

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITLEY ABBEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103734

Headteacher: Mrs Lorraine Allen

Lead inspector: Dr Pauline Buzing OBE

Dates of inspection: May 16-19, 2005

Inspection number: 268517

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	746
School address:	Abbey Road Coventry
Postcode:	CV3 4DB
Telephone number:	024 7630 2580
Fax number:	024 7663 9352
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss Maureen Emms
Date of previous inspection:	October 12-25 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Whitley Abbey School is an 11-18 five form entry mixed comprehensive school, close to the centre of Coventry. At the time of the inspection there were 746 pupils on roll, which makes it smaller than most schools of this type. The sixth form is also small: there are currently 52 male and female students and the school is part of a local consortium for sixth form provision. For some 'A' level subjects, students are educated at neighbouring schools, who, in their turn, send some of their students to Whitley Abbey.

The school serves a mixed socio-economic area, although a significant proportion of the pupils come from areas of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average at 22 per cent. The proportion of pupils on the register for special educational need is also above average at 25 per cent, and the percentage of students who have Statements of Special Educational Needs is also above average. The main areas of special needs are in social and emotional behaviour, in moderate and severe learning difficulties, and in aspects of speech and language. A number of pupils in each year group has a mother tongue other than English, mostly from community language backgrounds such as Panjabi or Urdu. Eight pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. Some 26 pupils are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is average, and is not a major factor in its work. The school was given a Healthy Schools Award in 2003 and a School Achievement Award in 2001.

Overall, pupils' standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are below average on entry to the school, compared to those in the country as a whole at the age of 11, although the school's data show that in some years, entry standards have been well below average. The school has

come through a very difficult period since the previous inspection: the move to new buildings in 2000 coincided with a very large budget deficit and this has constrained many aspects of development.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15849	P Buzzing	Lead inspector	
11575	C Fish	Lay inspector	
3174	W J Powell	Team inspector	Business education 16-18
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English 11-18
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-18
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science 11-16
3555	C Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16
18638	C Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-18
21975	A King	Team inspector	Modern languages 11-16
2740	B Barratt	Team inspector	Special educational needs, history 11-16
32178	J Shears	Team inspector	Geography 11-16
10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education 11-16; citizenship 11-16
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16, business education 11-16, English as an additional language
3163	J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music 11-16
20395	C Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	17
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	26
WORK RELATED LEARNING	29
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	57

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school has come through a long and difficult period since the move to new buildings in 2000. Severe financial constraints, together with prolonged staff illness and absence, led to a high staff turnover. Spending on all development, including resources, was halted, and temporary appointments to cover absences led to discontinuity in many pupils' learning. That period is over now. Staffing is more stable and **the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory**. Standards have improved after a drop in 2003, and the proportion of good or better teaching has increased. A new headteacher took up post in January 2004 and made substantial changes. The full impact of these has yet to be felt, but there has been significant progress on many important matters. The value for money provided by the school, including the sixth form, is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students in the sixth form do better than might be expected.
- The headteacher leads very well, supported by a good senior leadership group: the vision of improvement for the school is clear.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language.
- The weak literacy skills of a significant minority of pupils are not improved fast enough.
- The school provides well for the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils, and gives them good guidance and support.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils adversely affects learning in some lessons.
- Links with the community and with other schools are good.
- There is less good and very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in the rest of the school.
- The provision for art and design is unsatisfactory.
- The annual reports that parents receive are unsatisfactory.
- The combination of staffing difficulties and a large budget deficit have left a legacy of unsatisfactory provision in enrichment activities and limited resources.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The new headteacher and her senior group have focused on teaching, learning and assessment, and improvement is evident in most subjects. Standards have improved and achievement is now at least satisfactory in almost all subjects. The school now evaluates its performance and acts to improve how well it is doing. Literacy is a weakness, limiting achievement for a significant minority of pupils and students.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		All schools			Similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	E	E	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E	E	

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Although achievement in art and design is still unsatisfactory, the overall picture is improving. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results have been rising at the same rate as the national trend. In 2004, results were well below average for all schools in English, and below average in mathematics and science. Overall, they were below average. In comparison

with similar schools, results were below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science: overall, they were average. This represents satisfactory achievement, given the pupils' results in the tests they took when they were in Year 6. Standards seen during the inspection were below average in Years 9 and 11, and average in the sixth form. Achievement is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, and good in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11. There is good achievement in music in Years 7 to 9 and in history and physical education in Years 10 and 11. All other subjects show satisfactory achievement, with the exception of art and design, where achievement is unsatisfactory throughout the school. Achievement in the sixth form is good overall: it is satisfactory in English literature and mathematics, and good in business and ICT.

The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory overall. Attendance and attitudes are satisfactory overall, as is behaviour amongst most pupils. However, a minority of pupils displays unsatisfactory behaviour that sometimes has an adverse effect on work in lessons. Some pupils do not arrive at their lessons promptly, making it difficult for teachers to make a crisp start.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory overall. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is more good teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 because some teachers, often supply, inexperienced or temporary staff, have problems in managing classes in the earlier years. However, more teaching is now good or better than in 1998, leading to a higher percentage of good learning. Assessment has been developed well, and is now satisfactorily supporting learning. Partnerships with the community, links with other schools, and the school's pastoral care, are all good. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but enrichment is unsatisfactory. Accommodation is good, but the quantity and quality of learning resources are unsatisfactory: a result of the period of financial restraint. Partnerships with parents are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The governance of the school is satisfactory, and the school meets statutory requirements, apart from the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and to provide religious education in the sixth form. Leadership is good; the new headteacher's very clear vision for the school is shared by the senior group, and changes have begun to have a significant effect on how the school runs. The school is managed satisfactorily, with rigorous monitoring of its effectiveness.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the school, but inspectors agree with their concerns over the behaviour of some pupils, and of how they are informed of their children's progress. Pupils and students expressed general satisfaction with many aspects of the school, but also had concerns about behaviour and about how little, to date, they have been involved in making decisions about life in the school. All groups reported improvement since the advent of the new headteacher.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Adopt measures to ensure that the written and oral competence of the pupils is improved to enable them to cope effectively with examinations.

- Ensure that all staff apply consistently a clear set of expectations and procedures to establish a more effective learning environment and to deal with lapses in behaviour by a minority of pupils.
 - Increase the percentage of good and very good teaching in Years 7 to 9.
 - Improve provision for art and design.
 - Improve the annual reports that the school sends to parents.
 - Ensure that the unsatisfactory provision in enrichment activities and limited resources are addressed.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Ensure that the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship across the school, and religious education in the sixth form, are fully met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WHITLEY ABBEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Most students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. Standards are rising, the sixth form is well led and managed, and the pastoral care of students is good. Cost effectiveness is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve better than would be expected from their standards on entry to the sixth form.
- Achievement is particularly good in ICT and in the AVCE course in business.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, leading to good learning.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.
- In some subjects there is not enough emphasis on developing independent learning skills.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Satisfactory. Achievement in Year 13 is good because students show independence in their learning, but a greater focus on analytical assignment writing and additional, supportive monitoring are needed.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory, but there is a need to encourage students towards greater independence in their learning.
Information and communication technology	Good. Students achieve well. There needs to be a greater emphasis on independent learning.
Business	Good. Achievement is good overall, very good in Year 13, and is supported by teachers' careful focus on assessment, so that students know what they should do to improve. Writing in course work is of a higher standard than examination answers.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good quality guidance, but in some subjects, assessment is not as well developed as it could be. Students say they value the way the school supports them. This is particularly true where they are the first in their family to stay on at school and look towards higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Although many courses have small numbers, the school is working with others to provide more cost effective ways of delivering courses through a consortium. Governors are well informed about the sixth form, and there is good liaison between the head of sixth form and the senior group.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally positive about the sixth form, and value the way staff treat them as adults. They think their teachers are keen for them to do well. They would like to be more involved with the school's work. Inspectors agree that such development would benefit both the school and the students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, but good in the sixth form. Overall, standards in work seen are below average in Years 9 and 11, and average in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has worked hard on teaching and assessment since 2004 in order to raise achievement.
- After a very difficult period of high staff turnover and a large budget deficit, achievement in the school is now satisfactory.
- Students in the sixth form do better than expected from their standards on entry to their post-16 courses.
- Literacy standards are below average; this limits achievement for a significant proportion of pupils that enters the school with very limited literacy skills.
- Achievement in art is unsatisfactory.
- Science, modern foreign language and business education departments are well placed to help other departments to raise achievement.

Commentary

Main school

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, the data from national tests that the pupils take at the end of Year 6 show that standards in English, mathematics and science are now below average, although earlier data show that standards in previous years were well below average. In some other subjects, standards are still well below average on entry and, in addition, a significant proportion of the pupils have weak language and literacy skills, which affect their learning and limit their achievement.
2. In recent years, the trend in national tests, taken at the end of Year 9, has been rising broadly in line with the national picture, though the results were below those of the national results. In 2004, results were well below average for all schools in English, and below average in mathematics and science. Overall, they were below average. In comparison with similar schools, results were below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science; overall, they were average, and this was an improvement on the previous year's results, although the 2004 results still did not meet the school's targets. When the 2004 results are compared with the same pupils' Year 6 test scores three years earlier, they show that they have done as well as would be expected. This represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 in the core subjects.

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

Standards in	School results	National results
English	31.2 (30.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.9 (34.0)	35.4 (34.7)

Science	31.9 (31.6)	33.5 (33.3)
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There were 148 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The trend in examination results at the end of Year 11 since the previous inspection was rising until 2003, when results dropped. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades dropped again in 2004, but the percentage achieving five or more A* to G grades rose. In comparison to all schools nationally, these two figures are well below average. Compared to schools that had similar average point scores in 2002 in the Year 9 tests, the results are below average for pupils who attained five or more A* to C grades and A* to G grades, but they are well above average for pupils who attained one or more A* to G grades. The trend of the GCSE results has been rising at a rate that is below the national pattern, and last year's Year 11 pupils overall achieved at a rate that is well below what was expected. This reflects instability of staffing and limitations caused by the budget deficit that the school carried for the whole of the period these pupils were in the school. There is much more stability now, and this is having a positive effect on the pupils' achievement.
4. Boys and girls performed differently at GCSE. In 2004, boys' results improved, so that the gap between boys' results and those for boys nationally was smaller than that between girls' results and those of girls nationally, meaning that boys lag behind girls by a smaller margin at the school.
5. In 2004, results were significantly below average in art and design, combined science, design and technology, drama, English, English literature, history, and mathematics. When individuals' results are analysed, pupils - particularly boys - tended to do significantly better in science and in ICT than in the other subjects that they took. However, pupils did significantly less well in art and design, English, English literature, history, and design and technology. In work seen, achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is more often good in Year 10 and 11 lessons than in those that involve the younger pupils.
6. This is because lessons taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9 have been more likely to be taught by temporary staff or supply teachers, and the timetable sometimes provides the very youngest pupils with two teachers for a subject, and this reduces the effectiveness of building upon what has previously been learned. Staffing is now much more stable. In Years 10 and 11, the structure imposed by examination courses and good assessment procedures result in pupils achieving well in many lessons now.

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	32 (35)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (71)	88 (89)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (87)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.5 (26.5)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 146 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In work seen during the inspection, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall, with almost all lessons showing at least satisfactory achievement, and nearly half having good or better achievement. This is the result of the measures put in place over the past four terms, of

improved assessment and target setting, and of the more stable pattern of staffing for the older pupils.

