

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **FORT HILL COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Basingstoke

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116444

Headteacher: Mrs L Lawson

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 25 - 27 April 2005

Inspection number: 274103

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	591
School address:	Kenilworth Road Winklebury Basingstoke Hampshire
Postcode:	RG23 8JQ
Telephone number:	01256 354311
Fax number:	01256 325583
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ninita Thomson
Date of previous inspection:	1 <sup>st</sup> November 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average with 591 on roll. There are slightly more girls than boys particularly in Year 7 and Year 10. There are no Travellers or refugees. The school is largely composed mainly of white UK students with very small numbers of students with other ethnic heritages. There are no students supported through Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and the percentage of students whose first language is not or believed not to be English is low. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Whilst social circumstances vary, they are, overall, broadly average. Seventy per cent of students come from two wards where the proportion of adults with higher education is below the English average. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is above the national average. This is because the school operates a strategic, area-wide unit within its special educational needs provision for students with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The percentage with statements is broadly in line with the national average covering a range of additional needs. The school has a small number of students in public care.

The school is currently oversubscribed. In the past, significant numbers of students have joined the school late in their secondary education. Roughly, a quarter of Year 10 and Year 11 joined the school later than Year 7. The school is a community school. There is a full adult education programme, extensive use of facilities and family learning programme. The school operates a programme of extension activities on Wednesday afternoons – School is Out – which is staffed by members of the community. The school provides 10 hours full day care for 40 students. The holiday care scheme was inspected in 2004 and overall provision was ‘good’.

Attainment on entry of the current Year 7, as measured by National Curriculum tests in Year 6 of primary school, is below average. However, attainment on entry of the older year groups is well below average. Students’ writing skills on entry are low compared to the national average.

The school was awarded a school achievement award in 2002.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Drama
32708	Helena Renfrew-Knight	Lay inspector	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History Special Educational Needs
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science
15372	Patricia Walker	Team Inspector	English
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team Inspector	Mathematics
10060	David Gutmann	Team Inspector	Business Education Information Technology Leisure and Tourism
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team Inspector	Design and Technology Work Related Learning
11672	Peter Harle	Team Inspector	Art Music
30911	John Barton	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team Inspector	Citizenship Religious Education
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team Inspector	Geography
15221	Diane Mitchell	Team Inspector	Special Educational Needs (specific learning difficulties – dyslexia)
31983	Debra Makinn	Team Inspector	Physical Education

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>13</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>WORK RELATED LEARNING</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>41</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Fort Hill has many good features and is developing into an effective school, which provides good value for money.** Standards in examinations in 2004 were below average but standards of work seen in lessons and books of the current Year 11 are broadly average. Students<sup>1</sup> achieve well. The quality of teaching is good – indeed, it is often very good. Members of staff are very committed to students and supporting their success. They are working hard to tackle students' low literacy skills. Behaviour in the school is good – although there are some challenging students. The major challenge facing the school is tackling students' low aspirations and passivity. Members of staff work harder than students. The school's support for students with additional needs is good. The school has good links with parents. There are strengths in the curriculum, but also weaknesses relating to staffing difficulties in religious education and music. Overall, the quality of leadership is good. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school and good capacity for further improvement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is good. Since her appointment, there has been a sustained focus on raising students' achievement. The senior leadership team work well together. Across the school, leadership is good.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses and relationships are good. Students are known individually and staff work hard to build their self-esteem. There is strong care and support for students with additional needs. Learning support assistants make a very significant contribution to students' learning.
- A barrier to raising achievement is that students have low aspirations and are passive. Assessment in the school has good features but needs to be used consistently to promote success. Students have an insular culture and the school needs to challenge this with a broader world view, successfully undertaken for example, in the modern foreign languages department.
- The commitment to improvement, shared across the school is impressive.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall standards, as measured by the average point score per student, are below average at GCSE, but they are above average compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining 5 A\* to C grades at GCSE is below the national average but well above average compared to similar schools. The proportion gaining 5 A\* to G grades is also well above average and in the top five per cent of schools nationally when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's average GCSE/GNVQ point score per pupil up to 2004 was below the national trend. Standards of the current work seen in Year 11 show improvement because of the school's work in raising attainment at GCSE and are broadly average. The value added data indicates that students' results were below average compared to schools nationally, using 2004 GCSE results. However, **students are achieving well** currently, in relation to their starting point. They are helped in this because provision<sup>2</sup> in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science is at least good. It is at least satisfactory in all subjects with the exception of religious education where staffing difficulties have resulted in a poor provision. Students have good experiences in the classroom and this is leading to improving standards, particularly in the GCSE years.

Standards by the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests are below average. The school's drive to raise standards has focused on the upper years and there is a clear need to address standards in Years 7 to 9. The

<sup>1</sup> The convention in Ofsted reports is to use the term 'pupils' to describe those attending the school aged up to the age of 16 + and then to use the term 'students'. The school's preference is to use the term students to describe all who attend the school and this has been used throughout the text of the report although not in standardised headings nor in Part D.

<sup>2</sup> Provision is an overall judgement about the standards and achievement attained as a result of the quality of education provided, including the quality of teaching, and the leadership and management of the subject.

current achievement of these students is satisfactory. Low literacy skills and poor presentation of work are a major handicap to examination success and the school is working determinedly to raise students' skills. The examination picture is complicated by the high inward mobility of students who join the school late in their school career. Roughly, a quarter of the year group taking examinations in 2004 joined the school after Year 7, mainly in Year 9 upwards. There is little overall difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students with additional needs achieve well overall. The school has established a register of higher attaining students but work with this group in, for example, establishing a culture of achievement for the benefit of all students, is still to be developed. The library is a very important focal point in the school: there is a calm working ethos and it is used well by students.

**Overall students' behaviour and attitudes are good.** Most of the students behave well for almost all of the time. The school is a calm community; students are amenable, very pleasant and courteous and clearly proud of their school. They often lack academic confidence and self-esteem and, although they respond well to good teaching, are to a large extent relatively passive, lacking in personal ambition and somewhat insular in attitude. Overall attitudes are satisfactory. Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with strengths in social and moral development. Attendance is below average although improved since the last inspection.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**Overall, the quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is good** and often very good. Overall, there are strengths in the curriculum – the school is beginning to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals. There are weaknesses in that, because of staffing difficulties, students are not receiving currently their full entitlement in music and religious education. Aspects of curriculum organisation could be improved. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The care and guidance that students receive are good. Staff are vigilant and very committed to the students and their success. Some risk assessments associated with the use of the building need to be carried out.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Overall leadership is good as is management, aspects of which are very good.** There is a sustained focus on improving standards. The mainly new governing body is effective in many aspects. There are some statutory matters that need to be addressed. Overall governance is sound, committed to school improvement and improving.

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

In the pre-inspection surveys, over 90 per cent of students thought Fort Hill was a good school to be at and a similar proportion of parents thought their child was making good progress and that teaching was good. Not all parents are supportive of the school's aims, as reflected, for example, in some parents condoning absence.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Build on the very good use of assessment seen in the school so that the impact of assessment can be seen in all departments
- Develop consistency in expectations of presentation and continue to tackle students' low literacy skills
- Find ways of challenging students' insularity and passive attitudes. Seek to unlock their energies and develop their independent study skills. Make more demands on higher attaining students as part of the process of establishing a culture of achievement
- Over time, review the organisation of the curriculum and make more of the educational opportunities within the 'School is Out' programme.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Resolve the sudden staffing difficulties which mean that the school is currently not meeting requirements to teach religious education and music
- Meet the requirement to teach the full range of design and technology entitlement
- Meet fully the requirement for collective act of worship
- Put in place routines associated with risk assessment not currently addressed.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall students achieve well and current standards in Year 11 are broadly average because of the school's work to raise standards. Students' low literacy skills are a major barrier to examination success.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Catch-up literacy activities are well-structured and well-taught
- Whilst standards are improving by Year 9, they are still below average and need to be raised. Achievement is satisfactory from Year 7 to 9
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Overall, achievement is good
- Overall achievement of students with special educational needs is good.

#### Commentary

1. The attainment on entry of the current Year 7 was below average. That said, their skills in writing are low. Attainment on entry of Years 9, 10 and 11 was well below average as measured by National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 in primary schools. In general, students have low literacy skills.
2. Attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests is well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Given their starting points, students made satisfactory progress overall by Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 ( 30.3)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	33.4 (33.8)	35.5 (35.4)
science	31.7 (32.9)	33.1 (33.6)

*There were 107 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. The school works in a determined fashion to try to 'catch-up' students' skills, particularly in writing, through well-structured and well taught programmes using opportunities presented such as the 'Breakfast Club'. Students currently in Year 9 are on track to meet their targets in English. In mathematics, standards are improving and close to the national average in lessons. Progress in class is generally at least in line with expectations. However, many students lack confidence in applying their skills to problem solving, and the interpretation of word problems is a barrier to students in the middle and lower groups in particular. Many find it challenging to communicate reasons for answers either orally or in writing, partly the result of undeveloped literacy skills. In science, current standards in Year 9 are, overall, below average but improving as the majority are making good progress. In top sets, standards are average. For many, weak literacy skills hampered their standards in science on entry to the school. Books show an urgent need for most students to improve the accuracy of diagrams and presentation of work. Lack of pride in their own work limits achievement. In 2004, teachers' assessments in information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Year 9 recorded standards that were below the national average, and similar to 2003. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, there are indications of rising standards in Year 9 as a result of the introduction of the new GCSE business communications lessons. By the end of Year 9, students have a reasonably good understanding of databases and spreadsheets and show satisfactory skills in designing their own web pages. Most do not yet gain sufficient skills in measurement and control, and computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM), particularly in design and technology.



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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47 (31)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	30.6 (29.8)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 90 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. Whilst overall standards, as measured by the average point score per student, are below average at GCSE, they are above average compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining 5 A\* to C grades at GCSE is below the national average but well above average compared to similar schools. The proportion gaining 5 A\* to G grades is also well above average and in the top five per cent of schools nationally when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's average GCSE/GNVQ point score per pupil up to 2004 was below the national trend. Standards of the current work seen in Year 11 show improvement because of the school's work in raising attainment at GCSE and are broadly average. The value added data indicates that students' results were below average compared to school's nationally using 2004 GCSE results. However, students are achieving well currently in relation to their starting point.
5. In their GCSE English examinations in 2004, attainment was close to the national average. The average points scored by students was at the national average while the percentage achieving grades A\* to C was just below. A larger percentage of students than nationally is entered for both the English language and literature examinations and all attained a GCSE grade. The gap in attainment between boys and girls is smaller than average. Results have risen steadily over the past four years. A full range of inspection evidence seen during the inspection indicates that attainment is very close to what is seen nationally.
6. In mathematics, by the end of Year 11, students achieve well from their starting points at the end of Year 9. Many students show appropriate levels of skill in manipulative algebra and data handling both in lessons and in their workbooks but find difficulty in applying their knowledge to unfamiliar situations. In science, standards of work seen in Year 11 are broadly average. Achievement in relation to earlier attainment is good. Most students in Year 10 are already achieving well. Predictions, based upon work and test results, show that a significant core could eventually achieve above average results. This is an altogether much-improved picture since the previous inspection. In ICT, standards are still below average by the end of Year 11 due mainly to below average levels of literacy and numeracy. Many students do not extend good progress in lessons enough in homework. Current Year 11 students on the key skill course attain below national expectations but most achieve satisfactorily.
7. Students with special educational needs make at least the same rates of progress as their peers. They make at least satisfactory progress overall in Years 7 to 9, and good progress (some very good progress) in Years 10 and 11. The overall attainment of students with special educational needs is generally below national expectations. Students with statements achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. National Curriculum data, NFER reading tests and spelling tests are used in the identification of need on entry to Year 7. As part of the whole school's assessment procedures, all students in Year 7 to Year 10 complete a reading and spelling test in June, which forms part of the SEN audit. The special educational needs co-ordinator sets the targets for the individual education plans of statemented, School Action Plus and School Action students. These targets are currently derived from discussions with staff and where appropriate with students. Individual education plans (IEPs) are reviewed three times a year in December, May and July. Students make good progress against their IEP targets. Nineteen students are assessed as having specific learning difficulties. They are integrated into mainstream lessons, with additional support from qualified staff in the specialist unit. Support is mostly literacy or study skills in order to access other curricular areas. Teachers in the unit are beginning to develop numeracy support as a priority. The school makes effective provision for identified students in the unit. Standards on entry to the school are often low, but achievement by students at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Many achieve one or two additional levels in their standardised tests in English. The school has prioritised teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 and as a result, standards are better by the end of Year 11. Students make good

progress and some students achieve five or more A\* grades at GCSE. All achieve at least five GCSEs at grades A to G. Currently all students continue their education at the local college of further education, where there are good links established with the school.

