivate pupils to try their best. Very good questioning and explanations by teachers develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of music history and techniques. Teachers effectively share learning objectives and encourage pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning. They respond very well to the pupils' own questions, so that pupils are able to arrive at the answers for themselves. Relationships are good and create an effective learning environment. However, in a small number of lessons a few pupils who constantly chatter or shout out answers disrupt learning. Marking of work in Years 10 and 11 is helpful and gives guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work. Teachers do not always assess how well pupils are doing so, on occasions, progress is not clear.

## Leadership and management

125. Departmental priorities are shared and based on raising standards. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about music from other cultures, and music makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Very effective links with the community have also been established. There is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning within the department. The cramped accommodation means that group work is difficult to organise and older pupils' studies are hampered because there are not enough rooms available for pupils to use. The quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen since the last inspection but issues raised about soundproofing have not been resolved.

## Performing arts

Provision in vocational performing arts is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Very high
Achievement	Not applicable	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Not applicable	Very good

  

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards and very good achievement in performing arts are strengths of the school
- Pupils and teachers share a passion for the subject and they inspire others
- The arts make a significant contribution to the life of the school and local community
- Leadership is ambitious, dynamic and visionary and results in the highest possible standards
- Studio accommodation is inadequate and places limitations on drama and dance activities

## Commentary

### Examination results

126. The 2003 results were very high, in the top five per cent in the country. Half the pupils entered gained the highest A\* grades. Results were similar in 2004. Most pupils did considerably better in performing arts than in their other examinations. Very few boys choose the subject.

### Standards and achievement

127. Pupils enter Year 10 with limited experiences of producing work that sets out to combine different art forms. Many therefore have little idea of what the course will demand of them. Pupils' passion and commitment is strongly communicated when they talk about their coursework, through their participation in practice sessions and through the regular performances that take place in the school and local community. Exciting drama presentations display a good understanding of character and role. The performing arts are a vital part of what the school is about and play a significant part in the lives of pupils. Their work shows imagination and creativity and a deepening sense of the power of communication through dance, music and drama. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as

well as others because they are able to express themselves equally, without the restrictions that writing or reading difficulties can sometimes create.

### Teaching and learning

128. Teachers share very high expectations and they work very well together when classes are team-taught. The pace and range of work covered in lessons results in very good learning. Coursework components and the marking criteria are thoroughly taught and understood by pupils. For example, a critique, of a videoed performance of a past pupil, enabled pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of structure, dramatic form and choreography, and their understanding of symbolism. The work pupils produce in lessons and in their own time plays a big part in the spiritual and cultural life of the school and, because teachers and pupils are inspired by each other's work, the relationship is dynamic and creative.

### Leadership and management

129. The performing arts department is held in high regard by members of the local community. Leadership is ambitious, visionary and dedicated to maintaining this reputation and continuing to raise the standards and status of the arts. The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs of pupils very well. Links with the local theatre and arts organisations are a feature of the course currently and there are plans to increase the scope and access to arts industries in the future. Access to computers and technical equipment is appropriate. The accommodation for drama and dance is unsatisfactory. The floor space is too small and restricts pupils' creative performance work, but this is well managed by staff so that the impact on achievement is minimised.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

The judgements apply to physical education as a core subject and as a GCSE examination subject.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils in Year 10 and 11 core physical education have excellent opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities at a very good level
- An outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities has a good take up by pupils
- Enthusiastic, well planned teaching results in high standards
- For most pupils, knowledge and understanding of health-related fitness and their sports' vocabulary are insufficiently developed

### Commentary

#### Examination results

130. GCSE results in 2003 were above average and the 2004 results were similar.

#### Standards and achievement

131. By the end of Year 9, pupils' performance and knowledge and understanding of sports are broadly average. They play the major sports well and most swim strongly. Their achievement is good. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE practical work are well above average as pupils on the course are very capable in team sports, particularly rugby, netball, soccer and basketball. Their theory work is above average, as they describe performance clearly using the correct sports' vocabulary. In Year 11, playing skills in core physical education are above average. Pupils' achievement is good. They play rugby, basketball, lacrosse, football, hockey and netball to a good



standard, with several playing well above average at representative level. Pupils also perform well in swimming, water polo and racket sports. GCSE pupils' sports' vocabulary is weak, particularly in their anatomy and physiology work.