8. Achievement is good in modern foreign languages throughout the school, in history in Years 10 and 11 and in music in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in all other subjects, except for art and design, where achievement is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in provision, including teaching and the planning of the course. Weaknesses in resources limit achievement in some subjects: in science, for example, though the teaching is good throughout the school, inadequate resources mean that the pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
9. Across the school, standards of literacy are below average. The pupils enter the school with below average levels of literacy overall. The range of standards is wide. In each year there are those with high levels of competence, but there is also a significant number with well below average or even very low standards. This group of pupils that enters the school with weak literacy skills in Year 7 finds it difficult to take a full part in learning, since whenever they come to record what they know, understand or can do, they are handicapped. Consequently, inspectors found that weaknesses in oral and written literacy are having a detrimental impact on standards and achievement. Standards of numeracy are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, and pupils make satisfactory achievement. In ICT, standards are below average in Year 9, but have risen to average by Year 11, and achievement is good.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in reaching their individual targets and in improving their reading and comprehension. In lessons their progress is similar to that of other pupils. Their progress is carefully monitored and well supported in many lessons by teaching assistants.
11. Pupils with English as an additional language now have their achievements recorded systematically, though these developments are recent. This applies to their progress both in English and in the other subjects in their curriculum. Records show that pupils make the progress expected, and sometimes better - as in the few who had no recorded literacy competence on arrival. They achieve at least as well as their peers.

Sixth form

12. Standards at entry to the sixth form are below average for sixth forms nationally, both in overall terms, and in the grades required to study specific subjects. Four subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection: English, mathematics, ICT and the AVCE course in business education. In some of these subjects, the groups are too small to make reliable comparisons between the results and national figures, or comparisons between male and female students.
13. Examination results dropped in 2003, but rose in 2004. Data on individual students show much lower value added in previous years than is the case now. This is reflected in the average points score, which rose substantially in 2004. Though the results are still well below average for all students, and also for male students, they are below average for female students. There was also a considerable increase in the percentage of students achieving A or B grades in 2004.
14. Results in A-level English literature and in A-level mathematics were well below average in 2004, but results in ICT were well above average. The numbers taking the business examination were too small to make reliable comparisons with national statistics. The AS level results were average in English but the numbers taking AS level mathematics were too small to make comparisons reliable.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	82.0 (80.1)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	13.5 (8.2)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	186.3	265.2 (258.2)

There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

15. In work seen, standards are above average in ICT in Year 13 and average in English and business in that year group. Standards in mathematics in both year groups are below average, as they are in ICT in Year 12, and they are well below average in English in Year 12. Achievement is good overall; it is good in ICT, in business and in English in Year 13. In mathematics and in English in Year 12, students are achieving as might be expected from their previous results.
16. The school does not offer structured key skills programmes, and within individual subjects these skills are not always adequately reinforced, and this limits achievement. In terms of communication skills, too many students are not reaching average levels of competence: in their use and application of key technical vocabulary; in providing extended oral answers and explanations; or in producing well-structured written answers in a range of contexts to show their knowledge and understanding. In business education, there is a marked difference in the quality of course work, where students have a chance to develop and polish their writing, and examination answers. There was no evidence of numeracy being developed in English, and enrichment opportunities to research mathematics or make use of revision programmes, even in that subject are under utilised.
17. The students' competence in ICT is average and enables them to tackle research and presentation tasks set in the different subjects that they take. Students undertake data analysis using a spreadsheet and graphs as well as essay writing using a word processor. Integrating text and pictures, whether photographs, scanned material or clip-art are common and students are able to access their files on the network from around the school. Students on the A-level business education course achieve a good level of competence due to the more advanced use of computing skills. However, ICT skills are not developed well in mathematics, and opportunities are missed to raise achievement through this key skill in that subject.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory; those of students are good. Overall attendance is satisfactory, but punctuality is unsatisfactory. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has put very good procedures in place to promote better attendance.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour improve as their maturity develops.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils in some lessons has an adverse effect on the learning of others.
- Some pupils are not punctual to lessons.

Commentary

18. The level of attendance is well below average. Nevertheless, it is improving quickly as a result of very robust procedures, and the school has already met the target set for it by the local education authority. The educational welfare officer works closely with the school and her very good efforts, together with procedures put in place by the school, are having a positive effect. Procedures include the introduction of a calling home system and a close watch on groups of pupils known to have problems over attendance. There is evidence that some of the pupils who attend alternative provision part time in Years 10 and 11 go on to improve their attendance at school. The school is also working hard to improve punctuality, with a senior member of staff on duty daily to impress on pupils the importance of time keeping now and in the future. Some success is evident; on one day during the inspection, no pupil in Years 7 or 8 was late. However, pupils do not always arrive on time to lessons and this hinders a crisp start.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11%	School data	2%
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.

19. Many pupils have good attitudes to their education which mature significantly as they move up the school. They were polite, friendly and helpful to inspectors during the inspection. In many classes they are attentive and work hard. Most pupils get on well together and work well with others or on their own. In some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, pupils are well engaged and enjoy their work. However, this is not the case in all subjects where, for example, the provision has been adversely affected by unstable staffing.
20. The introduction of a new behaviour code is reported by many pupils, especially from Year 8 upwards, as having a positive effect. Year 11 pupils particularly talk of the school being a much calmer place. However, this new system is not used consistently across the school and pupils in some classes continue to disturb their own and others' learning through low level disruption, which they get away with because not all staff use the new 'Consequences' protocols sufficiently well. This is partly due to a high turnover of staff and a need, recognised by the school, to develop teachers' ability to implement the system in a fair and non-confrontational way. Pupils with special educational needs work hard and respond well to effective behaviour management in lessons. They work with enthusiasm in lessons and grow in confidence and self- esteem.
21. The school carefully monitors the use of the 'Consequences' programme, and a measure of its success is the reduction in the level of exclusions this. If a pupil is excluded, good and supportive arrangements are in place to ease the pupil back into school, including the use of support from MARA (the on-site multi agencies resource area) where this might be helpful. Bullying is a concern, especially for younger pupils. However, they know what they should do and the school is developing more ways of tackling these concerns, including peer mentors.

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	639	161	0
White – Irish	2	1	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10	6	0
Mixed – White and Black African	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	49	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	3	0

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

22. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The absence of religious education currently in Year 11, and the fact that the school is unable to provide a daily act of collective worship, mean that spiritual development is limited, and barely satisfactory. The school is set to improve this area: from September, the religious education course will continue into Year 11 and meet requirements, and consideration is being given to extending some of the 'Thought for the Day' programmes that exist in some year groups. Moral, social and cultural development are all satisfactory.

Sixth form

23. Students choose to stay at this school to continue their studies because they know and are known by the staff. Attendance is satisfactory, partly because many students are in receipt of EMA (educational maintenance allowance) payments, but chiefly because they want to do well and recognise that they have to work hard to do this. The school follows up on regular non-attendance and reminds those pupils of the link between attendance and achievement.
24. Students have mature attitudes to their studies. They say that self-discipline is needed to study in the sixth form and rise well to this challenge. Most students know what they want to do when they leave, but nearly all those spoken to intend to stay in the area. They are not much involved with the rest of the school, nor do they take part in any formalised support of younger pupils, although they are part of the school council system. However, they do arrange activities for themselves, such as the Leavers' Ball. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is as in the main school. Currently, the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, as are the school's links with parents. Arrangements for the care and guidance of pupils, and partnerships with the wider community and with other schools and colleges are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, leading to satisfactory learning. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and results in good learning. Assessment is now satisfactory throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, with a higher percentage being good or better.
- Teaching in science and modern foreign languages is good overall.
- The teaching of literacy across the curriculum does not address weaknesses in the pupils' reading and writing skills fast enough.
- Too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 continue to show weaknesses in teaching so that learning is sometimes adversely affected.
- The school has made considerable progress with assessment.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 102 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1)	12 (11.7)	43 (41.7)	39 (37.9)	7 (6.8)	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.

Main school

25. The overall quality of teaching and learning has risen since the previous inspection. Then, nearly half the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better and now, the good or better teaching can be seen in six out of every ten lessons. The proportion of teaching that is less than satisfactory, at almost one lesson in 14 is lower than the 1998 figure of more than one lesson in every ten. As at the time of the previous inspection, there is more very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is because the younger year groups have suffered more acutely from the instability caused by high staff turnover, necessitating in the use of temporary staff, shared classes and a high percentage of supply teachers.
26. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to focus on teaching and learning as the core activities of the school, and these are overseen well by the senior leadership group. Improvements in teaching have been hindered by lack of resources, owing to the deficit that the school carried until very recently, and this is still evident in some subjects.

27. Teaching is good overall in modern foreign languages and science throughout the main school, in history and physical education in Years 10 and 11 and in music in Years 7 to 9. However, there are examples of good teaching in every subject. The very good teaching that was seen was mainly in Years 10 and 11, across a range of subjects: English, mathematics, science, ICT, modern foreign languages, history, citizenship, physical education and leisure and tourism. Of the ten very good lessons that were seen in the main school, eight were in Years 10 and 11, and nearly three in every four lessons seen in those year groups had teaching that was good or better. One excellent lesson was seen in science in Year 11, showing that revision can be made interesting and can motivate pupils.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent revision lesson in Year 11 chemistry. The teacher's enthusiasm for her subject, and very high expectations of all pupils contributing soon resulted in a very positive learning atmosphere, despite some initial reluctance. A well-judged starter activity stimulated discussion, providing opportunities to involve all pupils, and praise them. In group work, covering a range of chemical processes, each group moved from one process to another contributing to the recording of key chemical facts. Varied visual stimuli and music contributed to increasing pupils' involvement. Pupils became so engrossed that they did not realise how hard they were working.

A consultant discussed issues, such as the impact of science, and of chemistry in particular, on their everyday lives. His approach helped to develop their emotional well-being; he gained a very good response. There were excellent hints from the teacher on effective revision methods. Finally, all pupils reflected on what they had learnt; they shared this with the rest of the class. Responses included chemical facts, as well as ideas for revision.

Pupils left the laboratory smiling, with enhanced confidence. Enthusiasm, the variety of learning opportunities and the range of topics resulted in capturing their interest, making revision stimulating. The pace of learning was extremely high throughout the 50-minute lesson.

28. Planning for lessons is good overall and teachers are conscientious. The better teaching has four main characteristics: lessons have a crisp start; teachers engage the interest and attention of the pupils; teachers' classroom management skills are good, and there is a good range of activities with timed targets to keep up the pace of the lesson. Science and modern foreign languages are particularly strong here. Where all these features are present, teaching is often very good.
29. However, it is not easy to achieve such an outcome. A minority of pupils tends to drift into lessons late, and one or two pupils in some classes are difficult to interest, so that teachers have to expend a lot of energy keeping them on task. This is particularly the case in Years 7 to 9. Where teachers fail to engage the interest of the pupils, learning suffers and achievement slows. This was observed in the seven lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory. Six of these were in Years 7 to 9. Here, again, the impact of the deficit budget is sometimes evident, since teachers often do not have the range of resources they need to interest pupils who are working at many different levels.
30. The teaching of literacy skills across all subjects is unsatisfactory. For example, in geography there is not enough explicit development of the required writing skills such as how to compare and contrast. In design technology references to key vocabulary are inconsistent; there is not enough expectation and guidance regarding extended language and sentence structures; and there is not enough emphasis on how to write for different audiences and purposes. Comments of this nature also apply to other subjects. In addition, there is not enough attention to the accuracy of the pupils' work. Enhancing the support for pupils' literacy skills across all subjects through more consistent teaching of the skills is an important priority
31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In many subjects, including science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education, teaching is good. In nearly all others it is satisfactory. Teaching is most successful where work is well planned to

meet pupils' individual needs, as in modern foreign languages, history and physical education, and where specialist classroom support is available. In ICT and music in particular, lack of specialist support hinders progress. Pupils' individual education plans provide clear targets for improvement. They are kept under regular review and assessment procedures as a whole are thorough and systematic resulting in pupils' progress being monitored carefully.