8. The school has recently begun to identify gifted and talented students. It has already identified its able students. Provision at this stage is limited although an appointment of a co-ordinator in September 2004 indicates the school's intention to take this aspect forward, seeing it as an important means of developing a culture of achievement from which all students can benefit.
9. Overall, there is little difference in boys' and girls' achievement. Numbers are relatively small and differences can be accounted for by cohort differences. The number of students whose ethnic heritage is not white UK is very small. The school monitors performance by gender and ethnicity carefully. It also monitors students in public care closely. The school has focused on tackling underachievement at GCSE and now that standards are more secure, needs to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.
10. There are a number of factors which support the school's thrust in raising attainment and others which act as a brake.
  - In most subject areas there is a sense of stability of staffing and the impact of their commitment and teamwork is beginning to show in the purposeful drive to raise standards, to 'put their department on the map'. Across the school staff there is a strong sense of shared purpose and camaraderie. Learning support assistants (LSAs) play a very significant role in this school, which stems from the fact that they are attached to departments and are seen as part of the team. The school is trying to develop a strong working ethos.
  - There are very strong links with the local education authority – its advisers work closely alongside departments and individuals, providing effective support in developing teaching strategies.
  - The quality of relationships is good – staff are vigilant, aware of students' needs and know them well. Often they have internalised students' individual education plans and are able to provide apposite support.
  - Where assessment is used particularly well, the LSAs pick up on the teachers 'tips for improvement' and check that they are followed through.
  - The quality of the environment – the school is very attractive, modelled on a Roman villa style – students respond well to the school's attractiveness and quality of display.
  - Successful departments at Fort Hill tend to have the following characteristics:
    - They develop teaching approaches to engage students' interest and enthusiasm supported by a good strata' of support- e.g. breakfast clubs, express classes, reading partnerships, and homework support.
    - They use high quality interactive resources.
    - Teacher questioning encourages students to hypothesise, reason, explain, conjecture, discuss with a (often designated) learning buddy.
    - LSAs make an exceptional contribution to learning because they are seen as very much part of the team.
    - There is a high quality rapport with students.
    - Literacy is being tackled through
      - Stressing terms and vocabulary in order to give precision to students' thinking.
      - Correcting literacy in exercise books – correct spellings are stressed.
      - Developing students' confidence through discussion- there are plenty of opportunities given to generate, rehearse and shape ideas before being followed up by writing.
      - Teachers taking every opportunity to model what a good answers looks like.
      - Using writing and discussion frames to help shape essay answers.
      - Insisting on students giving extended answers in formalised Standard English using correct terms.
    - The curriculum is taught in chunks or is taught so that incremental steps are small. Essentially, work is divided into units of work which are finite – work on that topic ends and assessment is integrated into the process of teaching.
    - There is good use made of ICT.
    - The department is very cohesive, characterised by tightly knit teamwork, consistency in high expectations of what students can achieve and preparedness to challenge in a positive manner students' work in order that they attain the standards expected.

- Praise is used well, but meaningfully, so that students gain a sense of success.
- There is good support for lower attaining students.

11. Factors which act as a brake on learning are:

- Students are not ambitious for themselves. The school is still trying to combat a legacy of lack of achievement and motivation. Students are used to that comfortable ethos and require a wide range of teaching strategies to capture their interest
- Some students attend sporadically (sometimes with absence condoned by parents) which means that not only do they lose out but there has to be a consistent rolling programme to keep them up-to-date which slows the learning
- Literacy skills and their lack is an ongoing major barrier to examination success
- Some sessions are too long. The timetable needs to be reviewed to give a regular rhythm of shorter good lesson experiences with more regular opportunities to revisit subjects. Carousel arrangements make continuity and progression in drama and design and technology difficult. In the longer term there is the need to review subject time allocations. More positive use could be made of the School is Out programme
- There is exemplary practice within the school but there is also the need to develop consistency about issues relating to the quality of students' response i.e. quality of homework, quality of students' presentation, the quality of everyday work

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

Behaviour in the school is good overall although there are some students with challenging behaviour. Students' attitudes to learning and their spiritual, moral and social development are satisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory. Attendance has improved slightly since the last report but is still below average.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The high quality of relationships observed between staff and students
- Consistent enforcement of the behaviour management policy
- Teachers' high expectations of students' behaviour
- Students' lack of ambition and motivation
- Poor attendance rate of some students resulting in issues of continuity and progress in their learning.

### **Commentary**

12. Students comment on their friendships, sense of community and good relationships with staff as the aspects they value most about Fort Hill. These high quality relationships and staff knowledge of students were observed during the inspection in many different situations and underpin learning at the school. Students tend to work for 'their' teacher; they take time to settle to a new face. 'Their' teacher is very important to their learning.
13. A more consistent whole-school approach to behaviour management has been implemented since the last report. Whole-staff training on behaviour management has been undertaken. A behaviour support worker is employed who provides advice to the staff and manages disruptive students out of class. Teachers display high expectations for students' behaviour during lessons. The school has positive methods of recognising achievement and students are aware of the penalties that are incurred by poor behaviour. Fixed-term exclusions, usually of one or two days, are used as a deterrent, to involve parents and to bring about a change in the working ethos by reinforcing the importance of homework, although a more discretionary approach is currently used in relation to homework. The number of fixed-term exclusions is now dropping as students accept the clear boundaries set by the school. This consistency of approach across the school has resulted in the orderly and respectful behaviour observed during the inspection. Most students behave well for almost all of the time.
14. While behaviour is good, students appear passive during lessons and many do not display ambition or motivation to learn. Students' attitudes are, overall satisfactory but they need the enthusiasm and teacher energy to motivate them. Whilst they respond well to good teaching, learning over time is limited by their

general passivity and lack of ambition. This can be reflected in statements such as 'I only need to get a C grade!'

15. The challenge facing Fort Hill is how it sets about to unlock the students' energies, so that students change their attitudes from being *taught* to actively *wanting to learn*. They do not bring their energies and commitment to the learning. Whilst the school works hard at developing students' sense of self-esteem and tries to make individuals feel valued and important, nevertheless, it has yet to find a way of developing students' drive, sense of identity and self-worth to an even greater extent<sup>3</sup>. Developing their principles, beliefs and values including those that have a religious basis is not yet a priority. Currently, students have an insular outlook. Challenging that insularity by extending their perspective beyond the immediate community by engagement in world issues and providing the opportunity to reflect on their stance to such issues and their sense of responsibility towards them, is a major challenge facing the school. There would seem to be limited opportunities for personal reflection at the moment, perhaps because teachers feel that a break in the pace of lessons might lead to student inattention. It is also very understandable that given the school's drive to raise standards, there should be a concentration on the features required for the examination rather than reflecting on the personal implications of the topic being studied. The current limited religious education provision does not help in this regard nor does the fact that the school lacks an assembly hall. This results in assemblies, a major vehicle to develop an international and spiritual perspective, have to rely on tutor group assemblies. Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with strengths in students' moral and social development.
16. Despite the efforts of the school, operating a first day of absence calling procedure, and rewarding good attendance, the attendance rate is well below the national median. Analysis of the data indicates that this is mainly due to individual cases of persistently low attendance. The school is limited in its ability to follow-up these cases given the current level of support available from an Educational Welfare Officer. The attendance rate is also affected by the high rate of fixed-term exclusions which are being used to enforce the behaviour management policy. Poor attendance leads to continuity issues for teachers in keeping students up-to-date. Some poor attendance is condoned by parents.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.1	School data	1.5
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

## Exclusions

<sup>3</sup> Promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Ofsted 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004

**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	376	53	2
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	6	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	4	1
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	197	106	1

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Overall, the quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. The high quality of personal relationships that exist between teachers and students underpin the quality of the classroom and school experience. Overall, there are strengths in the curriculum – particularly the overall quality of provision in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The school is beginning to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals, including work-related strands. There are weaknesses caused by staffing difficulties, which result in students not receiving their full entitlement in music and religious education. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The care and guidance that students receive are good. Staff are vigilant and very committed to the students and their success. Some risk assessments associated with the use of the building need to be carried out.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching is good and often very good. Students respond well to good teaching.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of relationships and the general rapport teachers have with students underpin the learning experiences in the school
- Teachers are skilled at motivating and engaging students
- Students respond well to good teaching but tend to be passive learners particularly when judging learning over time
- Sound and developing assessment procedures underpin the school's drive to raise students' standards of attainment. There are some strong features such as the whole-school systems for tracking progress and the intervention strategies in Years 10 and 11.