### **Teaching and learning**

132. In the most effective lessons, well planned tasks made pupils work hard, whilst enjoying their learning. In a Year 9 swimming lesson, pupils had to tread water for five minutes, before describing what affect their own style had on their body heat. This not only helped them choose the best technique, but also gave them good understanding of the principles of heat loss. During lessons and extra-curricular games, it was clear that pupils are very positive about their work. The great enthusiasm seen in Year 11 girls' pop lacrosse, with rapid end-to-end play and a real competitive edge, led to considerable improvement in skill. In the best sessions, those who are not taking part generally work well, writing reports on activities. In the majority of lessons, the warm-up activities were often not explained and opportunities were missed to learn and talk about health-related fitness. Pupils generally know how well they are doing, because of good assessment, but a significant number in each year group are not aware of what they need to do to improve to the next level.

### **Leadership and management**

133. The department plans are very thorough and it is developing the new Staffordshire gymnastics syllabus well. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is very well organised. This has had a good effect on classroom practice. The day-to-day organisation is very good, providing a strong programme for all pupils. This was seen at its best in the outstanding core activities in Year 11, where squash, water polo and lacrosse were among 12 activities taking place in the afternoon. There is also a wide range of excellent extra-curricular sports activities, including the Junior Sports Leaders Award. The uptake is very good and the school holds the Sportsmark as a result. The talented sports players have opportunities to play at international, county and district levels and links with local sports clubs are very strong.

### **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The main focus for the inspection was the vocational performing arts course and the vocational applied ICT course reported on in the earlier subject sections. The school also offers other vocational courses that provide pupils with specific skills and a good insight into the requirements of the workplace. Discussion with pupils and teachers indicate the pupils are responding well to the opportunities and that the courses have improved pupil motivation. In a GCSE business studies lesson sampled, pupils were preparing for an examination by revising aspects of finance such as profit and loss accounts. The achievement of pupils was satisfactory because the teacher worked hard to support individuals and tasks set were clearly related to the topic. However many pupils did not know or remember as much as was anticipated. Standards were in line with course expectations.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship, careers and work-related learning (WRL) are taught in one lesson per week. Tutorial time also supports this. The overall time allocation is on the low side to deliver all aspects of the courses successfully. The focus of the inspection was citizenship. A small number of PSHE lessons were observed. Teaching was satisfactory in these lessons and pupils learned and achieved soundly as a result.

## Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

  

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

### Main weaknesses

- Assessment procedures do not provide the necessary information for meaningful judgements about pupils' progress
- The skills of enquiry and communication are not being developed so pupils underachieve in this important aspect of the course
- The course requirements are not being fulfilled because of lack of time and weak monitoring of teaching

### Commentary

#### Standards and achievement

134. Pupils have insufficient opportunity to experience citizenship education and cannot therefore raise their standards enough. In Years 7 and 8, the standard of work was average. Standards in Years 9 to 11 could only be assessed by looking at what was available of pupils' work since September. This was almost exclusively PSHE rather than citizenship. Several aspects of the course requirements have not been covered so pupils are not making enough progress.

#### Teaching and learning

135. The citizenship lessons which took place during the inspection were satisfactory overall but there is insufficient coverage of the required areas of study. Over time, teaching has been unsatisfactory. Citizenship is included in subject schemes of work, chiefly through geography, history and religious education, but opportunities are missed in other areas. Analysis of departmental literature shows that there is a misunderstanding of the key requirement that citizenship must be the prime focus of a lesson and not incidental. For example, the history department refers to medieval government and kingship, which is history not citizenship. The English department considers its contribution to citizenship in detail, focusing on skills of enquiry and communication. These are key skills in the second strand of citizenship education, but they are not learned or assessed through discrete specific teaching.

#### Leadership and management

136. The curriculum is not fully implemented or monitored. A very good handbook and guide to teachers exists but this has had insufficient impact. Issues of progression from Years 7 to 11, where pupils are meant to re-visit topics, are not addressed because not enough time is available to deal with both PSHE and citizenship. There is no coherent scheme to provide secure foundations on which to base assessment and no evidence from pupils' folders that they are actively involved in building their own record of participation as is intended. There are good opportunities for some pupils to develop active citizenship through work experience and the school council. In addition, there are various other good quality events such as the army day, charity events and contacts with the local hospice. However, these are not woven into a coherent scheme that takes account of all the pupils in school.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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.