32. The school has good contacts with the local authority's support staff for pupils with English as an additional language and make good use of these teachers to help pupils. After notification of pupils' arrival, assessment is undertaken appropriately by these teachers and proper support is provided either in lessons, or through withdrawals. Pupils' learning is satisfactory, in common with their peers. Assessment tracks their progress and is significantly more thorough than it was until this year.
33. Parents expressed concern that homework was insufficient, not set at all in some classes, and generally, not used well enough to promote learning. The use of homework was broadly satisfactory during the inspection, although discussions with pupils and scrutiny of books suggested that in a few cases, this was not the norm. In the lower years of the school, these shortcomings are often related to the high turnover of staff.
34. Assessment at whole school level is satisfactory. The senior leadership group has recently introduced some good procedures with the clear intention of raising standards and targeting underachievement. These include the use of standardised national tests, termly assessments and progress reports. It is too early at this stage to gauge the impact of these developments. Senior managers analyse the available assessment data and value-added factors thoroughly as a basis for target setting, which is now a requirement in all departments. However, inconsistencies persist. Whilst very good assessment of pupils' work and progress exists in science and modern foreign languages, practices remain unsatisfactory in art and design and religious education in all years, and in design technology and history in Years 7 to 9. These islands of good practice could usefully kick-start developments in other subjects. In 2004, the school did not comply with the statutory assessment and reporting requirements in citizenship. Plans are in hand to rectify this by July 2005.
35. The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is satisfactory. To date, arrangements are better in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower school because the focus has been on using data to set realistic targets for each pupil in his or her examination courses. Good monitoring and intervention strategies in Year 11 include individual pupil mentoring by senior managers, booster classes, twilight sessions and a revision school during the Easter holidays. Similar approaches to targeting underachievement and monitoring progress are emerging for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The school's monitoring procedures involving middle managers, both academic and pastoral, show promise. A recently installed computerised record keeping system is proving a useful aid in tracking individual pupils' progress. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is rigorous. The sharing of good practice regarding assessment as a tool for learning at all levels is in its infancy.
36. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is unsatisfactory overall. Most know their targets, their National Curriculum levels or predicted GCSE grades, but many remain unsure about what they need to do in subject specific terms to reach the next level. Inconsistencies in marking and feedback by subject teachers have yet to be fully resolved. Pupils tend to receive clearer guidance in Years 10 and 11 than lower down the school, because teachers' marking is more frequently linked to course criteria by this stage. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Sixth form

37. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall; so is learning. Within the focus subjects, teaching is good in ICT, English in Year 13 and business and satisfactory in mathematics in both years, and in English in Year 12. The strengths of the best teaching are in the teachers' good subject knowledge. In business, there are additional strengths in the very good use of assessment to focus the students' thinking on how they can improve their work; ICT teachers are meticulous in marking work regularly so that students know how to improve, and they create a good match of challenge to the needs of individual students in the tasks they set. Challenge is evident in the work set for Year 13 in English, and the students respond well, but there is a need to focus more closely on the techniques of writing A-level assignments, and to reduce the amount of passive learning. In mathematics, though the teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge and give their time freely out of lessons to support students, there is sometimes too much teacher talk and not enough independence in learning is developed.
38. Assessment is satisfactory in the sixth form. Relevant data analyses and value added procedures ensure that transition from the main school is good. Effective liaison with other schools in the consortium provides for the transfer of examination data as new students join the sixth form. There is appropriate monitoring of standards and achievement by the head of sixth form, tutors and subject teachers. Target setting arrangements are developing satisfactorily. Of the four subjects inspected in depth, business education leads the way in the thoroughness and constructiveness of its assessment methods. In this curriculum area, assessment is accurate and informative; it is a spur to raising students' achievements. Procedures in English, mathematics and ICT are satisfactory overall; they including some useful references to examination criteria in marking.
39. The use of assessment information to respond to individual needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good awareness of each student's capabilities and whether they are meeting their subject targets or not. However, they could be more explicit in helping individuals to understand their strengths, weaknesses and what they need to do next. With the exception of business studies, where the teacher's constant reference to grade criteria encourages students to engage in self and peer assessment, sixth formers at the school tend to be less involved in the assessment process than is usual at this stage of their development.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory at all levels of the school. Opportunities for enrichment are unsatisfactory overall. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory overall because of the widespread limitations caused by many years of underspending on learning resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is now evolving to provide a better match to the needs of pupils and students in the 14 to 19 age range, though weaknesses in resources hinder development in some subjects.
- The consortium arrangements with other schools allow a small sixth form to operate at satisfactory cost effectiveness.
- The school's arrangements to promote the development of literacy need strengthening.
- Staffing difficulties have led to "patching" within the timetable, and unsatisfactory enrichment opportunities that do not always ensure continuity of learning.

- The statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form is not met.
- Accommodation is good, but the quality and quantity of resources are unsatisfactory overall.

Commentary

40. The curriculum is in a state of transition after a period in which the curriculum was, in effect, determined by what staffing could be timetabled in some subjects. The range of courses offered, criticised at the previous inspection, is being widened to provide a better match of courses to needs.
41. The overall teaching time is typical of that seen elsewhere. However, the balance of time spent on different subjects does not match national patterns. The time spent on art and design in Years 7 to 9, and on physical education in all years, is markedly greater than usual, yet this is not reflected in the outcomes seen in these subjects. The time allocated to geography, history and religious education is markedly lower than average in Years 7 to 9. The adverse impact of this is made worse by the delivery of the three subjects on a rota basis, leading to loss of continuity of learning. More teaching time will be given from September 2005, but the rota system is likely to remain. Low time allocation is one of the contributory factors to limited achievement in design and technology.
42. In some cases, for example some modern language groups, the timetabling of lessons through the week also contributes to a lack of continuity, with two weekly lessons taking place on the same day. In physical education, the limited number of groups in Years 7 to 9 leads to very large classes indeed; this is unusual, and reduces the potential benefits of the extra time that is given to the subject.
43. Overall, the arrangements in the main school meet statutory requirements for the National Curriculum, although the pupils about to leave Year 11 have not studied religious education. Those in Year 10 have done so, however, and from September, requirements for the subject will be met in full in Years 10 and 11. Although the programme content for citizenship meets needs, the required assessment has yet to take place; this is scheduled for the second half of the summer term.
44. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is evolving to provide three distinct pathways for pupils' options, in addition to a common core of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. By September 2005, this broadening to include greater opportunities for vocational provision will be available to all in Years 10 and 11, rather than being restricted to Year 10, as at present. The school is taking advantage of the flexibility now available in planning the curriculum for individuals, including periods of college-based learning. The school's planning for possible business and enterprise status is also incorporated into the whole-school curriculum, with growing planning of an enterprise dimension to its work across the curriculum.
45. There are satisfactory procedures to promote equality of access and opportunity. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. They follow the full curriculum and are provided with a well planned range of additional support in literacy, numeracy and learning skills. The Opening Minds skills programme, and the Progress Units in literacy and numeracy are especially effective in supporting pupils' learning. Appropriate support for pupils with English as an additional language is provided so that they benefit from proper access to the curriculum. The school has unusually good access to bilingual teaching assistants who help where necessary with pupils whose English is initially weak.

46. The arrangements for careers and continuing education are satisfactory, as are those for the personal, social and health education of pupils.
47. The school's arrangements to promote the development of literacy are inadequate, leading to unsatisfactory progress in this area in the main school. Where pupils have the time to work on their written pieces, they polish them and produce work of a reasonable quality, but many have entered the school with standards in literacy that are well below average or very low, and the school does not act swiftly or consistently enough in every subject to address these weaknesses to enable these pupils to cope effectively with examinations. The new headteacher has correctly identified the need for more effective action. She has taken important steps to improve the situation, not least in the appointment of a senior head of faculty to lead the development of literacy. This person has a very secure knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done, but initiatives are only recent and there is a lot of work to do before provision can be deemed to be effective.
48. Opportunities for enrichment, satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, are now judged to be unsatisfactory. In part this reflects the revised working day, with a shorter lunch time. Although provision in physical education and sport is good, that elsewhere is very limited, with unsatisfactory opportunities for enrichment in the arts; whilst some pupils take instrumental lessons, there are few opportunities for performance, for example. There are only limited opportunities for homework and interest clubs.
49. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school has undergone a period of significant difficulty caused by recruitment problems, long-term staff illness, and financial restraint, the effects of which have been felt particularly severely in art, and in design and technology. This situation is now largely resolved, although staffing remains unsatisfactory in art, where staff absence, a succession of supply teachers and part-time arrangements continue to have an adverse impact on the pupils' standards and achievement. Staffing is good in science, and satisfactory in other subjects. The provision of learning assistants to support the pupils with special educational needs is very good. The match of support staff to the needs of the school, and their deployment to subjects, are good, ensuring the smooth running of the school and sound management of its systems.
50. Accommodation is good overall as a new school has been built since the previous inspection. However, corridors are narrow and inhibit pupils' movements around the school and can be a cause of unsuitable behaviour at times. Particular strengths in accommodation are in the science department. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory as there is no soundproofing to the practice rooms which adjoin the main teaching room. Indoor facilities in physical education limit the variety of activities on offer. The lack of a large hall also has an adverse effect on the school's ability to provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship.
51. Learning resources are unsatisfactory and do not give adequate support to the delivery of the curriculum in the majority of subjects. The financial allocation per pupil is below the national average and as a result the overall quality and range of resources has a negative effect on teaching and learning. However, resources in physical education are good and make a positive contribution to learning but provision is unsatisfactory in science, art, music, history, geography, religious education and design and technology. Many departments have difficulty gaining sufficient access to information and communication technology making it difficult to enhance teaching and to support pupils' use of ICT to develop their learning. The library is adequate and well organised providing a satisfactory range of fiction and non-fiction books to support the curriculum.

Sixth form

52. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. This is a smaller than average sixth form, with relatively few courses offered at the school; many groups are small. However, the school works as part of consortium with other sixth forms in the area, and this provides access to a wider range of options that meet the students' needs. Both level 2 and level 3 courses are offered, including some as vocational alternatives to the more usual AS and A-levels. Business and ICT are particularly popular options at Level 3, but their one-year Level 2 alternatives have been less so, and are not running this year. There are no formal courses leading to key skills qualifications. Because there is no common timetable, and timings, across all consortium schools, some subjects pose students with travel problems, particularly if certain combinations are taken in different centres. The curriculum at this level does not meet statutory requirements in that there is no programme of religious education.
53. Staffing in the sixth form is good, with specialist teachers in each subject that was inspected in full. Sixth form accommodation is satisfactory although the sixth form common room is small and there is limited space for independent study. The quality and quantity of resources available within the curriculum to support students' learning are unsatisfactory. However a recently installed computer facility provides satisfactory opportunities for students to work independently.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures and practices to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and students are good. The pupils receive good quality advice, support and guidance; these are satisfactory for the students. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to take the views of pupils and students into account.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good systems ensure that any child protection issues are handled speedily and effectively.
- High quality support for personal development is provided through an effective multi-agency approach.
- Pupils and their parents say they settle into school quickly.

Commentary

54. Commitment to child protection is strong and is led by a designated person who is very well trained and fully up to date with all the latest requirements and information. Policies and procedures are clear and effective. Recent training has been provided for all members of staff who are on the premises during school hours. Staff are vigilant and prepared to raise concerns to try to ensure the safety of all pupils. Other health and safety requirements are effective and first aid is carried out sympathetically.
55. Although the pupils' survey suggests that most do not feel there is an adult in school they can talk to about any problem, relationships between pupils and staff are satisfactory. A number of changes in the teaching staff in recent times have made it hard for some pupils to develop a good relationship with teachers, especially in Year 7 where a pupil may have as many as 15 different teachers in a week. However, pupils who experience specific difficulties and are supported through the multi agency resources area (MARA) speak very highly of the support they receive from the staff there because they are able to develop good, supportive relationships

with them. Two young men in Year 11 commented that they would not be completing their education in school and seeking to stay in full time education, if it were not for the support and encouragement they had received. The strength of the MARA house provision is that agencies, including learning mentors, education welfare, youth services and counsellors, are under one roof and so contact is rapid and efficient, with all parties equal partners in initiating meetings to discuss how best to support and meet the pupils' needs. The pupils who use this resource are comfortable in this small, structured and supportive environment and this often enables them to remain in school.