## Commentary

17. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in that the school has implemented thorough whole-school systems and procedures to assess and track the students' attainment. These are managed very well. Subjects contribute regular and frequent assessments to the central records. Students' work is recorded using National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, and this information is shared effectively with students so that they and their parents are aware of their progress. The bi-annual review points provide an overview across all curricular areas of the students' achievements. Heads of year and tutors monitor achievement and take effective action, mainly in examination groups, to support individual students. Whilst subject leaders monitor the students' progress within their areas, they do not necessarily take an overview of the students' subject performance compared to others. The school recognises that it intervenes more rigorously in Years 10 and 11 than in younger year groups and this is reflected in the differing rates of the students' progress across the age ranges.
18. English, history, geography and art have good or very good procedures for the on-going assessment of the students' work. They use assessment well as an effective tool to engage students in their own learning and students are often clear on what they must do to improve. In some subject areas, students regularly reply to teachers' written comments on their work, for example. However, such effective practice does not take place consistently across all subject areas. Some lesson planning does not take good enough account of ways of identifying what all students have learned as a result of teaching. Generally, the marking of students' work is regular, frequent and sometimes diagnostic and students are aware of the overall quality of their work. However, marking practice varies across and within departments so that students do not always understand whether current work reflects their target grades, as in mathematics, for example
19. The quality of teaching has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan effectively and are very skilled at presenting the lessons in a way that captures and engages students' interest, which coupled with their knowledge of the students and the rapport they establish with them, ensures that students learn effectively in lessons. Questioning is skilled and not restricted to factual recall but encourages students to hypothesise, reason, explain, conjecture, or discuss the problem. Teachers are skilled at using interactive resources. Very effective teamwork with LSAs ensures that they make a very significant contribution to the teaching and learning taking place. What 'sells' the lesson, 'hooks' students' interest, is the energy and subject enthusiasm of the teacher. Teachers work hard in lessons and to be fair, students respond well to this good teaching in lessons. Learning in lessons is good. Because teachers structure their work in a variety of interesting ways, many teachers manage the longer periods well although the work rate tends to drop towards the end as students flag, despite the best efforts of the teachers. Carousel arrangements where groups change and drop subjects after a period of so many weeks cause discontinuity in learning. There were a small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, usually associated with teachers taking over an unfamiliar class.
20. Elsewhere, the report has noted students' passive attitudes towards learning. They respond well to good teaching as a direct result of teachers 'pressing' them to respond, through their enthusiasm and skills. (There are, of course, individual students who are self-motivated in particular subjects) Teachers work hard to ensure that students have grasped the point of the lesson. In the process, they give a very strong 'steer', with a tendency to guarantee success so that they can praise the students, raise their self-esteem and develop their confidence. Clearly these are very positive features and are built upon the foundation of teacher skills, particularly their skills of presentation. Nevertheless, there are fault lines in the strategy – this is not to be critical of what has been achieved but to give a pointer to future development – the slicker the presentation becomes, the danger is that students bring less energy to the lesson. Whilst overall, students' capacity to work independently is satisfactory, there needs to be a whole-school concentration on developing their independent learning skills – particularly their learning over time.
21. Overall, in subject lessons the teaching of students with special educational needs is good. In lessons seen, students generally made good gains in knowledge and understanding. Withdrawal lessons are effective, because special educational needs specialists teach students in small groups and respond well to their individual needs. Individual education plans provide clear overall targets for students. However,

the information relating to strategies is not yet subject-specific. Overall, teachers are well aware of the needs of students with special educational needs. Most teachers modify their teaching strategies and the resources used in lessons to help them to develop well. There is some good and sometimes very good teaching for students in Years 10 and 11 which has been a clear priority for the school. The opportunities for individual and small group work along with positive pupil attitudes and their willingness to learn helps achieve good results and sometimes very good results at GCSE.

22. There is very good liaison between subject teachers and learning support assistants. They understand the needs of the students they are supporting and enjoy very good relationships in the classroom (including with non-SEN students who may ask them for help or advice). They provide the help and challenge required to enable special educational needs students to become more independent in their learning.
23. There is a very good level of planning for lessons between subject teachers and the teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are involved in the production of suitably differentiated teaching materials. They attend at least one department meeting a week. Particularly effective practice was observed in history, English and geography, where dedicated teaching assistants made an excellent contribution to the work of their department.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 98 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (4%)	25 (26%)	45 (46%)	19 (19%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

#### **The curriculum**

There are strengths in the curriculum and some weaknesses. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory.

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

- There is good or better subject provision in most subjects including English, mathematics and science
- The school is beginning to make use of the flexibility now afforded to it to tailor the curriculum to the needs of specific individuals and groups including the development of work-related routes
- Provision for students' personal development is satisfactory
- There are good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum and very good support for learning outside the school day
- There are weaknesses with regard to religious education and music mainly caused by staffing difficulties.

#### **Commentary**

24. The subject provision is at least satisfactory in almost all subjects and good or better in most, including the provision for English, mathematics and science. Students go from one good classroom experience to another and this is a significant strength. The timetable is built up of thirty-minute modules and some lessons are long for the attention span of students despite the often skilful management of class teachers. Greater consistency of expectations would be achieved by a more regular rhythm applied to the school day with a crisper approach rather than sometimes letting the work fill the time available. Carousel arrangements do not help subjects such as design and technology or drama achieve continuity of learning.
25. Further strengths in the curriculum are linked to the school making use of the flexibility now afforded by developing the vocational strand and tailoring the curriculum to suit the needs of particular students. For example, the school uses the potential of physical education to raise the self-esteem of potentially disaffected students through the Junior Sports Leaders' course and it has fostered links with the local college to provide engineering for a particular group of interested students. The development of courses such as business education and leisure and tourism contributes to potential vocational routes for the 14 to 19 age group.

16 year olds with ongoing links established in the post-16 sector. The provision of work related learning is currently satisfactory but showing good potential for future development. Work experience makes a good contribution to students' personal development in Year 10. A strength of the work related provision is the fact that all students follow a business and communications systems course.

26. Provision for students' personal development is satisfactory. The statutory requirements to teach health, drugs and sex education are covered. The citizenship programme is being developed well and significant steps have already been taken to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. Monitoring of the work of the subject is not sufficiently developed in order to ensure consistency in the teaching of the subject. Satisfactory progress is being made in the development of citizenship and this provides a firm base for further success.
27. There are good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum. The school operates an innovative 'School is Out' programme which provides a range of curriculum opportunities for students. A significant number of older students take up the opportunities for further examinations in GCSE in the local college and many students participate in a range of extra-curricular activities. However, more could be done to promote the programme's success and the opportunities it affords. The opportunities provided for learning outside the school day are very good with a range of catch-up activities and support for homework and revision clubs. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. There is, however, some withdrawal from lessons for students with specific learning difficulties. As part of the Years 7 to 9 intervention programme the special educational needs department has delivered literacy and numeracy 'Catch-up' programmes to groups of up to 12 students, which are held as breakfast clubs. The quality of these sessions is very good, and a clear attempt is made by the teaching assistants to follow through and support students' learning in mainstream lessons. In addition, the department runs English Express Groups for four hours each week, for Years 7 and 8 students working below Level 4.
28. A reading partnership scheme is run for twenty-six Year 7 students. The reading partners are from the school's support staff and Year 10 and 11 students. They meet with their Year 7 partner twice a week for 10-15 minute individual reading sessions. A reading log is kept to monitor progress. The department also uses a termly bookmark competition to encourage students to read regularly. A games club is run during four weekly break and three weekly lunchtimes for students in Key Stage 3. Students play a variety of games and puzzles, which provides opportunities to rehearse basic language, literacy and thinking skills. A homework club is run over four lunchtimes a week and every Wednesday afternoon for students who attend the unit for specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The club provides an opportunity for students to develop independent study skills.
29. Weaknesses in the curriculum are the fact that students in Year 10 and 11 do not currently experience religious education, although the school had planned for the introduction of religious education in September 2005. The religious education situation is exacerbated by current unforeseen staffing problems which result in religious education in Years 7 to 9 being taught by non-specialists. The provision in religious education is poor. The long-term illness of the head of music has also caused difficulties and restricted students' entitlement to the subject. Currently, the full range of design and technology entitlement is not covered.
30. Apart from those difficulties, serious as they are, there is a good match overall of specialist staff to the curriculum – not easy to achieve in a relatively small school. There is a very good match of support staff. Although there are weaknesses in the overall accommodation such as lack of hall and poor quality of some outdoor games playing surfaces, overall, the accommodation is very good and resources are good.

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

Arrangements for students' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Provision for support, advice and guidance is good. The involvement of students in the work and development of the school is good.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff are vigilant and very responsive to individual needs
- The Year Learning Co-ordinators closely monitor students' progress
- Extra support is provided to develop literacy and numeracy skills in Year 7
- Development of opportunities for students to suit their aptitudes and interests
- Health and Safety risk assessments are yet to be undertaken for many teaching areas of the school.

### **Commentary**

31. Members of staff are vigilant and there is good supervision at break and lunchtimes. Students comment that the school looks nice, is well maintained and has character.
32. Since the last report, the school has moved from a 'House' based pastoral system to a year group system with heads of year acting as learning co-ordinators. This has supported an increased focus on attainment and achievement. The Year Learning Co-ordinators track student progress and meet with students individually during tutor time to discuss any issues. When asked if they have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school, students generally mention their tutors and Year Learning Co-ordinators
33. The school provides good support to students in Year 7 to ensure they have the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need to be able to engage with the curriculum. The breakfast clubs are popular with those students who are selected to attend them and allow students to develop confidence and self-esteem. Children supported through the reading mentor scheme show significant progress.
34. Staff work hard to identify suitable opportunities to engage students who are in danger of becoming disaffected with school. The Year 10 learning co-ordinator arranged a day a week work placement for a pupil in a field in which he had expressed a particular interest. The Junior Sports Leader Award course has given students the opportunity to develop planning and coaching skills by teaching younger students in the feeder primary schools.
35. The involvement of students in the management of the school has increased since the last report. The School Voice or Council has been established and students feel that their views are listened to, for example on school uniform issues and improvements to the toilets. There is a prefect system managed by a Head Boy and Girl and Senior Prefects. Prefects undertake break and lunchtime supervision activities and assist with functions. A number of Year 10s have been trained by Childline to become "Truly Trusted" to act as school 'buddies' and deal with issues around bullying.
36. Discussions with students indicate a good level of support in choosing option and careers guidance is available.
37. The Health and Safety policy has recently been reviewed, risk assessments for visits are undertaken and records kept on file but risk assessments associated with the use of the building have not yet been carried out for some areas of the school.
38. The special educational needs co-ordinator demonstrates a keen interest in her students. Relationships are secure and warm. Members of the department offer students a very good level of personal and academic support.
39. The teaching assistants attend a monthly meeting with the special educational needs co-ordinator. LSAs also attend at least one weekly department meeting with their link department so that they are fully involved with subject planning. The progress of students with SEN is monitored through a range of school-wide assessments including observations/baseline assessment/National Curriculum tests/standardised tests. In September 2004, the school introduced a target tracking record, which is completed by the teaching assistants. Different groups of students have been tracked at different stages of the year, which allows for early identification of underachievement.

40. Support and guidance for special educational needs students are comprehensive. They are offered the same support and guidance as other students. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises closely with the Connexions Personal Advisers for all transition reviews of students in Year 9 onwards. Wherever possible, the Connexions adviser attends the formal review meetings held with parents of statemented students in Year 9 and above. All students with statements have an annual review. Students, parents, school and LEA representatives contribute to the review. Interim reviews are held twice a year to combine with whole-school review days. There are good links with an extensive range of external agencies. The school has good links with feeder primary schools (there are 3 main feeder schools). The special educational needs co-ordinator and the unit staff visit the feeder schools to oversee the smooth transfer of statemented students in the year prior to entry.
41. The SENCO organises support for National Curriculum tests and external examinations. Where appropriate this may include special arrangements with the GCSE boards to provide students with special educational needs the necessary conditions to enable them to do well.

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

The school continues to maintain good links with parents and the community. Its links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision of information and communication with parents
- Very good links with feeder primary schools and with colleges
- Community provision of many of the optional Wednesday afternoon activities.