Most sixth form subjects were not reported on in the last inspection report so a judgement for progress has not always been given.

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

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	8	87.5	80.1	25	23.7	36.3	29.9
Biology	14	78.6	65.2	7.1	11.1	22.1	20.6
Business studies	2	100.0	76.4	0.0	16.3	20.0	26.2
Chemistry	7	100.0	72.7	28.6	13.9	37.1	24.1
English Language and Literature	13	84.6	85.9	0.0	19.1	23.8	30.2
Design and Technology	2	100.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	30.0	25.3
French	2	50.0	78.2	50.0	18.9	25.0	27.6
Geography	10	90.0	74.3	10.0	19.8	30.0	26.5
General Studies	10	70.0	73.9	10.0	17.8	24.0	25.7
Mathematics	33	45.5	61.9	12.1	17.1	15.8	22.1
Other Sciences	8	75.0	71.4	0.0	15.8	21.3	24.3
Physics	8	75.0	68.6	12.5	14.4	21.3	22.7
Religious Studies	2	100.0	80.2	0.0	22.6	35.0	29.8
Sports/PE Studies	3	66.7	73.2	0.0	11.4	20.0	23.1

### Level 3 GCE A-Level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	23	100.0	98.6	43.5	50.2	91.3	87.5
Biology	20	100.0	96.4	35.0	39.2	79.0	78.6
Business	7	92.3	61.5	30.8	12.0	70.8	57.3
Chemistry	12	100.0	97.6	41.7	49.0	86.7	84.9
Communication Studies	3	100.0	99.4	0.0	37.8	46.7	82.1
English/English Literature	25	100.0	99.5	16.0	36.3	70.4	80.9
French	5	100.0	100.0	80.0	51.5	96.0	87.6
Design and Technology	29	100.0	97.8	27.6	35.0	74.5	77.9
General Studies	40	92.5	94.7	20.0	31.0	70.0	73.1
Geography	27	100.0	98.7	55.6	44.5	91.1	84.0
German	1	100.0	98.4	0.0	47.9	80.0	84.8
History	4	100.0	99.0	25.0	44.6	80.0	84.6
Mathematics	14	100.0	96.7	71.4	55.6	100.0	88.8

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Other Sciences	31	100.0	97.3	51.6	41.6	82.6	80.3
Performing Arts	5	100.0	85.4	20.0	26.9	72.0	74.0
Physics	15	86.7	97.4	26.7	42.7	66.7	81.8
Religious Studies	1	100.0	98.8	0.0	46.7	80.0	85.6
Sociology	1	100.0	98.2	0.0	44.3	40.0	83.6
Sports/PE Studies	19	94.7	98.0	26.3	30.9	73.7	75.2
Travel and Tourism	1	100.0	63.5	0.0	6.4	80.0	53.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The English language and literature course is a popular choice for sixth form study and, along with French, was the focus for the inspection. In addition, one lesson of A-level German was sampled. In the Year 13 German lesson, teaching was very good. Standards of attainment were in line with the national average, which reflected good progress for most students. The students enjoyed and responded well to the challenging teaching.

### English language and literature

Provision in English language and literature is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are knowledgeable and this is leading to students being challenged to reach higher levels
- Students achieve very well in their understanding of specialist subject vocabulary because of the clarity of teaching and constant reinforcement of terminology in lessons
- Some students have difficulty in structuring essays and in referring to texts to justify their views

### Commentary

#### Examination results

137. Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were below average. In 2002 results were well above average and provisional results for 2004 show a significant improvement on the 2003 results.

#### Standards and achievement

138. Students' work shows extensive and well-produced coursework, a very good awareness of technical language and an accuracy in using it. Many students have lively ideas and are confident and articulate in presenting them orally. This was exemplified in a Year 13 lesson on the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy where nearly all students spoke very maturely and perceptively about some complex imagery. They had a very good grasp of tone and mood and the linguistic devices used to create them. Lower attaining students have some weaknesses in structuring essays and in using quotations and lack the higher order skills normally required for this course. Students are accepted onto the AS-level course with a wide range of abilities and interests, several with a grade C in English at GCSE, and these students struggle to keep up.