56. Procedures to assess and monitor academic and personal development are satisfactory. Support and guidance on the next stage of their education is good, with an active Connexions presence on the school site which gives the pupils easy access to good quality advice. Pupils say that the marking of their work is often helpful and they know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, some of these targets are too vague, such as 'hand your work in'. Parents speak highly of the induction process for the pupils into Year 7. These are judged to be satisfactory, but do not yet ensure that pupils continue to learn and make progress when they join the school; pupils in Year 7 complain of repeating too much work already covered in their primary school. Pupils and their parents receive good information and advice on choices to be made at the end of Year 9.
57. There are systems in place to take the pupils' views into account, but the pupils themselves are not convinced that the school will listen to them. A school council is in place with representatives from each year, and it has been instrumental in effecting some changes: for example, in the installation of more litter bins and benches outside. However, not all pupils appear to be aware of what the council does, how often it meets or who are the representatives. They are not aware of procedures for passing on information and many, particularly the younger ones, feel they cannot influence what goes on in school. Nevertheless, the school council has made known to the deputy head teacher concerns raised with it about the new 'Consequences' code of behaviour; he is involving them in seeking more clarification from the rest of the school on this matter. The head teacher has made a point of talking to pupils from every class in the school to gain an insight into how the pupils feel and this has given her a picture of their perceptions of the school. MARA house asks those pupils it serves to complete a questionnaire with very positive outcomes.
58. Pupils with special educational needs are well known personally and their learning needs are clearly identified. Their progress is checked closely through systematic monitoring, assessment and testing. Support and care for pupils with English as an additional language has recently improved. This aspect is now managed by the special educational needs manager, and is good.

Sixth form

59. Support and guidance are good in the sixth form. Students say they find teachers helpful over their work, but would be more likely to approach friends with personal problems. Although students feel they are sometimes not given enough support, such as reminders about deadlines, they acknowledge that their maturity and levels of responsibility for getting things done has improved. They would welcome more support from the Connexions service as they currently find it hard to access.
60. During the inspection a well organised school council meeting was seen. The students who attended tended to have negative views and assumed that the school would say no to any suggestions, whilst the youth worker tried to guide them towards a more proactive approach.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory overall, and partnerships with the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are good overall: they are satisfactory in main school and good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Though links with parents are satisfactory overall, the annual reports that they receive are unsatisfactory.
- There are good links with other schools and colleges; these links are particularly strong at sixth form level.
- There are good links with the local community.
- Curricular links at sixth form level already provide extended opportunities for students.

Commentary

61. The school works hard at developing contact with parents when their child starts in Year 7 and to maintain it as the pupils move through the school: even in the sixth form, the school continues to maintain as much contact with parents as it can.
62. Where pupils are experiencing any difficulty the agencies involved with them - learning mentors, the educational welfare service, youth service workers or other counsellors – endeavour to work, often through home visits, with the parents to the best advantage of the pupils. The personnel involved enjoy some success in bridging any gap between home and school.
63. Parents raised concerns about a number of issues, including behaviour and bullying. Concerns about behaviour in some lessons is justified, but behaviour overall was found to be satisfactory. Bullying is a problem for some of the younger pupils, but decreases as they move through the school with their developing maturity. Other areas of concern, including teaching and the provision of homework, are judged to be satisfactory.
64. Parents have justified concerns about the information relating to how their child is doing. These reports, commendably provided three times a year, do not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in learning or provide specific targets that will help their child to progress. However, other information provided for parents, such as the prospectus, information leaflets on courses in Year 10 and 11 and the sixth form, the governors' report to them and regular newsletters are all interesting and clearly set out. The parents' views, another area of concern for parents, are taken into account on important issues such as the recent changes to the school day and the arrangements for parents' evenings, the latter already resulting in changes.
65. Parents are fully involved in the annual reviews of the progress of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs. There are very close links with partner primary schools and external agencies
66. The school has developed a good working relationship with other schools through regular meetings and good co-operation with its local Riverside partners, and through the South East Coventry Federation. These links are very strong at senior management level. There is a strong commitment to providing all pupils with accurate information about the range of opportunities

available from Year 10 onwards. They are therefore able to make informed choices from the wide range of courses on offer.

67. There is increasing emphasis on the planning of curricular pathways across the 14-19 age range. This has resulted in very good collaboration with the college and with other neighbouring secondary schools, including special schools. The consortium arrangements through the local cluster of schools provide additional choice and opportunities for sixth form students. The outcome is a broad sixth form curriculum, with students able to access a wide range of subjects by travelling between sites. There is also good co-operation in the delivery of enrichment activities one afternoon a week, and provision of Level 1 Key Skills certification. There are increased vocational opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11, including work placements, and part-time courses at the college.
68. Pastoral links with primary partner schools are well developed. There is a useful exchange of information, and visits in Year 6, so that pupils and teachers are provided with the information they need to ensure that transfer from primary to secondary school proceeds smoothly. Curricular links are improving with the school's primary partners, with the development of bridging units, and good contacts established through the music department.
69. As well as curricular links, the school also combines with other schools, and in association with the Local Authority, in local and national initiatives such as Excellence in Cities, and Teaching and Learning partnerships. These initiatives are designed to improve provision for pupils across a wide age range.
70. The good links with the local community that the school enjoys are resulting in regular and increasing use of school facilities by the community, and links with local businesses are also increasing. The local business community makes a significant contribution to the school's two-week work sampling programme in Year 10. Pupils report very positively on their experiences of the world of work. Business partners are also involved with the school in the preparation of a joint bid for the future enhancement of school facilities.
71. The facilities available in MARA house have helped to establish a multi-agency approach through the school's co-operation with a range of local providers such as youth service, social services, the health service, and the police. For example, there is good support from the youth service in the school's attempts to make contact with those parents who are reluctant to visit the school. The school benefits from good links with the local authority's support team for pupils with English as an additional language. Bilingual teaching assistants are available and on two days a week, pupils have support from a teacher from this team where appropriate.
72. Links with local religious institutions are not fully developed. Visits to local churches, the cathedral, or mosques are not part of the curriculum of all pupils, although there are occasional visits by members of local churches to contribute to school assemblies.
73. The school makes a good contribution to the community, by raising funds for local and national charities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The quality of leadership is good overall: the leadership of the headteacher is very good and that of other key staff is good. Governance is

satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met, apart from those for collective worship and for the provision of religious education in the sixth form. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They form important links with the local community.
- The school is very well led by a clear-thinking headteacher, who provides purposeful direction for the school, focusing on raising achievement for all pupils. Leadership by the senior team is also good.
- A large financial deficit, incurred in 2000/1, has been removed this year. It has severely limited development since the previous inspection.
- The sixth form is led well.
- Leadership in modern foreign languages is very good: that of the science, business education and physical education departments, and of the areas that relate to pupils with special educational needs and English as a foreign language are also good.

Commentary

Main school

74. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has helped to develop good links with the local community, and has acted prudently during a long period of financial restriction, which was particularly difficult since the school had moved into new buildings and was in serious need of equipment and even some furniture. Governors are supportive and focused on raising achievement, but they have had few opportunities to engage in debate over development, since this has been limited.
75. Governors receive reports on the school's analyses of how well the pupils and students are doing. They are keen to ensure that the school's policies and procedures meet requirements, and that the school is fully inclusive and accessible to pupils and students with disabilities. The funding deficit, caused largely by long term absence of senior staff, coupled with central funding cuts, has caused problems in funding levels. Managing the consequences of this has constrained many areas of planning and development. Thus, for example, achievement in some subjects is still affected by limited learning resources, inadequate accommodation, or a need to restructure staffing.
76. Statutory requirements are met, apart from some shortcomings in reports to parents (currently being addressed) and that to provide an act of collective worship, which is difficult, given the very limited number of large spaces in the school. There are 'thought for the day programmes' in place in some year groups, but the provision is not yet consistent, and consideration is being given to alternatives, and to ways of organising religious education for sixth form students, as this is not currently provided.
77. The overall quality of leadership in the school is good. The headteacher provides very good leadership. In post for a little over a year, she has a very clear vision for the school as it emerges from a long period of considerable uncertainty and retrenchment. Her initial analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses match, in most respects, the findings of the inspection. The headteacher's senior colleagues provide good leadership within this overall vision for improvement; they each act as a leader to a range of areas of operation within the school. The senior team is now leading the school as it works towards the targets set in the development

plan that was drawn up following the initial analyses of the school's position. The plan emphasises the central aim of raising achievement across the school through improving learning and teaching, as well as motivating pupils through the provision of a curriculum that meets their needs. Building on its established partnerships with local organisations, the school is seeking to gain specialist status as a business and enterprise college, and its planning already reflects this ambition.

78. The quality of curriculum leadership is satisfactory overall. However, there is much variation between subjects. In some cases, as in art and design or in design and technology, temporary leadership arrangements are in place to cover the extended absence of the post-holder; this has an adverse effect on achievement in the subject. Curriculum leadership is judged to be very good in modern foreign languages, and good in science and physical education. In other subjects, it is satisfactory, although the temporary nature of appointments, and absence in art and design and design and technology means that no judgement of leadership could be made.
79. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well led and managed. The manager for special educational needs provides clear direction for provision, which is carefully monitored and kept under review. Systems and procedures within the Learning Support Department are efficient and effective. Teaching assistants are well supported and subject teachers are well informed of pupils' specific learning requirements. Individual Education Plans provide clear targets for improvement and useful guidance for teaching strategies to enable pupils to achieve these. They are readily available for use by individual teachers in lessons.
80. The needs of pupils with English as an additional language are well managed within the special educational needs department. Although recently appointed, the manager has good insight into the requirements of these pupils and has already put good systems in place to track their achievement. These systems are developing further to ensure that comparisons with potential, and with pupils' peers, are clearly demonstrated.
81. Management is satisfactory. The programme of monitoring the work of the school in all its aspects, including self-review is now firmly established, and the school's self analysis was largely accurate. Senior and middle managers now monitor teaching and are well aware of where strengths and weaknesses lie. The school has satisfactory arrangements for performance management. Though systems are in place, however, there are sometimes inconsistencies in how they are applied, largely because of the high turnover of staff and the considerable use of temporary staff and supply teachers.
82. The school's senior managers have tried to ensure that all permanent staff are thoroughly versed in the school's policies and procedures, and arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and of new teachers and new heads of department, are excellent: each group has its dedicated comprehensive programme. The commitment to continuing professional development is very good, and now that staff turnover and recruitment difficulties of recent years are largely resolved, the school is in a position to benefit more fully from its increasing investment in staff training. There are similar very good programmes for the induction and professional development of learning assistants, and technical and administrative staff.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,166,000	Balance from previous year	-216,600
Total expenditure	2,910,100	Balance carried forward to the next	39,300

Expenditure per pupil	3,901
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83. Many aspects of the school's work have suffered for a long period from its financial problems. The school had a substantial deficit by the time that it was established in its new buildings, caused in part by a fall in pupil numbers, and thus its income. This led to a period of financial stringency resulting in well below average spending on teaching staff and on learning resources. The effect of these decisions may still be seen in the school's reliance on part-time and temporary staff in many areas, and on the generally unsatisfactory nature of learning resources across the school. After three successive years of matching expenditure to income, the school's deficit has now been written off. Although income for the year ahead has yet to be finalised, the draft budget shows that the substantial rise in funding is being targeted appropriately to the areas of greatest need. One consequence of the tight financial climate has been that proposals for expenditure are examined carefully on a best value basis. This is not simply a lowest-cost approach; for example, the significant spending in the recent past on ICT facilities is part of a wider programme to raise achievement by promoting learning.