### **Commentary**

42. Both in the Ofsted parents' meeting and in the surveys undertaken by the school, parents generally expressed their satisfaction with the school. There is good provision of information to parents in the pupil reports given to parents in conjunction with the Parent Review Days. The planners provide an informal communications channel between the tutor and parents. Termly newsletters provide a lot of information on the school's activities and the work of departments. A Parent Staff Association has been established since the last inspection and is active in fund-raising for the school. The school has a good reputation for being inclusive and is oversubscribed.
43. However, not all parents are fully supportive and the school is working to engage them in understanding their responsibilities, for example, in ensuring homework is completed and that their child attends school.
44. The school continues to have good links with the community. The community is involved in the provision of many of the optional Wednesday afternoon activities, for example the Basingstoke Rugby and Football Clubs. The school's facilities are made available for community use out of school hours. The school raises money for the local hospice, Naomi House. IBM in Basingstoke provides an e-mentoring programme for business studies students. Volunteers from local companies come in to school to give work experience applicants mock interviews in preparation for their placement interviews. Local councillors come into the school to work with the children on local government issues. The Anvil Theatre has run drama workshops for the school.
45. Fort Hill's links with other schools and colleges are very good, easing transition as students move between them. There is an extensive induction programme with its feeder primary schools, shared staff training days, frequent meetings and joint working. The two main colleges both are represented at Fort Hill on Review Days, and at the Key Stage 3 Options evening. Their school liaison co-ordinators visit and students are encouraged to visit both and to attend taster days. Additional GCSEs in photography, dance, psychology and Spanish are offered at Queen Mary's College as part of the Wednesday afternoon optional programme of activities. As part of the Aim Higher initiative, Fort Hill has taken students to the Universities of Winchester and Oxford. Fort Hill competes with other local schools in sporting and public speaking events. With the appointment of its teachers as the County Lead teachers in history, maths science and English, Fort Hill is working to share best practice with teachers from other schools. The County History Centre has been established at Fort Hill.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good with significant strengths. Overall governance is sound, committed to school improvement and improving. There are statutory aspects that need to be addressed.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership by the headteacher and across the school is good
- Management is good with some very good features
- Staff share an impressive commitment to improvement.

### Commentary

46. Overall, the quality of leadership of the school is good. The headteacher provides good leadership overall with very significant strengths in her clarity of vision, determination and sense of purpose with a sharp, sustained focus on improving the educational experience for students. A very good feature is that she has developed strong teamwork across the school with staff who share an impressive commitment to improvement. The result, is that there is good capacity for ongoing improvement which will grow and develop as and when the standards attained by students begin to match the efforts that the school is putting in to improve them. Her management is also good. She has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She is supported effectively by the senior leadership team to bring to their role a range of strengths. They work very effectively as a team. Leadership across the school is also good.
47. Management is good with some very good features. The school is beginning to make very good use of data to assess its performance and staff performance management is used very well to raise standards. This is coupled with equally strong professional development so that whilst there is now a very strong sense of accountability there is also the necessary support to achieve the school's aims. The focus on teaching and learning to raise attainment has been very effective. Financial planning is effective. The annual budget is increasingly well managed and the governing body is now more involved in planning and monitoring. Spending on staffing, resources and accommodation is all within accepted limits and there is a small annual surplus. Strategic planning and evaluation of cost effectiveness of school initiatives have all improved and are being developed further with the support of the governing body. Financial control is very good. The school's business manager effectively monitors the annual budget and has very rigorous systems for monitoring day-to-day income and expenditure. Recommendations from the last auditor's report have been realistically addressed.
48. Principles of best value are being applied well. The school increasingly challenges its own performance. The headteacher sets challenging targets for students' achievement in Years 10 and 11. Many subjects are beginning to evaluate their own performance effectively. However, this is not yet done consistently by all departments and targets are not as rigorous in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and 11. The school's business manager monitors the work of contractors effectively. Students and parents are regularly consulted through surveys. The school Council has made good contributions to discussions on school uniform and issues relating to homework.
49. There is sound governance of the school. There has been good improvement in governance since the last inspection. Although the governing body has a significant number of governors who are new to the role, it is rapidly developing in effectiveness and has significant strengths. The governing body has a clarity of purpose and a clear understanding of its strategic role of governance. Discussion is open and there are very good relationships with the senior leadership of the school, which is not to imply any cosiness. The governing body is prepared to challenge, question and seek explanation. Members of the governing body bring a range of professional and personal expertise to the role. Above all, the governing body share a commitment to take the school forward and improve both the quality of experience that students have at the school and the standards that they attain.

50. There are weaknesses relating to the statutory requirements that need addressing, albeit that staffing difficulties have caused problems or knocked plans awry. The lack of religious education in Years 10 and 11 was picked up in the last report as was the fact that the school is not meeting the requirements for statutory worship. A theme in the report is the nature of students' insular attitudes and developing students' spiritual awareness – in the sense of developing their personal drive, ambition, sense of self as well as their values, including religious values. Both statutory aspects have a significant part to play in addressing this, particularly in bringing the outside world into school. The school does have a logistical problem in terms of assemblies because of the absence of large spaces, placing as it does reliance on form tutors to conduct mini-assemblies.
51. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides a good role model in her warm and positive outlook. Her leadership and management of the department are good and she receives a good level of support from the special educational needs governor. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, especially in the level and quality of support offered by teaching assistants. She runs an induction programme for new staff and organises INSET intermittently to raise awareness of the requirements of special educational needs students. Leadership and management of the unit are good. The management of the unit is part of the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator. The self-analysis in the school, the focus on teaching and learning and the monitoring and evaluation in provision have benefited identified students so that they make better progress in their chosen subjects. Statistical analysis about the individual progress of students with special educational needs has helped to improve standards for students in some subject departments. This is not yet consistent across all subjects. The senior management team and the new special educational needs governor are keen to support and challenge appropriately the work in the unit and their focus on teaching and learning and attainment has helped to improve strategies, all of which meet statutory requirements. All staff have had some training on including students in their subject and more is planned both on a whole-school and individual level. Unit teachers are now involved more closely with subject departments in monitoring provision in subjects which is helping to secure better pupil progress.
52. There are clear guidelines for teaching assistants as to how support should be used in the classrooms and this has resulted in a good level of performance. The teaching assistants are variously qualified. Many have taken part in appropriate training. The teaching assistants do not take part in performance review. The special educational needs co-ordinator has responsibility for monitoring the day-to-day impact of the teaching assistants' work in the classroom. There are new procedures in place for student tracking. However, special educational needs co-ordinator has identified the need to make better use of the school's electronic data to systemise student tracking and the analysis of value added information.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,445,946
Total expenditure	2,447,185
Expenditure per pupil	4211

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	29,820
Balance carried forward to the next	28,582

## WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision in WRL is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is current good practice in subject choices, careers guidance and work experience in Year 10
- Work experience makes a good contribution to students' personal development in Year 10
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from vocational courses at college
- All students study business and communications systems which systematically builds up their knowledge and understanding of business and the world of work

- The development of skills for employment for all students regularly in subject lessons has not been addressed and is a weakness

### **Commentary**

53. The school has previous good practice in careers guidance, subject choice in Years 9 and work experience in Year 10, and help with post -16 planning which builds into a systematic understanding of the key areas of WRL. All students follow the business and communications systems course that is a strength of the provision.
54. The school is starting to address the wider aspects of the new statutory framework for WRL although these have not been built into an effective continuous programme that can be tracked in all lessons.
55. Teachers have had some training for the new subject that should have been in place at the beginning of this year. Too little review of the existing good practices in subject lessons has taken place but it is planned for the next half term. Management has been effective. Students get a systematic learning experience but this is not yet supplemented across the subjects of the curriculum.
56. There is some good self-evaluation going on in the work experience programme, using the specialist diary and reports from employers. The school recognises the importance of work experience. It is organised successfully in Year 10 and is valued by students. Many students have part-time employment and this is referred to in their CVs but it is not systematically recorded. Some students in Year 10 attend a GCSE double certificated engineering run at the local college with another lesson at school with a visiting lecturer.
57. There is an effective links with Connexions, the careers service, who provide careers guidance and resources for making choices. All students have access to quality materials and advice from the school's careers library, specialist teaching staff and the local careers adviser. There are some outside speakers and visits to support a wider picture of life after school and to develop a proper understanding of business and industry. Visits to industry are an area that needs to develop in many areas of the curriculum
58. The school management has made WRL part of this year's development plan, but its implementation is planned for later in the school year. Leadership with clear roles and responsibilities and priorities is now changing outline policy into actual practice. The current effectiveness of WRL on the lives of the students is satisfactory, with good potential for further development.

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

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

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good** with some significant strengths.

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

- Attainment is rising, especially in GCSE examinations
- Achievement is good
- Standards at the end of Year 9 remain well below average
- Teaching is consistently good, with some very good features
- Leadership and management are good and lead to good teamwork
- Good use is made of performance data to identify areas for improvement
- The contribution made by the learning support assistants is a strength
- There are very good programmes to support lower attaining students
- Irregular attendance is a barrier to achievement for some students.

##### **Commentary**

59. Standards in English in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well below the national average for 2003, (the most recent year for which national comparative figures are available). Standards have ranged between below and well below average for a number of years. In 2004, standards were in line with those in schools whose students had similar attainment at the end of Year 6. There has been an apparent overall decline in standards since the previous inspection. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys and this gap is larger than is seen nationally. A full range of inspection evidence indicates that attainment is currently below average but is beginning to rise to be closer to what is seen nationally. The disparity in attainment between boys and girls is beginning to narrow.
60. Students now in Year 7 entered the school with below average attainment in English, while students in Years 9 and above had well below average attainment when they started at the school. However, for a significant percentage of students over a number of years their level in writing at the start of Year 7 has been lower than their overall English grade indicates. Overall, standards of writing are low at the start of Year 7, so that students in Year 9 in 2004 achieved well to reach the standards that they did. Students now in Year 9 are also achieving well, although there is a considerable proportion for whom tests are particularly challenging. Year 9 students are on course to reach standards close to the targets set for them. Students in Year 7 and 8 are achieving well in their basic English skills in response to well-structured support for their literacy and in particular their writing. The tests recently taken by Year 8 show that good progress has been made. The achievement of some students is limited by their irregular attendance.
61. In their GCSE examinations in 2004, attainment was close to the national average. The average points scored by students was at the national average while the percentage achieving grades A\* to C was just below. A larger percentage of students than nationally is entered for both the English language and literature examinations and all attained a GCSE grade. The gap in attainment between boys and girls is smaller than average. Results have risen steadily over the past four years. A full range of inspection seen during the inspection indicates that attainment is very close to what is seen nationally.
62. Students who took their GCSE examination in 2004 achieved well to reach average standards overall, since they entered the school with well below average attainment and by the start of Year 10 it was below average. Students currently in Years 10 and 11, including those with special needs, are also achieving well. Nearly all students begin to make clear notes in a variety of forms. Recall and revision skills remain a weakness for students and their notes provide useful support for this. They make good progress in

planning written answers and higher attaining students learn to structure them to focus more precisely the requirements of the questions. Average and lower attaining students develop a simple but usually clear style. Higher attaining students' style is more mature and fluent and their response to literature is more independent and analytical. Most students find it difficult to form or explain a personal opinion or response to literature. Year 10 students are making good progress in their response to film. There has been an overall improvement in standards in GCSE results since the previous inspection.