### Teaching and learning

139. Teachers are knowledgeable and their enthusiasm engenders very positive attitudes to English from students. Lessons are notably well planned and organised. There is a good variety of activities in lessons and teachers challenge the students to work through problems for themselves. A particular strength of teaching is the use made of syllabus-grade criteria in marking work and in evaluating students' contributions. A weaker aspect of teaching is that evaluations of what has been achieved in lessons are not sufficiently specific.

### Leadership and management

140. Clear guidance on the syllabus and on texts is available in the departmental handbook. The teachers allocated to sixth form classes are all well qualified. They have been well trained in examination-grade criteria and syllabus requirements. A good range of data is kept on students' progress and there is a good overview of the standards being attained by each class. Teaching has remained good since the last inspection and standards have improved.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

141. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average. Nearly all subjects contribute well to students' literacy skills. Students are able to write well-argued extended essays and they select and order information well. In most lessons, students were taking clear and helpful notes. Teachers are developing students' oral skills well and encouraging them to talk through issues and come to conclusions themselves. Subject terminology is well taught.

### French

Provision in French is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and pass this on well to students
- As French is used exclusively as the language of instruction, students' listening is well developed
- Students make good progress with reading and writing French because of the effective teaching
- Some lessons are too teacher led so students are not always involved enough in their own learning

### Commentary

#### Examination results

142. A-level results in 2003 were above average and were similar in 2004.

#### Standards and achievement

143. Standards observed during the inspection were above average, representing good achievement for students whose overall attainment on entry to the A-level course is average. Students have a broad working vocabulary, very good listening and reading comprehension skills and they write with grammatical accuracy. Students' speaking skills are less well developed, however, and the majority struggle for accuracy and lack confidence when asked to speak spontaneously.

#### Teaching and learning

144. Teaching has some very good elements. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use French exclusively in lessons to promote very good listening skills and present a very good role model to the students. On occasion, however, teachers dominate the lessons and this tends to stifle

the students' participation in their own independent learning. Teaching is well prepared, demanding and rigorous, as a result of which students have positive attitudes to their studies. Good but limited use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning, for example in the teaching of grammar. Very good relationships exist between the teachers and students. Students are well known as individuals and are encouraged to give of their best. They are well prepared for the A-Level examinations and know what they have to do achieve to their potential

### Leadership and management

145. As in the main school, leadership presents a knowledgeable role model. Very good teamwork is evident and the desire to improve standards is seen in the current investigation of a more suitable examination syllabus, better to serve the needs of students. Schemes of work are clear and useful and teachers know what aspects and topics of the course they are to cover. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to identify areas for development or to share the considerable amounts of very good practice. Work experience visits for some Year 12 students to Limoges are organised and these students benefit from the experience enormously in terms of speaking skills and confidence. Above average standards and effective teaching have been maintained since the last inspection.

### MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good level of teachers' knowledge leads to clear explanations of concepts
- Good, helpful marking by teachers guides students closely on mistakes made and what is needed to improve
- Computers are not sufficiently used to consolidate or develop students' learning
- Good leadership of the department has a clear vision for improvement

### Commentary

#### Examination results

146. In 2003, the results at A2 level were well above average. In 2004, the results were lower. At AS level the results were below average in 2003 and in 2004 they improved.

#### Standards and achievement

147. A small number of students enter the AS level course with below average standards in mathematics. These students find many aspects of the course too difficult. However, the majority, who enter with mathematical skills at least in line with the national average, achieve well. They attain above average standards partly because they have the skills to access the course fully. This variation in intake does reflect the difference in standards observed in lessons compared to that in examinations. In Year 12, students' algebraic and functions skills are average. They can solve quadratic equations by factorisation, by formula and completing the square. However, in their transformations work, students struggle to visualise the graphs to be produced. By Year 13, students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of previous work when introduced to a new topic. They have above average differentiation skills and use these well in relation to everyday examples of exponential growth and decay. Lower attaining students' statistical skills are significantly weaker and they struggle with many aspects of the course.