Sixth form

84. The leadership of the sixth form is good; the head of sixth form works with one of the deputy headteachers on sixth form matters, and governors interest and involve themselves satisfactorily in sixth form life. There is a clear vision for raising the level of participation in sixth form education through the provision of a range of courses appropriate to the students' needs. Since many students are the first in their families to undertake continuing education, the sixth form team works hard to raise expectations of what students can achieve, starting the process as early as Year 10.
85. Management is satisfactory, as in the main school. The performance of individuals is monitored closely, and frequently, against their personal target grades. There is good analysis of how well students perform; patterns of underachievement, in particular, are examined carefully. The school's monitoring arrangements present an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses at this level. The sixth form development plan reflects the main thrusts of the whole-school plan. Changes, for example to the curriculum offered, are thus rooted firmly in seeking to meet the students' needs. The generally high retention rates, and positive value added, show this to be successful. However, arrangements do not meet the statutory requirements for all students to follow a programme of religious education.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Year 10 work experience programme provides opportunities to help pupils develop their understanding of the world of work.
- Vocational courses enable pupils to increase their knowledge of the workplace.
- There are not enough explicit references to work related learning in lessons.

Commentary

86. Overall the school's provision is satisfactory, meeting all statutory requirements. A recent audit has established the position of WRL and highlighted strengths and weaknesses. Work

experience provision is good and the placements highly valued by pupils who understand how these complement their studies and prepare them for employment. Effective preparation ensures that pupils use their placements well, while employers comment favourably on their attitude, enthusiasm and energy. Local employers visit the school and advise pupils on the rapidly changing local employment needs.

87. Vocational courses have only recently been introduced and no examination results are yet available. In work seen, standards in business are broadly average but below average in leisure and tourism and in health and social care. In relation to the prior attainment of the pupils achievement is good and they are motivated by the different teaching styles and relevance to their future employment prospects. Opportunities are offered to a small number of disaffected students who benefit from the alternative provision and remain in education. Careers guidance is thorough and an important element in the tutorial programme so that all pupils understand the needs of employers, the changing world of industry and commerce, and how to prepare accordingly through practice letters of application, talks, mock interviews and CVs. Careers and enterprise days further support learning for work and a more extensive programme of these needs developing. While some subjects are integrating WRL into their practice, more explicit links need to be drawn and more regular reference made to the world of work. Teaching styles and the extra curricular programme need to give pupils more opportunities to develop responsibility, show initiative and leadership and increase their self confidence for employability.
88. Leadership and management of work related learning are satisfactory. The school has a good vision for developing WRL linked to its application to become a specialist business and enterprise college. Development plans indicate future thinking and show the commitment to this curriculum area although many aspects will not be initiated until September 2005. While not everything is in place, planning is positive and there is a clear sense of direction that deserves praise.

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

The provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Decisive intervention taken at senior management level is enhancing provision.
- Members of a recently formed team work well together to improve standards.
- Planning of schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Despite developments, features of assessment and the use of data to raise standards require urgent improvement.
- Although teaching is satisfactory, the proportion that is good or better is not enough to raise pupils' achievement beyond that expected.

And, across the curriculum

- The teaching of literacy is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

89. The pupils' overall attainment on entering the school is below average. The national test results at the end of Year 9 were well below average in 2003 and 2004. The pupils did not do as well as they should have in 2004. In recent years results have been better in the mathematics and science tests. Since 2000 the English results have remained broadly at the same level, whereas they have risen in most other schools. At the end of Year 11 the GCSE English and English literature examinations results at grades A*-C were significantly below average in 2003 and 2004. The boys' results were relatively better than those of the girls. In 2004 the pupils achieved better results in most of their other subjects.
90. Standards in the current Years 9 and 11 are below average. A recently formed team of specialists is improving curriculum and lesson planning so there is a sharper focus on skills: these developments are leading to better standards than achieved in recent years. Achievement is now satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils are at least sustaining their standards on entry. In Year 9 there has been an increase in the number of pupils achieving above average standards, with higher attainers showing good control of language and awareness of audience. More middle attaining pupils are producing better organized work written with clarity. In Year 11 more than four out of ten are producing work at grade C or higher. The course work of a few reaches the very highest grade of A*. Nevertheless, erratic attendance undermines the progress of some Year 11 pupils. Throughout the school there are clusters of pupils whose control of accurate and clear writing is not sufficient to help them progress to average standards. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, although good in Years 10-11. Here, appropriate courses and good collaboration between teachers and teacher assistants support these pupils well. Standards of ICT are average. There was no evidence of the use of numeracy.
91. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a small proportion of lessons teaching was very engaging and motivating: more of this quality is required in order to raise achievement.

Teachers plan well, identify a good range of tasks in lessons, use resources such as the interactive whiteboard well – albeit confined to one teacher - and set substantial homework. Even so, the organisation of too many lessons did not take sufficient note of the significant number of pupils (of all attainments) whose levels of concentration are relatively low and who need to be kept busy and helped to become more independent in their learning. There is not enough consistent attention given to the rigorous timing of tasks to inject more pace and urgency; breaking tasks into more manageable chunks to aid completion; and directing questions to specific pupils to encourage more participation and concentration. There is also not enough use of open questions that encourage reflection on the learning throughout the lesson, or of the teacher encouraging learners to respond fully to each other. Expectations regarding the care and presentation of books need to be higher. Day to-day assessment is satisfactory. Teachers provide good, clearly written targets to support improvement but tend not to refer to what the pupil has done well. Pupils are aware of grade and level targets but there was not enough direct reference to these during lessons.

92. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is improving following a period of instability. It is consolidating more effective procedures such as systematic assessment in Years 7 to 9. Consciously taken decisions at senior leadership level have set up effective structures to manage provision. The recruitment of an Advanced Skills Teacher is extending better practice. There is more teamwork; the department draws on good practice from successful departments elsewhere; and systematic lesson observation is aiding improvement. These initiatives require full establishment before their impact is fully realized, but the trend is upwards. The use of data to analyse prior attainment is a weakness: it is not used enough to set realistic but aspirational targets; monitor and evaluate progress and provision; and guide intervention. The previous inspection reported unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10-11. This has improved, which when coupled with recent developments, results in satisfactory improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

93. The pupils enter the school with below average levels of literacy overall. The range of standards is wide. In each year there are those with high levels of competence, but there are also a significant number with well below average or even very low standards. Inspectors found that weaknesses in oral and written literacy are having a detrimental impact on standards. Too many students are not reaching average levels of competency in their use and application of key technical vocabulary; in providing extended oral answers and explanations; or in producing well-structured written answers in a range of contexts to show their knowledge and understanding.
94. Given these challenges the provision for the teaching and development of literacy skills across all subjects is not satisfactory. The new headteacher has correctly identified the need for more effective action. She has taken important steps to improve the situation, not least in the appointment of a senior head of faculty to lead the development of literacy. This person has a very secure knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done, but initiatives are only recent and there is a lot of work to do before provision can be deemed to be effective. For example, in geography there is not enough explicit development of the required writing skills such as how to compare and contrast. In design technology references to key vocabulary are inconsistent; there is not enough expectation and guidance regarding extended language and sentence structures; and there is not enough emphasis on how to write for different audiences and purposes. Comments of this nature also apply to other subjects. In addition, there is not

enough attention to the accuracy of the pupils' work. Enhancing the support for pupils' literacy skills across all subjects is an important priority if standards are to improve.

Modern Foreign Languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been very good improvement in standards, achievement, teaching, learning and curriculum leadership since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good, so that pupils learn well and achieve well.
- The teachers are very effective in helping the pupils to develop good, responsible attitudes to their work: this is a major factor in their good achievement.
- Assessment is used well to track pupils' achievement as well as to help individual pupils to understand how to improve.
- Curriculum leadership is very good, and has the capacity to improve standards still further.

Commentary

95. In the 2004 GCSE examination, when the only foreign language on offer was French, results for the relatively small proportion of pupils who chose to do the subject were above the national average. There has, therefore, been a significant improvement since the previous inspection when, as now, French was optional in years 10 and 11: pupils' results were then well below average and generally worse than results in the other subjects they took.
96. In work seen during the inspection, standards in French are average by the end of year 9, which represents good achievement given the pupils' general standards on entry to the school. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the French they have learned, and write and speak in simple French with a sound level of competence. In Spanish, which can be studied instead of French from Year 9, the pupils make rapid progress and achievement is also good. The pupils continue to achieve well in French or Spanish in Years 10 and 11, and by the end of Year 11 standards in both languages are above average for both boys and girls. The pupils have learned a good range of vocabulary and structures and speak and write in the foreign language simply, but effectively. Higher attainers write in French or Spanish using a variety of tenses and with a good degree of accuracy. There is a small group of pupils in Year 11 who chose to do Italian in Year 9; they have also achieved well by the end of their course.
97. Teaching is good overall throughout the main school, ensuring that the pupils learn well. The teachers are very experienced, planning lessons to cater for a wide range of pupils' needs, and deploying a range of effective teaching methods with confidence. They manage the pupils very well, and set up an ordered environment where effective learning can take place. The pupils develop good attitudes to learning languages as they move up the school, working purposefully and often with enthusiasm, on their own or in pairs. The department thus makes an important contribution to the pupils' social development, as well as to their linguistic development, and the pupils' positive attitudes and responsible behaviour are significant factors in the good progress they make. Assessment policy and procedures are firmly established and are well used to track progress and set targets for pupils and the department. Pupils are aware of the curriculum level at which they are working, and understand how they can progress to the next level. Marking is regular and consistent, and the teachers help the pupils to improve the quality of their work by adding helpful and motivating comments.
98. Curriculum leadership is very good, and has the capacity to improve standards still further. There is clear, principled direction for the work of the department, and very good management, particularly in terms of monitoring and assessment, which are having a positive effect on standards and achievement. The impact of this very good leadership is diluted, however, by three principal factors: first, the limited time available for the subject, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where pupils need to spend more time practising new language in order to develop secure

linguistic foundations on which to build; secondly, unsympathetic timetabling which does not help teachers or pupils; and thirdly, the budget deficit of recent years which has left the department barely adequately resourced. Despite these disadvantages, improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to support pupils' understanding of mathematics and prepare them for external examinations.
- Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their pupils and give their time freely outside lessons to support those who have difficulties.
- In many lessons, there is too much repetition of work and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory and opportunities to develop pupils' thinking skills are underdeveloped.

Commentary

99. In the 2004 Year 9 national tests, results were below national averages and in line with those of similar schools, based on the pupils' prior attainment. Results are similar to those of previous years although there was less difference between the performance of girls and boys in 2004, and girls narrowed the gap between their results and those of the boys. In the GCSE examinations, results were below national averages and above those of similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment. Pupils did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects and the performance of boys was better than that of girls.
100. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards in Year 9 and in Year 11 are below national averages, representing satisfactory achievement based on their earlier performance. Pupils in Year 9 have a good knowledge of indices and standard form while higher attaining pupils solve simultaneous equations and use inequalities and linear programming. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 use the sine and cosine rules for any triangle although their basic number work remains weak.
101. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported so that their standards and achievement are similar to those of other pupils.
102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and give their time freely outside lessons to support pupils. They enjoy positive and productive relationships with their pupils. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations for their pupils and use praise to encourage and motivate pupils well. These lessons proceed at a brisk pace and include a good balance of teacher exposition and pupil practice.
103. In the two unsatisfactory lessons seen, pace was slow and higher attaining pupils (including pupils identified by the department as gifted and talented) were not sufficiently challenged by the work. There was too much repetition of earlier work so that pupils were not engaged and

showed disinterest. In many lessons seen, teacher talk dominates so that pupils' thinking skills are not sufficiently developed.

104. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. They are enthusiastic and work well especially when the teaching is inspiring and challenging. They enjoy supportive relationships with the teacher and with each another.
105. The curriculum in mathematics is broad but there is inconsistency in the provision for using and applying mathematics and the development of pupils' thinking skills. There is an appropriate emphasis given to the National Strategy but work in Year 7 does not build sufficiently well upon that undertaken in the primary school.
106. There was no evidence of ICT seen in the pupils' work sample and too little emphasis given to ICT in the classroom. The provision for literacy is satisfactory, although inconsistent across the department. In some classes, subject specific vocabulary is stressed well but extended writing, in coursework, is under developed.
107. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and, in a short period of time, the head of department has demonstrated her commitment to raising standards and improving teaching. Management is satisfactory and the head of department has a very good awareness of areas for improvement, which are carefully articulated in the department documentation. Areas for improvement include updating schemes of work and department documentation as well as ensuring the consistent implementation of school and department policies.
108. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 9 have remained similar to those reported at the previous inspection but standards at GCSE have improved. Pupils with special educational needs are better supported and their achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are improving as a result of the support from external advisors and the head of department. Schemes of work have been updated and resources have improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

109. The provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory although the numeracy policy is still in draft form and not yet disseminated across the school. Number work is used well in geography for scale calculations and in science for standard form. Algebraic skills are used for substituting in formula in science as well as in spreadsheet formula for ICT. Spatial awareness is used across the curriculum including weighing and measuring in technology. Graphs are used well in science where pupils undertake a module on graphical work which includes a useful resource booklet. In physical education, teachers make good use of mathematics to identify angles in sports.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum leadership and management of the department are good.
- Teaching is good, and occasionally excellent.
- Assessment processes are very good; there is regular monitoring of pupils' standards.

- The quality of accommodation is very good, but resources need updating.
- The use of computers is underdeveloped and inconsistent across the department.

Commentary

110. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently below average in the last four years. However, in 2004, they were above average compared with pupils in similar schools, and this represents good achievement by these pupils during Years 7 to 9. Results were similar to those in mathematics, and better than in English. Boys have consistently performed better than girls, but the gap in performance is narrowing. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, results were below average; the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades was below average, but almost all pupils gained at least a grade G. Overall, pupils performed better in science than in most of their other subjects, and their achievement in science since the Year 9 tests was satisfactory. Boys gained better results at this level also.
111. When pupils enter the school, overall standards are below average, and standards seen during the inspection at Year 9 and Year 11 were also below average. Pupils' attitude to work is satisfactory, but they are slow to settle in class, and do not always listen carefully to their teachers' instructions. They often show a rather casual approach to learning, with a lack of self-motivation, and insufficient pride in the presentation of their written work. They show more interest in practical work, and co-operate well when working in groups. The irregular attendance of a significant minority of pupils has a negative impact on the quality of their learning. However, pupils' overall achievements are satisfactory; this is largely due to the determination of their teachers to see them do well. No obvious differences were observed in the standards of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to their teachers, they respond well to the support of teaching assistants, and they also make satisfactory progress.
112. In the good, and occasionally excellent, teaching, teachers include learning strategies, as well as content, in the planning of lessons. This results in a range of activities designed to encourage pupils to become involved in the lesson, to use their initiative, and to think about science in everyday life. Teachers treat pupils with respect, and relationships are satisfactory. There is a good contribution to the development of pupils' use of number, but initiatives to improve literacy standards are inconsistent. There is also inconsistency in the use of computers and modern technology to extend learning opportunities. There are regular assessments of pupils' standards, and very good monitoring of the progress of individual pupils, so that any underperformance can quickly be identified. By contrast, day-to-day marking lacks depth, and not all teachers provide sufficient information about how pupils can improve, and gain better results.
113. Curriculum leadership and management of the science department are good. There is very good teamwork between teachers, and very effective liaison with the technicians. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly, and there is good analysis of examination data. However, year-on-year comparisons of the work of the department are difficult, because of variations in the method of presenting examination results. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements in the quality of accommodation, in the organisation of the work of the department, and in teaching skills. There has been insufficient progress in the use of modern technology in lessons. The anticipated improvement in examination performance has yet to materialise, partly because of a serious shortage of resources, but improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE examination are above average.
- The pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 11.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes negatively affect learning in some lessons.

Commentary

114. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Around three quarters of pupils reach the expected level but only a small proportion reaches the higher levels. Standards have not kept pace with national trends since the previous inspection. Despite the above average standards in the GCSE examination, the number of A* and A students is lower than nationally. In 2004 both boys and girls did better in the ICT examination than they did in other subjects and results had been well above average in 2003. Standards at the end of Year 11 overall are average. Examination standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
115. Achievement is satisfactory in years 7 to 9. Pupils enter the school with below average knowledge and understanding in ICT and make satisfactory progress. All pupils produce documents and analyse financial data but only a few pupils become sufficiently evaluative in their use of research and images they have found on the Internet. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 because most pupils study either on the ICT course or on a business course. However, there still a number of pupils in Year 11 who do not use ICT regularly and few pupils are given regular opportunities in their other GCSE subjects.
116. Teaching and learning are good overall, enabling good achievement by Year 11. Teaching and learning are only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because the staff recruitment difficulties and resource problems have had most effect here. During this year, in particular, inexperienced and temporary teachers have not been able to give pupils consistent or appropriately challenging tasks, despite a sound scheme of work. Classes are also taken by non-specialist teachers. Some classes in Year 7 - 9 have high numbers of pupils with special educational needs and also behavioural problems.
117. During the inspection, there were no teaching assistants deployed to help in these classes and little learning took place when a small proportion of pupils behaved badly. This was particularly acute with inexperienced teachers. Learning is good or very good where the teacher takes care to apply a consistent disciplinary approach and to set work which will interest and challenge pupils at all levels. In these lessons, pupils know how well they are doing and take part in assessing and evaluating their progress. In less successful lessons, pupils do not know the level at which they are working or how they can improve; the aims of the lesson are insufficiently clear. Teaching is good in the GCSE classes. The curriculum leader for ICT has taken care to ensure that these pupils' work is regularly checked and marked and that pupils know when the deadlines are. Most pupils are keen to do well and their attitudes to learning are good. Even so, learning has suffered in classes that have had a series of temporary or non-specialist teachers. The teachers' mark books also show how standards have suffered due to absence in these classes, particularly amongst lower attaining pupils.

118. Leadership of ICT is satisfactory. The leader for ICT has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department through regular monitoring of teaching and learning. The scheme of work and lesson structure, based on national guidelines, is well planned. However, the necessary regular development of the scheme has all but stalled due to the difficulty in recruiting and supporting specialist teachers. Improvements to the resources and curriculum have also been constrained by financial problems. The management of the ICT department is also satisfactory. The leader for ICT has ensured that the network of computers provides good access to resources in most areas of the school. Technicians help to keep everything running smoothly.
119. The school continues to provide full and short courses in ICT at GCSE level, but the number of subject departments that make use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Two good examples are geography and English where pupils regularly collect information from the Internet, analyse data or texts and present their work using a word-processor. The planned ICT curriculum for all years includes support for vocabulary, especially technical terms, but the below average standard of literacy affects learning at all levels and pupils do not get sufficient practice in writing and speaking. On the other hand, there are good opportunities for improving mathematics skills at all levels.
120. Since the previous inspection improvement has been unsatisfactory. Developments have largely been constrained by financial and staffing problems. The use of ICT across the curriculum has not improved enough and standards have slipped in Years 7 to 9 and for non-exam pupils in Years 10-11. Nevertheless, the school has improved computer access and ensured that standards in the GCSE examination have been maintained.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

121. The pupils' competence in ICT is below average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11. Pupils learn to use a good range of ICT tools to explore, analyse and present information. They gather data from instruments or the Internet and create graphs. They learn to make Web pages and presentations. However, there are few pupils who work critically to improve and refine their presentations or to develop more complex lines of enquiry to support their ideas. Few pupils work on their own initiative to select, say, the appropriate graphics program for a particular task. This is partly due to the lack of regular ICT use in subjects such as art, mathematics, history or music and also to the difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give the pupils good guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils take too long to settle at the start of lessons.
- When they are working in groups, the pupils co-operate well.
- Teachers do not focus sufficiently on developing a wide range of writing tasks.

Commentary

122. The GCSE results in 2004 were average and that has been the trend in recent years. Pupils do as well in geography as in their other subjects. Boys do better than girls.
123. Standards are broadly average when pupils start in Year 7. In work seen they are average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, which represents satisfactory achievement. The pupils understand a range of geographical terms and respond to questions with answers that indicate their ideas and factual knowledge. Pupils who select geography as an option in Year 10 are broadly average at the start of the course and, by the end of Year 11, reach average GCSE standards so achievement is satisfactory. The pupils have a secure factual base, understand physical processes, such as river erosion, and link cause and effect as they did in a lesson on the development of tourism on Madagascar. All pupils, including those with special education needs and the higher attaining pupils, make satisfactory progress as teachers are keen to include everyone in the full range of learning. Geography supports literacy by its use of key words and numeracy by the use of graphs and simple statistics. The subject makes a good contribution to ICT through encouraging the use of the Internet for research and in presenting work. ICT is used effectively to raise standards in the GCSE coursework papers.
124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where good relationships and support create in the pupils a willingness to answer questions and offer examples. They need more opportunities to improve their literacy skills by being given a wider range of writing tasks. Practical geographical experiences are restricted and only a very small amount of fieldwork is undertaken. While pupils work well in groups and behaviour is satisfactory they do take too long to settle at the start of the lessons.
125. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory benefiting from the care and subject knowledge of the teachers. Teachers use a range of activities to engage all pupils. Pupils are well supported in their GCSE preparation and especially in their coursework. They work collaboratively and share ideas which they are then willing to offer in class. Their oral responses are stronger than their written work. All pupils develop their awareness of social, moral and cultural issues while citizenship is promoted in teaching and by good display. Assessment is good. Marking is consistent, regular and positive. Helpful comments provide good guidance for pupils on how to improve. Targets are set and steps are being taken to encourage pupils to evaluate their own work.
126. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and, after an unsettled period in staffing terms, a mutually supportive team is being established. Management is satisfactory with appropriate action plans and schemes of work in place. Resources are inadequate in terms of stimulus material for lessons and opportunities for professional development. Teachers would benefit from seeing and sharing good practice so as to further improve their skills. Improvement has been satisfactory since the previous inspection ensuring that standards have been maintained during a difficult period of change.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11.

- Marking is done regularly, but does not give clear enough guidance for improvement in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but monitoring and evaluation are not fully effective in promoting consistency in teaching and learning.