63. Teaching is consistently at least good and some very good teaching was seen. This represents an improvement since the previous report, when a smaller proportion of good teaching was seen. Teachers make good use of clear objectives for learning in each lesson in order to motivate students. They plan to offer a good range of activities and groupings, which maintains concentration and involvement levels, particularly amongst the boys. The response of boys is positive and boys and girls respond equally well to class activities, with boys showing a thoughtful response to literature. Students respond well by showing enthusiasm and working hard. Tasks are well resourced to support learning at all levels. Teachers make good use of questioning to probe understanding and encourage students to take a more participative role and there is usually a good response from students to their class activities. Students' oral response is frequently better than their written answers and gives a clearer indication of their progress in understanding. Teachers respond well to students' difficulties in meeting test and examination requirements by giving them frequent, clear advice on examination requirements and what to expect under test conditions. A considerable strength of the teaching is the quality of marking. This ensures that students know their targets and have specific and challenging advice on how to achieve them. The effectiveness of this is seen in the level of awareness shown by students. The contribution made to the quality of teaching by the learning support assistants is very good and is a real strength of the department. They take an active and highly effective role in lessons and are clearly trusted and respected by students. A particular strength of their work is the "breakfast club" which they run to give intensive support to lower attaining Year 7 students in basic literacy skills, particularly writing.
64. The quality of leadership and management is good. There is a clear focus on raising standards and there has been good identification of the priority areas for doing this. The emphasis placed on raising standards at GCSE level and on the basic literacy skills of Year 7 students is having a clear impact at both ends of the school. There are good systems, on a number of levels, to offer additional support to students who enter the school with low attainment in literacy. Effective use is made of performance data in order to identify which students need this additional support and to track their progress. The scheme for regular assessment of progress is effective in identifying which students are likely to underachieve and there are good systems in place to offer additional support to them. There are effective strategies in place to enhance the response of boys and raise their standards, although there is less attention given to this in Years 7 to 9. There is a good sense of teamwork in the department. The schemes of work are constantly reviewed and updated and contributions to this are made by all department members. These schemes offer clear guidance on how to assess students' progress. The use of ICT in English lessons appears in the medium-term planning of the department and students have some opportunity to develop their skills in this. However, these opportunities are rather infrequent, largely because access to facilities is difficult. There is a good programme for the enrichment of the curriculum to which students respond enthusiastically. For example, a trip to the Globe theatre advertised during the inspection was sold out in two days. The strong potential for the department recognised in the previous report is being fulfilled.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

65. Students enter the school with low standards in writing. The standard of literacy in subjects across the curriculum is below average, although in geography and art, where literacy skills are taught in a structured way, standards are above average. In these two subjects, students are given support by the use of writing frames, which help students plan what they want to write or say. In most subjects, students are uncertain about how to express their ideas clearly, and both their speaking and writing lacks detail and development. Because of this, students lack the confidence to take an active role in class discussions. Many students are hampered by having a limited general vocabulary, although in some subjects, for example music their subject vocabulary is a little better. In mathematics, for example, students' difficulty

in reading for understanding limits their access to the curriculum. In many subjects, including English and design and technology, presentation of written work is careless and unsatisfactory, and the students themselves find it difficult to understand what they have written.

## **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **currently satisfactory but improving rapidly towards good provision**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average and progress is only satisfactory overall
- Standards are improving, particularly in Years 7 to 9, due to good teaching
- The department provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities
- The number of students who choose to continue to study a modern foreign language in the present Year 10 is very low
- Very good relationships are creating a very good working atmosphere in lessons
- Students have a good understanding of their learning.

## **Commentary**

66. GCSE results in French were below average in 2004. Girls performed significantly better than boys and students did not do as well in French as in other subjects. However, the proportion of students entered for the examination was significantly higher than the national average. Some students in 2004 were not well motivated and this had a detrimental effect on results compared with other schools. However, after four years of poor performance the results in 2004 represent a marked improvement. The number of students entered for the GCSE examination in German was very small but results improved by comparison with previous years.
67. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are improving. Standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 are below average overall. However, this represents good achievement for students who enter the school with a level of general ability that is well below average. Overall, there is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls. High attaining students in Year 9 develop a good grasp of vocabulary and structure but are not secure in their use of the main tenses. They are not developing the skills to use language independently. However, the achievement of low attaining students in Year 9 is very good. There is clear evidence of improving standards in Years 7 and 8. Teachers know and support all students well which means that students with special education needs are able to achieve in line with other students. There is particularly good progress by gifted and talented students in Year 8. Standards are below average in German. Students' achievement is limited by lack of time, though the progress they made in lessons seen was good.
68. Standards in Year 11 in French are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Progress was limited in Year 10 due to staffing problems. Progress in Year 11 has been good. Standards in German are average and achievement is satisfactory, limited by insufficient curriculum time in Years 8 and 9 and by staffing problems in Year 10. Overall, students behave well and attitudes are increasingly positive. They respond well to the teachers' enthusiasm though a significant minority of students lack genuine intellectual commitment.
69. Teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching. Students' attitudes are improving because of the very good relationships that create a positive working atmosphere in all lessons. Teachers know and support all students very well. There is good long-term planning based on comprehensive schemes of work. Lessons are well-structured with a clear focus and concentrate on developing all four language skills. Starter activities are effective though the review of learning at the end is not as thorough. Lessons have clear objectives but these are often not expressed in terms of what students will learn. Resources, particularly those produced by the teachers themselves, are very good and the interactive whiteboard is well used to model language and to present authentic speaking and listening material.



70. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a comprehensive programme of visits which is raising the profile of the department after some years of decline, improving the motivation of students and giving them a good insight into other cultures. There is effective extra support for learning, particularly for examination groups, while the provision of pen pals from a number of countries is leading to very good achievement by gifted and talented students, particularly in Year 8. Assessment is regular and thorough. Students receive particularly good written feedback on their work which means that they know what they need to do to improve. This one of the main factors in improving student motivation. However, the level of challenge is often limited. There is sometimes a lack of pace in lessons, particularly in the longer lessons. Teachers use the target language well but students are rarely encouraged to do so as a means of basic communication in lessons. For high attaining students there is often not enough concentration on the teaching of grammar which means that they are not developing the skills they need to use language independently.
71. Leadership is good. The new head of department has worked hard to raise the profile of modern foreign languages and has assembled a very dedicated and hard-working team. This follows a period of decline since the last inspection which was caused by staffing problems. However, there is no dedicated learning support assistant which is affecting the achievement of students with special needs. Management is satisfactory. The new team is being well supported by senior management. There are rigorous systems for monitoring the work of the department, including the quality of teaching. However the department is not yet using information about students' prior attainment to set targets and evaluate its own performance. In the present Year 10 the number of students following a course in languages is very low. This is because of poor student motivation in the past due to staffing problems and because languages has become an optional subject for the first time. The result is that the majority of students in Year 10 are not learning a foreign language. There is not enough time allocated to the second foreign language. The last report was positive. However, results in French declined dramatically the following year and remained very low until 2004. Standards are improving and provision is increasingly good so progress overall has been satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- National test results in mathematics at the end of Year 9 are well below average
- Standards at the end of Year 11 rose in 2004 and matched nationally expected results
- Teaching is good overall; teachers are committed to helping their students to do well and relationships are very good
- Teachers miss opportunities to assess and record students' progress in lessons
- The leadership and management of the department are good. Good teamwork is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve.

### **Commentary**

72. Overall standards in mathematics match nationally expected levels. Students' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school has been well below average. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been consistently well below the national average over several years and remained so in 2004. Standards in the GCSE examinations have been low in relation to national averages for both boys and girls but, in 2004, approximately half of Year 11 gained a grade C or better in mathematics, double that of the previous year. Boys achieved more successfully than girls and students in middle groups made slower progress than their peers did. Staffing turbulence partly explains these differences but the department has not yet identified fully the reasons for the girls' underachievement. The progress of students with special educational needs is good.
73. Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards in Year 9 are improving and close to the national average in lessons. Progress in class is generally at least in line with expectations. However, the work in some students' books, particularly in middle and lower groups, reflects underachievement over time with poor presentation and drawing skills, errors not followed up, and incomplete work. Many students have

weak numerical skills when they enter the school. These are developed well for students in higher groups by the end of Year 9 as is work on shape and space and data handling. Able students are quick to spot number and other patterns. However, many students lack confidence in applying their skills to problem solving, and the interpretation of word problems is a barrier to students in the middle and lower groups in particular. Many find it challenging to communicate reasons for answers either orally or in writing, partly the result of undeveloped literacy skills. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well from their starting points at the end of Year 9. Many students show appropriate levels of skill in manipulative algebra and data handling both in lessons and in their workbooks but find difficulty in applying their knowledge to unfamiliar situations.

74. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. Working relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping students achieve of their best. They are helped in this by the work of the learning support assistant. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of the students' attitudes and work. There is a strong and shared sense of purpose between teachers and students and a growing realisation that targets can be achieved, as in a Year 8 lesson on estimation and operations with decimals, a Year 9 lesson on probability, and a Year 10 lesson on stem and leaf diagrams. However, sometimes teaching does not routinely address the language needs of students either through activities or resources. The mathematics department has good systems to track the students' achievements at key points over time but within lessons too little use is made of common strategies to assess students' immediate understanding. Marking across the department is too variable in quality and does not always ensure that students follow-up errors and misunderstandings.
75. Students learn well in Years 10 and 11 because of teachers' high expectations. In GCSE classes learning is supported by the students' conscientious attention to teachers' guidance although few are independent learners. Learning in lessons is better than that portrayed by the current national test results in Years 7 to 9. Students cooperate very well with their teachers and are willing to apply themselves productively in lessons but are less able to consolidate work through sustained homework and revision activities.
76. The good leadership of mathematics has encouraged a committed team approach among new and established teachers. The department is well managed, and day-to-day running is smooth. The department is benefiting from effective curricular planning that allows for the phased introduction of GCSE statistics and for the competent use of ICT resources to enhance the students' classroom experiences. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress: GCSE examination results have improved significantly; the quality of teaching and learning is good; resources have improved, including those for ICT. However, much remains to be done to raise the students' standards of attainment at Key Stage 3, to support the students' literacy skills, and to develop further methods of in-class assessment.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

77. There is good provision within mathematics to develop students' numeracy skills alongside other aspects of the subject. At whole-school level, however, there is not yet a fully planned approach to develop the students' mathematical skills across subjects and provision is no better than satisfactory. Nevertheless, students encounter opportunities to use these skills in a number of areas. In geography and science, the development of relevant mathematical skills is well integrated into schemes of work. Students apply mathematical skills efficiently in interpreting graphs, tables and other statistical diagrams and are able to manipulate simple formulae when required to do so. Within art, there is very good provision to develop the students' spatial awareness through the emphasis on three-dimensional work. There are missed opportunities, however, within design and technology courses. Pre-weighing in food technology, for example, hinders the students' appreciation of measurement.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and students are achieving well because of good leadership of a close-knit team focused upon high performance. Students' good attitudes enliven learning
- Understanding is deepened when students reason out theories themselves; it is thwarted by poor presentation of work. Skills of investigation are not developed early enough
- Thorough analyses of assessments sharply judge performance and track individual students' progress well. Identifying specific targets that focus on learning particular aspects of a topic, is a next step. The rate of progress for students who grasp ideas quickly needs more thrust.