## Teaching and learning

148. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. Consequently students benefit from good clear explanations, allowing them to achieve well. Students often respond well to questions, they volunteer suggestions articulately and freely participate in discussions. The lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned effectively, allowing students to build on each stage of new learning before progressing to the next. Homework is set regularly to consolidate and extend new work introduced in the lesson. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to involve students more actively in lessons or further develop their independent study skills. Good use is made of examination papers to familiarise students with what will be expected of them. ICT is not used sufficiently in lessons either as a teaching aid or by students to strengthen their learning. The marking of students' work contains good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. Some students find the move between GCSE and AS level difficult. Teaching and learning styles are different and consequently learning suffers in the initial months, especially for the lower attainers who do not always receive enough support to make this change.

## Leadership and management

149. Good leadership, with a clear vision for improvement, results in teachers working well as a team. There are effective procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through Years 12 and 13. Lesson observations take place regularly with feedback given to teachers on how to improve. Schemes of work are out of date and do not give enough guidance on approaches and resources to further enhance teaching and learning. An extra lesson after school takes place for students studying further mathematics and teachers give freely of their time outside lessons to support students. This is really appreciated by the students.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

150. Students' mathematical skills are generally above those seen in other sixth forms. Subjects make a satisfactory contribution to numeracy across the curriculum. Training and support for numeracy in other subjects has taken place. However, only in a minority of subjects has numeracy become fully embedded into schemes of work or lesson planning. In art, this has taken place; students regularly use mathematical language in describing shape and they calculate scale factors and proportion proficiently.

## SCIENCE

Physics was the focus of the inspection. A-level biology and chemistry were sampled. In the Year 13 biology lesson, the sound and well-informed teaching on the advantages and disadvantages of different types of microscopy enabled students to make satisfactory progress. The Year 13 chemistry lesson was good, because the teacher effectively covered revision materials that enabled students to prepare well for an examination. Standards seen were above the national average.

## Physics

Provision in physics is satisfactory.

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' interest in physics is encouraged by the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject
- ICT is not sufficiently used as a teaching and learning tool to help students learn
- A good departmental review takes place to identify strengths and weaknesses within teaching and learning
- Not enough support is given for lower attaining students to achieve as well as they can

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

151. In 2003, the results at A-level were below the national average and in 2004 these results fell, further continuing the downward trend.

#### **Standards and achievement**

152. Standards on entry to the course are below average. Some students are accepted on to the AS level course having attained only grade C in physics at GCSE level. In Year 12, students make satisfactory progress overall but they struggle with many aspects. They can interpret voltage/current graphs for a metal and diode, and carry out investigations on the effect of temperature on these. However, in their practical work their below average standards are clearly shown as students present their results often with units missing from tables and lines of best fit not accurately drawn on graphs. By Year 13, standards remain below average. Students in their circular motion work can explain centripetal acceleration but lower attainers are unsure of the units and are confused between the use of mass or weight in forces diagrams. Overall achievement is satisfactory but many students struggle with important aspects of the course.

#### **Teaching and learning**

153. Teachers have a good rapport with the students and aid their interest and achievement by having a good understanding of physics. In lessons, students participate in discussions and put forward their understanding clearly. The lessons proceed with a brisk pace and students make sound use of previous learning when studying a new topic. However, teachers do not always match the work well to the needs of all students. Helpful constructive marking is apparent on some students' work but is not consistent. It does not inform students of the grade they are working at or what they have to do to achieve the next grade. Students have not yet developed strong independent learning skills and opportunities are missed to get students to prepare for topics in advance of a lesson. The notes made by a minority of students in their files and the presentation of some of their homework does not assist later revision. Students have a satisfactory experience of practical investigations, which assists their achievement in the practical examination.

#### **Leadership and management**

154. Departmental review takes place and because it is thorough and accurate, it has identified some key areas to move the department forward. Schemes of work have not yet been developed to guide the teaching team on how best to support students of all abilities. Lesson observations take place and feedback is given. However, not enough monitoring of students' work takes place to ensure standards are being maintained. Teachers make themselves available out of lessons to support students. Lower attaining students moving between GCSE and AS level lack additional support to assist this step. Consequently, some students do not do as well as they should and they find this lost time difficult to make up later. ICT is used effectively in investigations in the form of data loggers.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

This was not a focus for the inspection.