Commentary

127. GCSE results dropped from well above average in 2002 to well below average in 2004 largely as a result of the disruption of teaching and learning by severe staffing difficulties. These have now been resolved. Standards are rising and now match the average in Year 11. Standards in Year 9, while below average, in line with the 2004 teachers' assessments, are also improving, albeit more slowly. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. The achievement of all, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented pupils, is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11.
128. Pupils have sound and, in the case of higher attaining pupils, good knowledge and understanding. Middle attaining Year 9 pupils readily identified and understood the differences in the status of different groups of people in Nazi Germany. Year 11 pupils' GCSE course work showed good understanding of Roosevelt's reasons for introducing the New Deal. Oral contributions are stronger than written work. This is usually accurate but largely descriptive and often does not explain or use evidence enough to support points. GCSE course work is weakened by an insufficiently analytical approach especially in the interpretation and judgement of the reliability of sources, and little sustained argument. There is little evidence of independent enquiry. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are lowered by weaknesses in the development of historical skills – especially in the critical use of historical evidence, and by the careless completion of tasks. Literacy and numeracy skills are broadly average: however, standards of spelling, formation of letters, sentence structure, and use of vocabulary, though average overall, are sometimes lowered by carelessness in Years 7 to 9, but supported in Years 10 and 11 by corrections in marking and added emphasis in teaching on the use of key words. ICT is used effectively for presentation of GCSE course work but not enough for independent research.
129. Teaching and learning in Years 9, 10 and 11 benefit from the teachers' good subject knowledge. In Years 7 and 8 history is taught by a larger number of teachers, many of whom are not history specialists. These arrangements make it difficult to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Strengths in teaching include brisk, purposeful starts to lessons, clear learning objectives and explanation, good reinforcement, and searching questioning. At best, work is well matched to learning needs. Skilful teaching methods which took full account of pupils' starting points, enabled a bottom set of Year 9 pupils to make very good progress in understanding soldiers' reasons for fighting in World War 1. Group work is very effective. Year 11 pupils worked with enthusiasm in groups interpreting the attitudes and motives of world leaders at the Treaty of Versailles. In this lesson and in many others, learning was very well supported by very good classroom relationships and behaviour.
130. Where teaching and learning are weaker, mostly in Years 7 to 9, over-direction and control by the teacher limits opportunities for pupils to take initiative and contribute their views. Presentations do not enthuse and motivate them, and the purpose of tasks is not clear. Pupils' natural interest and curiosity are not channelled, and some become bored and disruptive. Marking is also weaker in Years 7 to 9. Much is superficial and does not provide guidance for improvement. The awarding of National Curriculum levels is not securely based. Performance data not used systematically to track progress and set targets in all years.

131. The teacher in charge of history is keen, enthusiastic and has a clear grasp of the issues to be addressed. The subject has become part of the humanities faculty relatively recently, and it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the newly introduced management strategies. Teaching and learning are monitored by the schools' senior management team, but there is little systematic subject-based monitoring and evaluation. This is resulting in not enough support and guidance especially for teachers who are inexperienced or who are not history specialists. The lack of an appropriate range of resources, including access to relevant text books and ICT facilities, hinders learning significantly. There are also insufficient opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning through visits and other activities.
132. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. It has been hindered by staffing difficulties but standards, teaching and learning are now improving especially in Years 10 and 11. Assessment procedures have been improved but are not fully established. Weaknesses in the teaching of history skills remain in Years 7 to 9, and there has been no improvement in resources.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course in Years 10 and 11 does not currently meet statutory requirements because religious education is not taught to Year 11 pupils. However, the school plans to ensure that these requirements will be met from September 2005.
- Schemes of work are now in place and this means that pupils are now learning both the factual content of religious beliefs and why these beliefs are important to some people.
- The recently appointed curriculum leader has a clear vision of how to improve standards in religious education.

Commentary

133. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below the expectations of the Coventry agreed syllabus for religious education. This represents satisfactory achievement for all groups of pupils, who arrive at the school with below average knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. By the time they are 14, pupils have developed their knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and of some of the other faiths represented in Britain today. They are beginning to use specialist vocabulary with increasing accuracy. Many pupils, however, find it difficult to understand why religion is important to some people. This is because, until recently, schemes of work concentrated primarily on what religious people believed rather than why they believed it or what their beliefs might teach other people.
134. It is not possible to judge standards or achievement by the end of Year 11. There is, as yet, no course in religious education for pupils in Year 11, and the course that pupils follow beyond Year 9 does not meet statutory requirements because of this omission. The school plans, however, to introduce the short course GCSE for all pupils from September 2005. Pupils in Year 10 make satisfactory progress because the staffing situation has improved and their lessons are well planned.
135. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good features. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned and lively with a wide range of activities and tasks to motivate pupils. During a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils discussed abortion in a mature and well-informed manner, showing a growing understanding of Christian views on this issue. This was particularly impressive because Year 10 pupils have had

several years of being taught by many different teachers, most of whom were non-specialists. Pupils behave well, co-operate with teachers and with each other and take pride in their work. Although most Year 10 pupils try hard to behave well and show improving attitudes towards the subject, attendance for this year group is poor. This is mainly because several years of serious staffing instability have caused some pupils to have negative attitudes towards the subject. The recently appointed curriculum leader is working hard to change these attitudes and is beginning to succeed. Assessment of pupils' work is currently unsatisfactory because pupils do not understand what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve their work.

136. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision of how to improve standards in the department and has made a good start to her work. Schemes of work are now securely in place and statutory requirements are now met in Years 7 to 9, and will be met in full in September when the current Year 10 continue their religious education course into Year 11. She is now beginning to address the issue of assessment and this will enable her to focus more effectively on analysing pupils' standards and achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, although most of the progress in addressing the weaknesses has been made during the last year.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in resistant materials are above average with standards improving in graphics, food and textiles in Years 10 and 11.
- Low time allocation, inadequate resources and insufficient joint planning linked to assessment in Years 7 to 9 restrict coverage and the depth of knowledge, resulting in below average standards.
- Teachers share good subject knowledge effectively and manage behaviour well, providing a productive learning environment.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped in all years.

Commentary

137. Overall standards in GCSE at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were below average, but there are variations across material areas. Students obtained above average standards in resistant materials but well below average in other materials. Staffing difficulties and inadequate resources have contributed to low standards. However, work seen for Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are improving, particularly in food and textiles, so that standards are judged as average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show below average standards. These are reflected in the work seen during the inspection. Students enter Year 7 with weak skills, knowledge and understanding in design and technology but because of good opportunities to work in a variety of materials they achieve well in practical work in Years 7 to 9. They select and work competently with a variety of tools, but designing skills and processes are underdeveloped resulting in unsatisfactory standards by the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory particularly in making skills. Below average curriculum time allocation and insufficient joint planning linked effectively to assessment means that pupils do not build

effectively on learning from one unit of work to another, restricting coverage of programmes of study and the depth of knowledge and understanding of the design and make processes.

138. Achievement in years 10 and 11 is satisfactory with examples of good achievement in resistant materials and graphics. Students build on practical skills, develop a better understanding of the design and make processes and acquire a greater depth of knowledge in their chosen course. Standards in writing and the use of ICT are underdeveloped and this has a negative effect on standards in all years.
139. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Individual lessons are effectively planned and organised to ensure safe practice. Learning outcomes are identified within the planning but these are not consistently shared with pupils to ensure they understand what they are expected to have learned by the end of the lesson. Teachers generally manage behaviour well and give good individual support to enable all pupils to make satisfactory progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is shared well with pupils to promote the sound development of knowledge and understanding. The use of number and the development of writing skills are not sufficiently developed in lessons to ensure pupils apply them appropriately to develop working drawings and measure and weigh accurately. Insufficient teaching and learning resources have a negative impact on pupils' achievement and progress.
140. No overall judgement may be made on leadership, due to the absence of the head of department during the inspection, but management is satisfactory. The department was overseen effectively during the inspection by an acting head of department. The documentation and discussions with the acting head of department show a shared understanding of the direction for the department and of the strengths and weaknesses that reflect the inspection findings. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The department has been through a period of instability because of staffing and resources difficulties but the head of department, supported by a hardworking team, is committed to improving standards, and has already implemented plans to improve provision. Strategies to improve planning and to monitor the work of the department are not yet sufficiently developed to secure long-term improvements.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Drama was sampled.

141. In one **drama** lesson in Year 11, pupils worked hard to produce an ordered, written description of a character in 'The Crucible'. Despite some weak literacy skills, pupils made good progress because they made great efforts, stimulated by good teaching. The teacher's good knowledge of examination requirements meant that they were given good clues about how to improve their written answers, and learning was good.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory; examination results in 2004 were very low.
- Long-term staff absences have resulted in unsatisfactory learning.
- Current staff, with useful help from external advisors, provide stability at present.

- Departmental management has been poor; the curriculum is not planned well enough; assessment and marking are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are disillusioned, unmotivated and under-confident; behaviour is often unsatisfactory.

Commentary

142. GCSE results were very low in 2004. Most pupils, particularly boys, underachieved significantly. Attainment is well below average by Year 9 and by Year 11.
143. Pupils' low standards on entry do not improve well enough to Year 9, whatever their ability. The curriculum is not planned to ensure that all pupils develop consistently their skills or their understanding of different aspects of the subject. Despite generous time allocation, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, and they develop negative attitudes towards the subject. Long-term staff absences, necessitating supply and cover teaching, have had a major adverse impact on most pupils' learning. Their painting and drawing skills, for instance, fail to progress satisfactorily, with some pupils regressing. Pupils have different learning experiences, often lacking key aspects such as learning about artists' work. Although a few experience 3D work such as ceramics, not all do so.
144. A large proportion of pupils takes GCSE courses, but for similar reasons, these too achieve unsatisfactorily. Staffing shortcomings have been exacerbated by the decision this year to start a vocational GCSE course, which has now been abandoned. Year 10 work is, therefore, well below average in volume and quality, despite very recent intervention by external advisors. This is just beginning to improve standards and attitudes. Year 11 pupils have had a very disturbed GCSE course because of staffing problems, so have not achieved well enough. Standards here are also well below average, though results are likely to be better than last year.
145. Learning across time has been unsatisfactory recently, and poor for some classes. Teaching seen during the inspection was untypical of pupils' recent experience and was satisfactory overall. The acting head of department and external teachers plan properly, including making connections between artists' work and pupils' practical exercises. Non-specialist teachers do not make these associations well enough. Unsatisfactory supply and cover staffing has resulted in a lack of marking for many pupils, so few know how to improve standards. Learning is often disturbed by unsatisfactory behaviour, resulting partly from pupils' dissatisfaction with their own achievements. Pupils seldom use, ICT, and they have only recently had sketchbooks, so they have not developed research or annotation skills. This prevents necessary improvements in literacy.
146. No judgement can be made about leadership in the absence of the head of department. Management of the department has been poor, although the acting head of department provides good stability. Retention of the good specialist accommodation is essential for improving standards. There has been poor improvement since the last report. Standards have declined very significantly and the quality of teaching and learning has deteriorated. Improvement in provision for art and design is a key issue for the school.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 promotes good learning.

- The planning of lessons is strong.
- Extra-curricular provision in the subject is underdeveloped.
- The lack of computers inhibits pupils' experiences in music.

Commentary

147. The school re-introduced a GCSE course in 2002. In 2004, standards in the examinations were well below average for A*-C grades; they were average for A*-G grades. Pupils' work seen during the inspection in Year 11 suggest improving but below average standards.
148. In 2004, teachers' own assessments were that standards were average by the end of Year 9. Although standards have been improving in recent years, work seen during the inspection indicates that they are still below average. However, this represents good achievement because standards on entry to the school are well below average. Standards are improving on the examination course. Whilst they remain below the national average by the end of Year 11, this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. At all levels girls outperform boys. Overall standards in practical aspects are constrained by shortcomings in performing skills. Currently, pupils have few opportunities to use computers. This severely limits their musical experiences and learning. At all levels, pupils' oral and written skills are below average.
149. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, but they are good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teacher's planning is a particular strength, resulting in effective starter and plenary activities in lessons. Relationships are usually good. The teacher tries hard to encourage pupils to develop their performing skills. Thus, in a Year 7 lesson, they worked well as a class, improvising effective rhythmic solos over a steady accompaniment. In some lessons, the impact of teaching on learning is modest because work is insufficiently matched to pupils' needs. Large class sizes in Years 7 to 9 also constrain progress. In Year 11, the teacher's careful analysis of GCSE questions helped pupils to: extend their knowledge and understanding of examination techniques; enhance their musical vocabulary; and extend their knowledge of different musical styles.
150. Assessment in the subject is satisfactory. Improving strategies mean that pupils in Years 7 to 9 know at which National Curriculum level they are working, although not necessarily what they need to do to improve. Pupils' attitudes in music are mostly good; they listen well to each other's compositions and performances. Music contributes well to their cultural development.
151. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. There is a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to raising standards. The use of data to inform teaching and learning is developing well. The reintroduction of a GCSE course is a welcome addition to the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is still in its infancy; the school is aware of the need to support the very small department in providing activities to engage pupils' interest. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Although standards in Year 9 remain below average, they are rising in the current Years 7 and 8. Accommodation, although new, does not include soundproofing between the main music room and the practice room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education in the main school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' consistency promotes very good attitudes to the subject.
- Good teaching in core lessons promotes good learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils benefit from a good extra-curricular sports programme.