## Commentary

78. Year 9 test results at Level 5, compared with all schools, were average in 2004. They were high compared with similar schools at this level and the higher Level 6 and above but low compared with national figures. Although, overall, results were below average, they continued the improvement shown during the past four years. Boys' and girls' performance was not significantly different.
79. Almost all students in a group of twenty-five, studying double science, achieved within the A\* to C grade range at GCSE. No one gained A\*. In single science, 18 students achieved grade C and most were within the C to E range. When the results from the two examinations are combined together, results at A\* to C were below average but show a significant improvement since the last inspection.
80. Current standards in Year 9 are, overall, below average but improving as the majority are making good progress. For many, weak literacy skills hampered their standards in science on entry to the school. Students' books show that, in top sets, standards are average. They further sharpen up with good quality teaching. A teacher's perceptive use of the inquisitive nature of a Year 7 class, through a constant stream of open-ended questions, not only drew out interesting suggestions from students about how water might travel throughout an entire plant, but also demanded testable proof of their theories. Therefore, in role as young scientists, they markedly deepened their knowledge about plant physiology. Low attainers are persistently encouraged to improve their level of understanding because of their teacher's high expectations of what they are capable of achieving. Books show an urgent need for most students to improve the accuracy of diagrams and presentation of work. Lack of pride here is reining in achievement. There is scope for more practice in numeracy, use of technical words, application of ideas and, development of investigative skills during class experiments.
81. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Achievement in relation to earlier attainment is good. Most students in Year 10 are already achieving well. Predictions, based upon work and test results, show that a significant core could eventually achieve above average results. This is an altogether much-improved picture since the previous inspection. In a top set, Year 10 students applied kinetic theory well in reasoning out how heat changes magnesium ribbon. They made very good progress, delving deeper into chemistry as their teacher skilfully linked in new work about specific (activation) energy changes, as chemical bonds are formed or broken. Although attention span was spasmodic in a lengthy revision session, support was thorough for low attainers in Year 11 tackling electrical resistance in a wire. All students know how to plan investigations. The very best work uses fundamental ideas about science well to plan tests, consider variables and clearly explain their relevance. The need to identify, justify and follow modifications, however, is not well understood. The majority need to construct sharply hypotheses and increase the sophistication of observations, identification of anomalies and evaluation of results. Teachers do not focus upon these skills early enough nor in sufficient detail.
82. The overall quality of teaching and learning has also improved since the last inspection. It is good, ranging from very good to satisfactory. Teachers and students get on well together; this close rapport helps students to understand difficult work. Standards are especially raised for those with special educational needs because of strong teamwork between teachers and the support teacher. Those who learn more quickly than others, however, need much more challenging work so that they can penetrate ideas at higher levels, whichever set they are in. Through skilful questioning, very good teaching constantly causes students to think through, reason out ideas and, defend their decisions. Beginnings of lessons are usually well planned but there is scope for creatively involving students in imaginative endings to help them reflect about its messages. A quick, 'fun' start swiftly captured the interest of Year 9, so that

they could then be successfully taken down various pathways of revision. Understanding about cellular activity was certainly strengthened by enjoyable forfeits for 'wrong turns' along the paths. Lesson plans need a cutting edge focus upon how meaningful learning can take place, rather than on the organisation of activities. Learning is held back when teachers have centre-stage for too long. Occasionally, in class and on trial test papers, superficial answers are accepted when more is possible. Although a focus is not selected, marking is consistent and good quality comments help students in their learning.

83. Leadership and management are both good. The head of department has a clear vision and high expectations for future developments. Members of staff are equally committed to building a high performance team, because in a climate of close teamwork, he motivates and supports them. Strong technical support is an important part of this team, widening experiences for students. Together, they are thrusting up standards. The drive for improvement, through several initiatives, has resulted in good progress since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and learning which has led to raised standards and flourishing achievement. Analysis of performance is stronger. Assessment information is used well to check the general progress of individual students and discuss it with them; specific targets that focus on particular aspects of science, have yet to be identified for them. Access to computers is still limited and provision for data logging is out-of-date because of a limited budget. Classroom observations now need to sharply penetrate links between teaching and learning in exploring planning of learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory** with good features.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Lessons taught by specialists are good, but in lower years some students do not achieve as much as they should
- Computer provision has improved significantly, and the number of available computers is in line with the national average
- ICT is not used enough in several other subjects, although statutory National Curriculum requirements are met
- The subject is well led, but some tasks are too hard and students' progress is not assessed consistently in Years 7 and 8.

### **Commentary**

84. In 2004, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, though accurate, recorded standards that were below the national average, and similar to 2003. Achievement by the end of Year 9 was good in relation to well below average standards on entry to the school. Year 11 students who took an external key skills qualification in 2004, about a half of the year group, attained at below the national average, with remaining students' standards being slightly lower. Overall, students' achievement was satisfactory. The key skills qualification is being replaced by a GCSE course in business communications for all students from Year 9 upwards, which is already resulting in better achievement by most students.
85. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, students' work indicates rising standards, particularly in Years 9 and 10, although standards are still below average by the end of Year 11 due mainly to below average levels of literacy and numeracy. Many students do not extend good progress in lessons enough in homework. In Years 9 and 10, standards are currently below average but students are achieving well in the new GCSE business communications lessons, although lesson time is only a third of normal provision in Year 10. Current Year 11 students on the key skill course attain below national expectations but most achieve satisfactorily.
86. Most students, including those with special educational needs, show fairly competent skills and confidence in using computers in specific ICT lessons. Year 7 students make good use of text and some graphics in animated PowerPoint presentations. By the end of Year 9, students have a reasonably good understanding of databases and spreadsheets and show satisfactory skills in designing their own web pages. Most do not yet gain sufficient skills in measurement and control, and CAD/CAM particularly in design and technology. They extend competence well in some subjects such as history, business studies,

modern foreign languages and religious education, but do not use computers enough in science, mathematics, music and art due mainly to lack of equipment.

87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and often good, particularly for GCSE groups in Year 9 upwards. Teachers support individual students well in the upper years, but in Years 7 and 8 some tasks are too hard. Specialist teaching is good. Learning in all years is sometimes slowed by network problems. Most students behave well, generally show good attitudes to work, and work well together. Those with special educational needs achieve well when they get extra support from the well-briefed teaching assistant, who modifies tasks effectively to match students' literacy levels. Homework is set regularly, but not consistently in Years 7 and 8. Students identified as gifted and talented contribute well to class discussion but would benefit from extra homework tasks.
88. Leadership and management of the fairly large team of teachers, mostly non-specialists, are good. The co-ordinator, though heavily loaded, is very experienced and has very good vision for improvement. The National Curriculum strategy is being well implemented overall, but assessment of students' progress against National Curriculum levels is inconsistent. Increases in computer equipment to the nationally expected level and lunchtime clubs are helping raise standards. Technical support is very good, and current problems with network connections and out-dated machines are being tackled. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has good capacity for further improvement through more specialist staffing, equipment upgrades, and more planned computer use in other curriculum subjects.

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

89. Although computers are becoming increasingly available in most subjects, staff changes and some shortages of equipment mean that students do not have enough opportunities to use computers to enrich their work in some subjects such as mathematics, science, music and art. Computers are being used well by students in history, business studies, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are used well for some applications in technology but not enough for CAD/CAM and control. Computers are used outside lesson times in the ICT clubs by many students. Most, but not all, also have home computers. Teachers are beginning to use software to analyse data on students' progress but its use to set targets for improvement is still underdeveloped. The school website works well and is a rapidly expanding source of information. Some new interactive whiteboards are being imaginatively used, but there is scope for more planned use of computers by students to improve achievement in subject lessons.

### **HUMANITIES**

#### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good** with some very good features.

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

- Good relationships support positive attitudes towards geography
- There is very good learning in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching
- The assessment structure is very thorough and students have a very clear idea of how they can improve
- The department is very well led
- There are limited opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9
- Additional support for students, particularly those with special educational needs is very effective.

## Commentary

90. By Year 9, students are working at the national expectation with present standards in Year 9 indicating good achievement as the students have made considerable progress since Year 7. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is above the national average. Achievement in Year 11 is very good because of the very wide range of learning activities supported by some very good teaching. Achievement overall is good. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because of very good support from teachers and in particular from the geography teaching assistant. The A\* to C GCSE results in 2004 were well above national expectations with 72 per cent of students securing the higher grades, with boys achieving significantly better than the girls. The achievement of these particular students was excellent.
91. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. The best lessons are characterised by a very knowledgeable and well-planned delivery that provides a highly effective, structured and stimulating learning environment. One of the main priorities of the department is to develop the thinking skills of all students. This is a successful strategy because there are effective question and answer sessions with the full range of students making significant and thoughtful contributions. There is good challenge for all students to stretch and extend their oral skills. Students also have strong study skills and work with considerable focus and application. A very extensive range of visual and written materials develops students' learning well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in the smaller classes in the other years. There are very well planned assessments at the end of each module, with further activities within each piece of work. Peer and self-marking further develop the students' understanding of what they need to do to improve. As a result, students are able to develop their skills very effectively and the assessment is crucial to the improving achievement level throughout the course. There is very effective support for individual students during the lessons and the excellent partnership between the teachers and the teaching assistant is a particularly strong feature of the department. Students are encouraged to work closely with each other and the strong relationships support the effective sharing of ideas.
92. Leadership and management are very good because there is a very clear vision focused on further improvement with the schemes of work regularly reviewed and improved. There is a very strong emphasis on teamwork which has supported the development of a range of very good resources. Although there is a good range of fieldwork for the GCSE students, the practical investigations in Years 7 to 9 are currently limited to working on the school site. The departmental improvement plan makes a significant contribution to the overall school strategy. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because standards are higher, teaching and learning improved and the leadership and management very secure.

## History

Provision in history is **very good** with excellent features.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding quality of teaching of the head of department, which is based on an excellent understanding of how to teach and how students learn, and stems from an expert knowledge of the curriculum
- The meticulous planning that underpins student achievement
- The excellent contribution made by the teaching assistant to the success of the department
- In Years 10 and 11, some students lack personal ambition and are inclined to be passive learners – teachers have to work very hard to instil motivation.

## Commentary

93. In 2004, results at GCSE were slightly above the national average as 63 per cent of students gained A\* to C grades. Results in history are regularly amongst the strongest in the school.
94. By the end of Year 9, students generally show good knowledge and understanding of the historical events and personalities they are studying. Where teaching demands it, listening skills are significantly above average. Students follow instructions well and become confident in extracting information from a broad

range of written and pictorial sources. Overall, thinking skills, through regular work on processing and evaluating information, are developing well. Students are able to synthesise and adapt what they learn in class and the most able show imagination in their approach to historical interpretation. Although some written answers lack detail, prompted by their teachers, students make good progress in sequencing and linking historical information.