### **HUMANITIES**

In addition to the focus subjects of history and religious studies, one lesson was sampled in each of geography and psychology. In the Year 13 geography lesson, standards were above average. Teaching was excellent. The lesson was excellently planned and organised and the teacher challenged and engaged students and enabled them to make really good progress. In the Year 13



psychology lesson, very good teaching promoted good learning and high levels of interest amongst students of varying abilities.

## History

Provision in history is satisfactory.

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good command of the subject and use resources well to capture the interest of students
- The subject is very popular and students enjoy lessons and are keen to learn
- Homework is not always rigorously monitored, so some students' assignments have too many errors
- Lower attaining students are not given enough support to develop their independent learning skills

### Commentary

#### Examination results

155. In 2003, results at A-level were just below the national average. Girls performed above the national average and boys below. In 2004, A-level results declined. Results at AS level in 2004 improved.

#### Standards and achievement

156. Encouraged by their teachers, students are learning to think creatively and to consider different historical approaches and interpretations. By evaluating a broad range of evidence, they heighten their appreciation of historical causation and the issues surrounding historical controversies. However, written work does not yet demonstrate the ability of all Year 12 students to challenge the assumptions implied in a question, or to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively. Some of the students now taking history in the sixth form enter with weak GCSE results or no background in history at GCSE level. Unless cajoled, weaker students tend to be passive learners and do not achieve as well as expected. They lack confidence in developing their ideas in class discussions. By Year 13, students are adopting a more critical approach. They produce convincing arguments and reach coherent conclusions with greater ease.

#### Teaching and learning

157. Well-informed teachers base their lessons on an interesting range of resource materials. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive and students feel that their teachers are very approachable. Where teaching is most successful, lessons are well planned and carefully structured to motivate and inform. Students are challenged to use their reflective skills and are encouraged to partake in discussion. Whilst lessons are accessible to all, lower attainers are not always provided with the level of study skills training they need to maximise independent learning opportunities, or the quality of notes required for revision and exam preparation. Teachers generally provide students with helpful feedback, with detailed indicators for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their work. However, there are not enough opportunities for assessing students' work and for more rigorous monitoring of homework assignments. Some students' lack of organisational skills means that they fail to meet deadlines or even produce work.

#### Leadership and management

158. Policies and procedures are well developed and appropriate priorities have been set for the future. Leadership's active promotion of the subject is reflected in the high take-up of students in Year 12. One negative impact of the increase in popularity of history is that the 47 AS-level students are

grouped in two large classes, which restricts learning on occasions. Over the past three years, staffing difficulties within the department have disrupted the quality of provision, but this is now managed effectively because of a clear vision for improving teaching and raising standards. The department scrutinizes performance data, but is not yet identifying underachievers in the early stages of the course.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Religious education is provided for all students in the sixth form and meets statutory requirements.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have been below average but are improving because of effective teaching
- Enthusiastic teaching challenges students to think deeply and defend their conclusions
- Students are well prepared to tackle their coursework essay because of knowledgeable teaching and effective leadership

### Commentary

#### Examination results

159. Results in 2003 were below average but improved in 2004. Since the groups are relatively small and contain a wide range of abilities, comparisons with national averages need to be treated with caution. The departmental analysis of results, however, shows that a few students have not met their target grade and obtained lower grades in comparison with their other subjects.

#### Standards and achievement

160. There is a wide range of ability on entry to the examination course and this is reflected in a variation of standards. In an imaginatively devised interview task, students demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the ethics of Fletcher. Students are developing personal files that contain good course notes, forming a good basis for future learning, and their assessments show good progress since the start of the year. Standards in Year 13 vary from above average to below. The course is very challenging for lower attaining students who find the construction and defence of philosophical argument particularly hard. They are however persevering and are on course to achieve well in relation to their individual abilities.