95. By the end of Year 11, students' historical knowledge and understanding has deepened. They are able to construct and substantiate arguments, and the highest attainers show perception in their answers. Most students are reflective and many demonstrate a well-developed ability to ask, and answer questions. When managed well in class, students are generally responsive to the directions of their teachers and work productively. However, some students lack focus and are reluctant to take responsibility in pursuing independent lines of historical enquiry. Teachers expend very considerable energies in sustaining student motivation.
96. Overall, student achievement across the age range is at least good, and can be very good, even excellent when teaching is of that quality. In Years 10 and 11, individual progress can sometimes be hindered by a lack of ambition.
97. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The head of department is an outstanding practitioner and he models teaching that is passionate, inspiring and consistently challenging. Lessons are meticulously planned and paced; the individual needs of all students are carefully considered and refinements are systematically introduced in response to delivery. By applying a graduated approach in which each section of the lesson is seamlessly linked, teachers avoid student overload and ensure that information is accessible to a disparate group of learners. Questioning, using a carefully chosen language register, is very skilful and involves students in actively developing historical judgements. Lessons are imaginative and draw upon an intuitive understanding of how to relate to students across the ability range and the excellent quality of learning resources, designed and produced by the department. The head of department's clarity of exposition, use of humour and seemingly inexhaustible range of anecdotes contributes to everyone's enjoyment of the subject, so that student attention remains tight in lessons of up to ninety minutes duration. Overall, students learn very well because lessons are fun and a rich variety of carefully selected activities and tasks have the level of challenge required to keep them working very productively.
98. A dedicated teaching assistant, who is a trained historian, contributes very significantly to the success of the department. By providing carefully honed support to students with special educational needs, both in class and in the regular out-of-hours revision sessions run by the department, and by contributing wholeheartedly and conscientiously to planning meetings and resource production, she has added the extra dimension required to lift the confidence and learning of the less able. The quality of her work is also mirrored in the readiness of higher attaining students to seek her counsel.
99. The department provides very well for a wide range of students' learning styles and a very clear emphasis is placed on the development of literacy. Homework is set regularly and is carefully linked to lessons. However, there is scope to develop skills of extended writing, and to promote independent learning through regular research assignments. Teachers are conscientious in checking books and they provide an excellent quality of feedback to students. Marking is thorough and includes identification of errors in grammar and spelling; all students are told in detail what they need to do to improve. Exemplary use is made of an interactive whiteboard and PowerPoint in teaching, and ICT is well integrated into schemes of work.
100. Leadership of the subject is excellent and the quality of management is very good. The head of department has clarity of vision and very high aspirations. There is an impressively strong commitment to improve pupil performance, which is reflected in a powerful work ethic and rigorous attention to planning and the curriculum. The teaching team of three, which includes a newly qualified teacher and the teaching assistant, demonstrates an excellent sense of purpose, which is likely to be enhanced by plans to introduce more team teaching. Key policies are in place. There is effective monitoring of performance data and painstaking review of patterns of attainment. Appropriate priorities, including constant extension of the most able students in order to reach the top grades at GCSE, are being set for the future. The department recognises the need to improve the quality of schemes of work by adding reference to the

development of key ICT and literacy skills and for the ongoing review of assessment opportunities. For the future, there is also substantial scope to broaden the perspectives of the students and add a stronger global dimension through the provision of extra-curricular activities and a far wider range of educational visits.

101. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The lack of curriculum time for the subject in Years 10 and 11 means that students do not receive their proper entitlement
- A lack of specialist leadership and management is currently limiting the subject's development
- The subject makes an unsatisfactory contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
- Not enough is done to use assessment data to inform the planning of new work and track students' progress.

### **Commentary**

102. Standards are being affected because the subject does not have, currently, specialist teaching. The school has been unsuccessful in its considerable efforts to recruit a subject specialist. Although the school managed to appoint a subject specialist, the person left after two terms, leaving the school, once again, without specialist teaching. At the time of the inspection, lessons were being taught by one unqualified teacher and through supply cover. Furthermore, the subject is not currently taught to students in Years 10 and 11. Students do not receive their proper entitlement and statutory requirements are not met.
103. By Year 9, standards are well below average in relation to the locally agreed syllabus. Given students' well below average standards on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory achievement. When the subject was taught by a specialist teacher, students achieved well. However, there is clear evidence of underachievement in Years 7 and 8. Students make gains in knowledge and understanding of religions, but they do not always link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences.
104. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Students are not developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts because the teachers do not have an effective approach. Lessons tend to concentrate on the teaching of basic facts and students are not provided with enough opportunities to apply their learning to their everyday lives. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory but, although students are provided with enough support, not enough is done to provide them with work to match their particular needs. Teachers' expectations are too low and there is insufficient challenge for most students. Assessment is unsatisfactory. There is inconsistency in the marking of students' work and variation in the interpretation of the standards being achieved. In addition, the current procedures do not provide a firm basis for assessing what students know and understand. Students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.
105. The school's current arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The newly appointed head of subject left after two terms and this has led to a complete lack of specialist teaching. A member of the senior management team currently has strategic oversight of the subject and, although he approaches the task with great commitment, the lack of subject specialism and the extent of his other many commitments does not allow him to tackle the many issues facing the subject, especially in teaching styles and strategies, and in assessment for learning. There is a need to provide a departmental development plan to address current priorities that will have an impact on students' achievement. Not enough is done to monitor the work of teacher and students.



106. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. Not enough opportunities are provided for spiritual development. Students are not sufficiently assisted to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life because of the lack of specialist teaching. Not enough opportunities are provided for students to reflect upon their experiences.
107. As a consequence, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students get insufficient experience of design and technology in Years 7 to 9 to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, providing a weak foundation for those who commence GCSE courses
- Students' progress improves as they go through the school. Specialist teaching fully impacts at GCSE level
- Students' experience is too limited, as they do not study about systems and control and modern materials sufficiently
- Computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is used too infrequently to give students an effective experience.

### Commentary

108. Last year in the GCSE examination, results were broadly in line with national averages, with A\* to C results being well below and the A\* to G results above average. Fewer students follow a GCSE course than nationally.
109. Attainment on entry is below the national expectation and at the end of Year 9, students' standards are still below the national expectation. Additionally, only a few students achieve the higher levels. Achievement is satisfactory across the key stage, with boys and girls achieving similarly. Progress is now improving. There is good provision in textiles and food technology but staff shortages meant that students in Year 9 have had too little experience of working in wood, metal and plastic in the earlier years. These weaknesses, and the fact that students do not study complex control systems and utilise Smart and modern materials sufficiently, means that the National Curriculum is not being taught as it should. In addition, the use of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) requires further development.
110. Achievement is good on the GCSE courses because students with limited experience and below average attainment are getting results broadly at national standards. This has required a lot of commitment by staff and students to catch up the missing time, particularly in the product design area that has suffered the most.
111. The school is creatively resolving the subject staffing difficulties and these are starting to bear fruit. A textiles teacher has been recruited and has completed the necessary training and another teacher is following a conversion programme to become a specialist teacher. Of necessity, these matters take time and the strong leadership within the department is enabling these developments. More still needs to be done, for even with this staffing, the National Curriculum cannot be fully delivered and another member of staff is required for this to be realised. The school is conscious of this and is looking to recruit further staff, even if they have to train more teachers themselves.
112. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good; overall, it is good. Assessment structures have improved, enabling learners to learn more effectively. The long lessons have to be broken into smaller tasks to make them effective, but even then, some lessons slow markedly in the last twenty minutes. The best teaching is extremely well planned and organised, has clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students and proceeds with pace and vigour. All students, even those with lower concentration spans, are kept on task and produce good work and learn well. This is because lessons are broken into 'bite-sized' pieces and constant pace, change of direction and task together with a sense of excitement, fun and

endeavour ratchet up standards. In the more mundane lessons, some of these good elements are missing. The good relationships support the challenge and pace of teaching and learning.

113. The department has been through a period of serious decline due to staffing difficulties but it is now starting to improve markedly. There is still much to be done and the school is supporting the development through innovative staff training and planned building upgrading. Day-to-day leadership by the head of department is good because of the high degree of commitment to improvement and the high level of support given to colleagues. Leadership of the whole subject is still unsatisfactory because there is a statutory breach at Key Stage 3 and the school's thoughtful plans have not yet fully impacted.
114. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

Provision in art is **very good**.

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

- Examination results have been consistently well above average over many years, and the department is focussed on the pursuit of excellence
- Creativity and skill development are equally important in the department
- Three-dimensional work and ceramics are of high quality
- Display in the department and around the school is well used both to celebrate success and to inspire others.

#### **Commentary**

115. Examination results have been consistently well above the national average over many years, and current Year 10 and 11 groups indicate that this level of work is still in place. Students on the new '3D' course in Year 10 are working at a similarly high level.
116. Achievement is very good. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9, and well above average in Years 10 and 11. Work is carefully planned to be exciting, creative and, above all, attainable. Students arrive expecting to succeed. There is a firm foundation of observed drawing, and a wide spectrum of skills and techniques. Sketch books are very well used as tools for development, and the links between this research and experiment and final pieces is clear. The very good work in art-based literacy is progressive from Year 7, and leads to high quality annotations in the sketch books of examination students. Speech frames help students to verbalise their responses, with direct consequences for written annotations. Three-dimensional work is a strength involving both sculpture and ceramics; the clay heads are very skilfully made. The art rooms are like Aladdin's cave – exciting places where inspiration and creativity are made accessible.
117. Teaching and learning are both very good. The lessons are characterised by very good relationships leading to a very good learning atmosphere. The work is carefully structured in small steps from the beginning of Year 7 through to the end of Year 11, and students experience the delights of success from the beginning. The department is built around the pursuit of excellence; staff believe in the students who learn to believe in themselves. The nature of the tasks enables all students to succeed, with the open-ended tasks providing opportunities to excel. Students with special needs attain very well in art, and the successful examination groups include a significant proportion of such students. The excellent assessment system where National Curriculum criteria and levels in student-friendly terms clearly support self-assessment is a powerful tool for the high aspirations of the department.
118. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department is carefully balancing the need to reinforce existing good practice with the need for new initiatives. There is already a strong sense of common purpose. Resources are good, but ICT resources are insufficient to give easy access as appropriate within the curriculum. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but the work related aspect is underdeveloped. A textiles course in Year 10 is now part of the art provision. Very good support is given for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and inspiration is a frequent factor. Attitudes

and behaviour are very good, with students accepting responsibility for their own learning. The department takes full advantage of any opportunities for 'artists in residence' type work. There is a good programme of gallery visits, and the high quality display work in the school is extended into the community, with many examples of the school's work in the community.

119. The very high standards at the last inspection have been maintained, and further developments are in place.

## **Drama**

The provision for drama is **satisfactory** and improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards seen are below average but overall achievement is satisfactory
- Teaching is satisfactory with good features and within context the teacher is doing well
- There is a clear commitment by the teacher to establish the subject and for students to achieve well.

### **Commentary**

120. Standards in the GCSE examination were below average in 2004 as indicated by A\* to C grades but all students gained an A\* to G grade. Numbers taking the examination were relatively small. Standards of work seen are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 although a range of attainment was evident and included some talented students. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 students were in the early stages of devising their examination work and standards were likely to rise as they shaped and refined their work. The reason why standards are below average at the end of Year 9 is that the drama programme starts in Year 8 and is linked to the design and technology rotation. Students do not get as much curriculum time in drama as in many schools and this is reflected in overall standards. Given their starting point, overall achievement is sound.
121. The quality of teaching is overall satisfactory with some teaching that is good. There are a number of good features. The teacher brings energy, commitment, enthusiasm as well as considerable subject knowledge to the lessons. He is still forging his relationships with some classes because of the carousel arrangements but has managed to develop a positive friendly relationship with older classes, particularly Year 10. In the mask work with this class, there was evident good progress in the unit of work, evidence of good teaching over time and overall good achievement. Students in this class and in the Year 11 lesson seen had positive attitudes to the subject. He has high expectations, both of the students and himself. Work is well planned and draws on detailed structured schemes of work.
122. It is inappropriate to make judgements about the overall leadership and management of this one-person department at this stage. Nevertheless, there are good features. Above all is a determination by the teacher to establish the subject and for students to achieve well. The teacher has devised an introduced an assessment structure (unlike many other subjects, there is no nationally laid down structure of levels in drama) which gives clear criteria and helps students identify where they are at and what they have to do in order to improve. He is also clearly prepared to structure and adjust the curriculum in the light of experience. The teacher has done a great deal to establish the subject's credibility that overall provision is satisfactory. This is not veiled criticism but recognition of what has been achieved in a relatively short space of time and upon which he is clearly continuing to build.

## Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made appropriate management decisions in difficult circumstances concerning staffing
- National Curriculum coverage for music is inadequate, if the present system where a significant proportion of students in Years 7 to 9 do not have music lessons continues in the long term
- The assessment system does not link National Curriculum criteria or levels in all topics
- ICT to resource composition with Years 10 and 11 remains inadequate.

### Commentary

123. The illness of the head of department is having serious consequences for provision in music. The school has made the appropriate decision to cover examination work using the part time teacher with non-specialist support, but to replace music lessons for many students in Years 7 to 9 with non-musical provision of good quality. If this were to continue in the long term, the requirements of the National Curriculum would not be met. One consequence of the current situation is that the very lively extra-curricular programme in music has had to be suspended.
124. Students enter the school below the national average; examination results are well above average, although numbers are small. Current Year 11 students are not working at this high level. Achievement in lessons seen was good. Standards were below average. Specifically musical skills are rare, and even with the examination groups, the proportion that play instruments is small. This makes the necessary understanding and use of staff notation very challenging. However, the sense of pulse in ensemble and individual work is good, and one Year 11 trumpeter played well with style and accuracy.
125. Teaching and learning are both good. Lessons are characterised by good relationships and clear target-setting. The long lessons are well structured with variety built in, and students know what is expected of them- the examination lessons had a powerful sense of urgency. Where possible, listening and analysis was backed up with practical work, as with the Indian music heard. Questioning is good. The work by staff to minimise the negative impact of the current situation is impressive.
126. Leadership and management from both the school and the part time teacher in charge are good. The decision to avoid the potential problems of music supply cover is entirely appropriate, and a good 'holding strategy' is in place. Some resources are very good, such as the keyboard suite, but there are weaknesses in tuned percussion and ICT, which was an issue at the last inspection and is still totally inadequate for the composition needs of examination students. Recording equipment has improved, and is just adequate.
127. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but not being taught to many students at the moment. Work related learning is undeveloped. ICT using the sequencing facilities of the keyboard suite is good with Years 7 to 9, but minimal with Years 10 and 11. A good foundation has been laid for assessment, but topics are not linked to National Curriculum criteria or levels to resource self-assessment. There is a long tradition of links with '*The Anvil*' – the local theatre/arts centre, and the school has taken full advantage of any opportunities, and is currently involved in a ceilidh project. Instrumental teaching is provided through the LEA service; recent price increases have resulted in a drop in numbers of students involved.
128. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but ICT resources for composition work at examination level are still very weak.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and lesson planning which engages the interests of students and contributes to the good achievement
- Strong leadership and management which ensure consistency among teachers
- Variable quality of accommodation which limits curriculum breadth.

### Commentary

129. Standards in Year 9 and for the examination groups in Year 11 are on a par with national averages which represents good achievement overall. Standards in Years 7 to 9 tend to be higher in single gender lessons and there is scope to review the purpose of the sport education course. Results in the GCSE examination are below national averages for the higher A\* to C grades but, reflect an improving trend over recent years. Standards for those Year 11 students who have difficulty in managing the traditional curriculum and are taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award (JSLA) are above average, representing excellent achievement. Although it was not possible to observe any Year 10 or 11 core physical education lessons during this inspection, consistently good achievement was evident from boys and girls, those from higher and lower ability groups and, from students with special educational needs.
130. Good achievement occurs because teaching is good overall and in Year 10 and Year 11 there are examples of very good or excellent teaching and learning. In Years 7 to 9, teachers establish the basic skills, building effectively on students' prior learning. Teachers question students skilfully to measure their understanding of tasks. Groups are well managed and tasks generally engage students' interest: they contribute with enthusiasm. However, the sport education course lacks sufficient definition, objectives are unclear and some students' behaviour deteriorates affecting the progress of others. Other lessons are well structured, particularly the GCSE lessons, where teachers use some very good resources to challenge students to think for themselves. In very good and excellent lessons, teachers have the confidence to set tasks, step back and let students use their knowledge to provide their own solutions to problems. This is extended in JSLA lessons, where very good links have been established with the local primary school, teachers focus on teaching skills and students use their knowledge to teach others. These students demonstrate maturity in their understanding of the subject matter and of how students learn: many teach with real confidence and skill. Teachers use assessment to review the curriculum but assessment criteria do not always reflect students' planning and evaluating skills sufficiently.
131. The head of department has been in post for a year and has achieved cohesion, consistency and purpose within the team of teachers. Documentation is thorough and used effectively to standardise teaching and learning within the subject. Leadership and management are good. There remain some concerns about the curriculum, the emphasis towards invasion games, use of time in some very long, three-session lessons, and in providing assessment evidence for students' knowledge and understanding. Risk assessment is underdeveloped and there remains scope for development of the use of ICT by students. Although teachers use the facilities well, accommodation ranges from good to poor: the floor surfaces do not accommodate gymnastics easily, changing areas are often cramped, outdoor courts surfaces and netting need attention and the jumping pits and take off boards need repair and replacement.
132. Provision for extra-curricular sport is good. The school sports co-ordinator has worked hard to develop sport within the whole community, creating good links with clubs and the leisure centre. Curriculum links with primary schools are beginning to be effective, allowing good progression from primary to secondary phases of education. The school has achieved notable successes in area and regional competitions in a variety of sports and individual students have been encouraged to pursue their specialist sports with great success.
133. Progress since the last inspection is very good.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good** with very good features.

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

- Lessons are well planned and teachers have very good relationships with students
- Results are above the national average and have improved consistently each year
- Most students have good attitudes to work; they behave and achieve well overall
- ICT is readily available in lessons and used very well by students
- Satisfactory links with local business and industry are being developed further, including a new e-mentoring scheme supported by a local computer manufacturer.

#### **Commentary**

134. Students gained GCSE examination grades that, in 2004, were above the national average, as nearly three-quarters of students gained grades of C or above. Results show consistent improvement from previous years, and similarly high levels in 2003. Most students performed better than expected in the examination in relation to their attainment on entry to GCSE, and achieved well. The attainment of girls and boys was similarly high.
135. In lessons and course work seen, standards of current students meet national expectations, and girls and boys achieve well overall. Year 11 results are predicted to be as high as in 2004, with about a third of students likely to achieve very well. Year 10 students are beginning to understand differences between sole traders and partnerships and higher-attaining students draw neat, accurate break-even charts. Year 11 students discuss good ideas for starting their own local businesses for GCSE course work. They use ICT effectively to draw graphs of market research surveys based on questionnaires. Most students show good attitudes to work, and are well motivated by interesting tasks. The standard of literacy and numeracy of some written notes and homework in Year 10 was below expectations.
136. Teaching and learning are good overall, with very good features. In three lessons seen, teachers had very good relationships with students, and very good subject expertise helped them understand difficult financial concepts such as working capital. Homework is set regularly. Gifted and talented students took the lead in oral presentations on sources of finance to the class, although they are not always given extended tasks for homework. Students' work is usually marked thoroughly, and feedback to students is very constructive. A very good initiative is the way students regularly assess each other's work, but students would benefit from assessing their own case study work more thoroughly. Teachers use opportunities for developing literacy through using ICT well in class work.
137. Leadership and management are very good overall as the experienced teacher monitors students' progress effectively. The department is implementing plans to raise achievement and develop more links with local businesses well, and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

### **Leisure and tourism**

Overall provision in leisure and tourism is **good** with very good features.

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

- Standards of work are below average but students are achieving well due to very good teaching
- Curriculum leadership and management are very good in this newly introduced subject
- Some good links with national leisure facilities are planned, although links with local facilities have not yet been developed
- Students in the small Year 10 class show very good attitudes to work, and are interested in the practical tasks which help develop ICT skills and self-confidence.

## Commentary

138. The double-option GCSE course has recently been introduced in Year 10, and has made a very good start. Although standards of work seen in lessons are below average, female and male students are making very good progress in lessons, and achieving well overall from very low starting points at the end of Year 9.
139. In three lessons sampled, students used ICT (information and communications technology) effectively to research information on a theme park website, and produced attractive advertising leaflets for a promotional campaign. They learnt about the objectives of leisure marketing through discussing marketing strategies with increasing confidence, and developed a good, critical awareness of key issues. Although their levels of literacy and numeracy were well below average when they started the new course last September, their achievement to date has been above expectations. They show very positive attitudes to work and are developing good skills of working independently.
140. Teaching and learning are very good. In lessons seen, the experienced teacher was very skilled in encouraging students to participate in interesting and practical tasks. In lessons, the teacher assessed students' progress well, and gave them encouraging and constructive feedback on how they could improve literacy and numeracy. Very good teacher/student relationships and effective lesson planning so that activities could be successfully tackled in 'bite-size' chunks helped students, including those with special educational needs, develop a keen interest in their work and gain the self-confidence to offer their opinions about promotional techniques freely.
141. Curriculum leadership and management are very good overall, and further new developments including visits to theme parks in Europe, are planned, though visits have not yet taken place. The range of equipment and materials used is good, and there is very good capacity for further improvement.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

It was not possible to see any personal, social and health education or citizenship lessons. The programme is taught by form tutors on a rolling programme. The programme includes citizenship, sex, health and drugs education and meets the requirements to teach these aspects.

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students follow a planned course in citizenship education that includes personal development and health education
- Good planning and organisation of the curriculum
- Not enough is done to monitor the work of tutors and subjects to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum
- Not enough is done to assess students' achievement and progress.

## Commentary

142. By Year 9, standards are well below average in relation to what is expected. This represents satisfactory achievement. Students are making gains in their knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship. By Year 11, standards are below average. Students demonstrate a sound understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities and can relate these to their own and others' experiences. Their achievement is good because they can apply their learning to new situations.
143. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to students' personal development. Citizenship education is taught within the personal development programme by form tutors. It is partly supported by related themes and topics covered in other subjects, especially in the humanities subjects, who make a significant contribution. There is little explicit identification of citizenship in subjects and some students are unclear whether they are studying citizenship. Students have

additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school Council. This is valued by students and enables them to contribute to the life of the school. Not enough opportunities are currently provided within the wider community for students to participate fully in active citizenship.

144. It was not possible to see any teaching of citizenship during the inspection. However, in the work seen in other lessons, the range of teaching styles and concentration on the development of communication skills enables students to express their own thoughts, feelings and actions. Not enough is done to assess and record students' achievement and progress in citizenship, although the school does provide an annual report to parents on the progress students are making in the subject.
145. The curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the subject and shows good leadership. The programme is being developed well and significant steps have already been taken to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. Monitoring of the work of the subject is not sufficiently developed in order to ensure consistency in the teaching of the subject. Satisfactory progress is being made in the development of citizenship and this provides a firm base for further success.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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