#### Teaching and learning

161. In Year 13 lessons, good teaching is characterised by an enquiring critical approach and constant consideration of how to challenge students to develop the skills and techniques that will be required for examination success. The subject is approached with enthusiasm and rigour. Skilled use of examples and anecdotes helps the students understand their current topic of conscience in the work of Freud, Butler and other philosophers. The topical debate on homosexuality in the Church of England illustrated how one faith could have such varied views, all stemming from claims to conscience. Guilt was well illustrated by reference to its ineffectual nature in the face of an eating habit. Students responded well, worked willingly with the teacher and each other and showed growing understanding as the lesson progressed. They collaborated well to produce a strategy for their coursework essay and were able to select key points from different philosophers to help them in their preparation. The pace and challenge was good for most students, but the lower attainers found the challenging nature of the teaching very demanding and needed more guidance and help to understand their work fully.

## Leadership and management

162. The staff team meet regularly to review their work and are conversant with the guidance from examiners on how to prepare their students effectively. The induction of new staff, including newly qualified members of the department, is thorough and effective. The team is reflective and self-critical in the constant pursuit of better results through improved teaching and learning. The current team is relatively new. Their determination and enthusiasm to raise standards shines through and is already having a good impact.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The product design course of design and technology was the focus for the inspection.

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership is enthusiastic and effective and has resulted in the course becoming increasingly popular
- Students do well in both the resistant materials and graphics options
- Teaching is good in the way it supports students' project work
- Teachers do not always appreciate the need to help students with their study and note-taking skills

### Commentary

#### Examination results

163. Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were in line with the national average. In 2004, results were similar.

#### Standards and achievement

164. All students on the product design course are on target to complete their major project successfully. The higher attaining students in Year 13 have very good graphical technique with a range of formal and free hand skills. They combine this with a good understanding of the design process and are able to develop and evaluate their ideas well. All students demonstrate secure ICT skills though the lower attaining in the Year 12 AS course have weak note-taking skills which limits their recording of information and development of ideas. The majority of Year 13 students are working at higher standards than predictions based on their GCSE results. The school's open access policy enables students with widely different abilities to follow the AS course. Most of those students are coping well and making good progress.

#### Teaching and learning

165. The specialist teachers have good theoretical understanding and are able to give students effective support in practical work in graphics and resistant materials. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson, where students presented design ideas they had developed in conjunction with their clients. The teacher gave constructive advice about, for example, the limitations of materials and methods of joining those materials. Teachers use varied resources, including ICT, to provide students with good background knowledge of design schools and technological developments. The effectiveness of some of that teaching is reduced by insufficient attention to students' note taking and study skills. Consequently, students have too few useful notes for future use.

## Leadership and management

166. Leadership is characterised by a clear vision for raising standards and ensuring high quality teaching. All teachers share an enthusiasm for their subject that has contributed to its popularity with students. Staff work well together to plan schemes of work and ensure that students understand the assessment requirements at each stage of their project work.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was the focus for the inspection. One music lesson and one performing arts lesson were sampled. In the Year 12 AS level music lesson, good teaching was reflected in students' secure knowledge of the use of musical devices for composition. Very good questioning developed students' skills in using computers and keyboards in their work. Relationships were purposeful and students achieved well. In the Year 13 performing arts lesson, students achieved really well because of exciting, inspirational teaching. Standards were very high because of the very good teaching taking place. Students were very enthusiastic and rightly proud of their creative work.

### Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achieve well from their various starting points
- A very good range of teaching and learning styles are used to good effect
- There is insufficient room for students to use specialist facilities outside their lesson times
- Leadership is purposeful and analytical, and teamwork is very good

### Commentary

#### Examination results

167. Results in 2003 were average. The average point score for girls was above the average. There were very few boys. In 2004, all but a few students achieved their predicted grade and several exceeded it.

#### Standards and achievement

168. Students who go on into Year 13 make good progress and work confidently with a range of media, for example different printmaking techniques, clay modelling and ceramic ware. Opportunities for using computers have improved very recently and digital media is set to become an even stronger feature of students' work. Opportunities to strengthen students' analytical skills are developed well, through the way teachers plan and structure lessons and students' learning. They are expected to write at length and to annotate sketchbooks and to contribute to vigorous discussions about their own and others' work. The range of teaching and learning styles helps students to learn and achieve well. Outside lessons, students are disadvantaged by not having ready access to specialist facilities where they can continue to work in their own time and where they can develop their independent learning skills. Each year a few students are given the opportunity to join courses in Year 12 without having taken the subject in Years 10 and 11. Some of these struggle to keep pace with the demands of the subject and do not continue into Year 13.

#### Teaching and learning

169. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise and this enables students to choose to work with a variety of different media and materials. Teachers work very effectively together so students' work and progress are monitored well. This careful monitoring enabled the majority of

students to achieve well in the most recent examinations. Teaching is lively and energetic, with high expectations of students and their participation. Some students capitalise on their own personal interests and teachers' expertise by choosing to work in ways that cross the arts disciplines. This is a feature of work seen in the school and some projects in the local community. Imaginative teaching allowed one student to take her passion for music into her artwork by layering images - using collage and montage techniques and digital media. Teachers ensured the work was underpinned by an increasing awareness of, and interest in, the work of contemporary artists and designers.

### Leadership and management

170. Leadership in the subject is purposeful and expectations are high. The strengths and weaknesses in the subject have been accurately and thoroughly analysed and the actions to address weaknesses and celebrate strengths effectively implemented. Teamwork of staff is very effective. The interests and expertise of teachers and non-teaching staff enriches the range of experiences on offer. The school has successfully been awarded Silver Artsmark, which is an indication of the breadth of curriculum and extra-curricular activities available to students.

### HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was the focus for the inspection. In addition, two travel and tourism lessons were sampled. In a Year 12 AVCE travel and tourism lesson, the students achieved very well because a very well planned lesson combined authoritative teaching about factors that affect tourism generally with students applying this general information to their specific case study of a project in Scarborough. Students were able to develop empathy with the positions of different interest groups. There was a very productive mix of whole-class teaching and group work and the local knowledge of students was used to aid understanding. In a Year 13 lesson, standards were above average. The students achieved very well as a result of very effective, stimulating teaching.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative teaching enables students to achieve better than expected
- Good opportunities are provided for students to become independent learners through leading and coaching younger pupils
- Students' positive response to their teachers and enjoyment of the subject helps their learning
- Target setting is weak and does not help to raise the standards of the few who find the course difficult

### Commentary

#### Examination results

171. A-level results in 2003 were average and in 2004 are similar. Results in the four previous years were similar to the national average.

#### Standards and achievement

172. Students have very good practical skills. Scrutiny of their work, discussion with them and observation of theory lessons confirms that they have good understanding of most areas of study, but are less secure in their understanding of physiology. A small number of students begin the course having no GCSE experience or grade D at GCSE. They achieve well but rarely attain the highest levels.

## **Teaching and learning**

173. Several imaginative teaching approaches and good use of the school Intranet allow students to take control of their own learning. Where challenges are presented imaginatively, students said that they not only learned well, but also enjoyed their work. Year 13 students, analysing complex ideas relating to physical education in France, the USA and Britain, worked well piecing together a well-designed chart and then discussing their opinions in groups. Several cited their involvement in the community leadership project with Year 7 pupils as particularly challenging and enjoyable. They said quite clearly that they preferred active learning to basic tasks like note taking and teacher directed sessions. Students find anatomy and physiology work more difficult than their other modules and the lack of practical work in this area is affecting their progress. Homework is regular and students receive regular written and oral feed back on progress. However, there are no specific targets that show them what needs to be improved to raise their grades. This is a particular issue for those whose previous knowledge and experience of physical education is lower than average.

## **Leadership and management**

174. Leadership is committed to driving standards up and improving the quality of learning within the subject. The commitment to developing the GCE course within the department is very strong. There is a clear drive to bring more girls into the programme to create a better balance of take up of the subject. This is succeeding, with a much bigger uptake in 2004. The staff are very good role models and several students are considering sports-based careers such as teaching, coaching and physiotherapy. Non-examination students have access to timetabled sessions in sports. Although this is a voluntary option, the uptake has been extremely good. Several sixth form students are talented performers, with international, regional and county experience. They have very good opportunities to maintain their high standards.

## **BUSINESS**

This was not a focus for the inspection. One Year 13 Nuffield economics and business A-level lesson was sampled. Accurate teaching prepared students well for the examination. Students worked through a practice paper based on a case study of the airline industry enabling them to apply concepts such as contestable markets well in discussion. Standards were generally average and students achieved satisfactorily.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

This was not a focus for the inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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