- Standards on the examination course are below average and pupils underachieve.

Commentary

152. Standards on entry are average in the subject. Teachers' own assessments in 2004 were that standards were well above average by the end of Year 9. In work seen of summer games and athletics, this is not borne out; standards are average, representing satisfactory achievement. By the end of Year 11, standards in core physical education are average; boys and girls achieve satisfactorily. On the GCSE course, re-introduced by the school in 2004, standards are below average in theory aspects by the end of Year 10. Across the ability range, achievement is unsatisfactory. At all levels, oral work is average; literacy is below average. Across the school, performance skills are better than analysis and evaluation. In competitive sport, school teams and individuals are successful at district level in games, athletics and trampolining. One boy attends the city football academy.
153. Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is satisfactory. In practical work, teachers encourage pupils to do their best, thus promoting very good participation rates throughout the school. Discipline is rarely an issue. Clear explanations, useful demonstrations and regular feedback help pupils to improve their performance. Outdoor lessons usually begin with an adequate warm up. However, there is rarely time in the 50 minute lesson for pupils to learn the importance of cooling down because of the distance between the sports field and changing rooms. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Despite the teachers' best intentions, progress is constrained by timetabling anomalies which produce classes of up to 44. In Year 8, girls were uncooperative in a rounders lesson, limiting the teacher's efforts to extend their knowledge and skill.
154. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good in core lessons because teachers adapt tasks to meet pupils' needs. For example, lower attaining pupils improve their volleys in tennis because of careful coaching. Teachers enjoy very good rapport with Year 11 pupils in their final lessons. Accordingly, boys compete keenly in a tennis tournament; girls show excellent commitment in rounders. In the Year 10 examination class, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils need more help to understand and subsequently apply theory, in preparation for the final written examination. To date, opportunities to promote pupils' personal, social and leadership qualities are not fully exploited in lessons. Boys and girls rarely have the option to work together in preparation for adult life.
155. The head of department has a clear rationale for the subject's traditional ethos, shared by his well established team; curriculum leadership is good. Stable staffing arrangements and departmental consistency underpin the subject's status in the school. Developments include a Certificate course and the reintroduction of GCSE. Provision for extra-curricular sport is also good. However, the impact of these features is constrained by inadequate accommodation and timetabling anomalies, which in turn limit standards and achievement in the lower school. Management is satisfactory. Monitoring is developing well, including close support for an unqualified teacher. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business and Leisure and Tourism were sampled.

156. The school offers a single award GCSE **business** course and also an applied GCSE. The first pupils on the former course take their GCSE examinations in 2005; the applied group does so in

2006. A Year 11 GCSE lesson was sampled; the pupils were preparing for an examination the following day. Teaching was good, in spite of the large size of the group and the wide range of abilities present. Careful management of the group maintained a positive working atmosphere. Standards of work were broadly average, restricted in some cases by the pupils' relatively modest literacy skills. Coursework standards are higher. Overall, achievement for this first group to examination has been good.

157. In one Year 10 **leisure and tourism** lesson sampled, the pupils made very good progress as a result of energetic, enthusiastic teaching using a range of activities. Pupils were encouraged to offer ideas and praised for their efforts so gaining in both understanding and confidence.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled and citizenship reported in detail.

158. The planning for pupils' **personal, social and health education** is satisfactory and reflects the ethos and values of the school, including the importance it places on emotional literacy. Drugs awareness and sex education are taught in a sensitive and informative manner. Schemes of work and other supporting documentation are thorough, relevant and helpful. Teachers and other involved staff deal well with sensitive issues. Because of this provision, students are well informed and knowledgeable about a range of topics, including teenage pregnancy, the protection of the environment and how to resolve conflict. They empathise with people in different situations and respond with growing confidence in lessons and in other situations. Provision for careers education is satisfactory and effectively prepares pupils for the next stage of their lives.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has yet to implement fully the requirements of National Curriculum citizenship, although substantial progress has been made in the past year.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are prepared to work hard.
- The curriculum leader has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards in the subject.

Commentary

159. The school has a timetabled subject that seeks to cover personal, social and health education (PSHE), careers and National Curriculum citizenship. This is taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 11. Some aspects of citizenship are also delivered via other subjects of the curriculum and there are plans to introduce the short course GCSE in the very near future.
160. Standards of work in citizenship are average. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve appropriately in the context of their prior attainment. They are learning to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and consider difficult and challenging moral and ethical issues. By the time they are in Year 11, the majority of pupils have taken an active part in a

range of group and decision making activities. They are beginning to make suggestions for improvement in the school.

161. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are enthusiastic, and make use of relevant examples to illustrate what they are saying. This means that pupils build up their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a good citizen in today's society. Pupils show interest in what they are doing and are prepared to work hard and take an active part in what they are doing.
162. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Substantial progress has been made with the introduction of the subject during the past year, although the school has not formally assessed pupils' work at the end of Year 9 until this year. The school shows a clear commitment towards the subject.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004. Only courses entering more than five candidates have been listed.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	7	100	99	14	45	71.4	85.5
Information technology	8	100	96	38	26	85.0	71.1
Business AVCE	7	93	92	0	24	60.0	67.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject was English literature at AS and A-level.

English

The provision for English literature is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Year 13.
- There is a good and supportive team approach to planning.
- There is a need for a sharper focus on the techniques of assignment writing required at A-level.
- There is need for greater rigour in the application of criteria for admission to the course and in the supportive monitoring of the students' progress.

Commentary

163. The results of the A-level examination in 2004 were well below average, having been below average in 2003. Results of the AS examination in 2004 were broadly average. Recruitment to the course is good within the constraints of a below average size sixth form: the course usually attracts more female students than male. Retention is good. Standards on entry are below average for starting an AS course, and occasionally, as in the current Year 12, well below average. Generally students have tended to achieve results in line with their prior attainment.
164. Standards in the current Year 13 are average, which represents good achievement given the students' below average standards at the start of their sixth form studies. Analysis of the students' progress confirms they are reaching better standards than might have been expected. Higher attainers analyse well, but those below this level lack the consistently incisive analytical writing skills required to obtain the higher grades. Standards in Year 12 are well below average and here, achievement is no better than satisfactory. In the work seen, too many relied on description, paraphrase and summary. The students did not use technical terms frequently or appropriately. Their work contained too many inaccuracies. Their standards, as shown through their writing, are not as high as revealed in discussion. Attitudes in Year 13 appear to be good, but they are only satisfactory in Year 12, where they are undermined by a lack of real

independence and initiative in the way students tackle the work. Standards of ICT are average. There was no evidence of the use of numeracy.

165. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although good in Year 13. In Year 13, students tended to be engaged more actively and more responsive, especially when challenged by probing tasks, questions and activities. They are encouraged by the teachers' enthusiasm for the texts and their understanding is enhanced by the teachers' specialist knowledge. Even so, there were occasions when the learning was of a more passive nature so there is room for a more consistent development of greater independence in learning. This is even more the case in Year 12. Day-to-day assessment is informative and gives clear advice on how to improve, although most comments do not specify sufficiently what the student has done well. Observations and discussions revealed a clear need for a sharper and sustained focus on helping students of all potential attainments improve their ability in the techniques of writing A-level assignments.
166. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The planning of materials emerges from a good team approach. Regular meetings ensure good mutual support. The analysis of prior attainment data suggests that some students start the course when they are not fully suited to its rigorous academic demands, especially in terms of reading and writing. The school has good monitoring policies that track students' progress towards their minimum target grades. However, the department has not developed a systematic approach to supporting and monitoring progress through a unit-by-unit skill based approach, or by ensuring that the students are fully familiar with assessment requirements and objectives. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to support students understanding of mathematics and prepare them for external examinations.
- Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their students and give their time freely outside lessons to support those who have difficulties.
- The provision for ICT within the department is unsatisfactory and opportunities to develop students' independent learning skills are under developed.

Commentary

167. Mathematics teaching is shared with a neighbouring school and the curriculum covers modules in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. In 2004, the AS results were well below average. The number of students taking A-level was too small to make reliable comparisons with national standards. In general, students gain results in line with expectations from their sometimes modest GCSE profiles. Retention rates in the sixth form are similar to other schools. In work seen, standards at the end of Year 13 are below average. However, this represents satisfactory achievement on the basis of the students' prior GCSE performances in Year 11. Students in Year 13 can differentiate and integrate as well as make use of the Poisson distribution and the binomial distribution. The provision for literacy is satisfactory, although the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory; students confirm too few opportunities for using ICT in their mathematics work.

168. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their expositions are clear and well considered. They have high expectations for their students and enjoy positive and supportive relationships including giving their time freely outside lessons to support them. However, the teacher sometimes talks too much, and this means that the students' independent learning skills are not sufficiently encouraged. The students' attitudes and behaviour are good. They enjoy positive and productive relationships with the teacher and with each another. They engage well with the lesson and work well outside of the lesson completing assignments and working through past papers.
169. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and, in a short period of time, the head of department has demonstrated her commitment to raising standards and improving teaching. Management is satisfactory and the head of department has a very good awareness of areas for improvement which are carefully articulated in the department documentation. Areas for improvement include updating schemes of work and ensuring that the provision for students in the sixth form is better co-ordinated across both sites. Enrichment opportunities to research mathematics or make use of revision programmes are under utilised. The department is suitably equipped in terms of textbooks, but the library has too few suitable mathematics books. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 13 have remained similar to those reported in 1999.

SCIENCE

No work in this curriculum area was inspected in full, but biology was sampled.

170. In a Year 12 **biology** lesson, students achieved very well in their work on genetic engineering. A very well planned lesson incorporated very good activities and particularly good use of a video clip to consolidate the students' learning and supplement their knowledge. Despite below average standards, students made the most of their opportunities, and benefited from the very good teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good overall.
- The A-level curriculum is not appropriate for all the students who begin the course and has resulted in a high drop-out rate.

Commentary

171. Standards in the 2004 A-level examination were well above average. They were above average in 2003. Work seen shows that standards in the current Year 13 are above average. Standards in the AS examinations have been similar, but standards seen in the current Year 12 group are below average. Groups are too small to make a valid comparison between male and female students.
172. Achievement is good. Year 13 students entered the course with average knowledge and understanding in ICT, but with weaker skills in communication and literacy. Students have been affected by the recent staffing problems, but are beginning to consolidate their knowledge and

understanding ready for the examination. Coursework is generally good because the subject leader has ensured that students understand the mark scheme and meet the deadlines. Students have also developed their writing skills through practice and attention to appropriate models. These efforts have been less successful with the Year 12 students, whose standards on entry to the course were lower and commitment to independent learning less developed. Retention rates have been good in the past, but there has been a big drop out from the current Year 12.

173. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to match the level of challenge closely to the students' needs. Assessment is satisfactory. Work is marked regularly, so that students know what they have to do to improve. The students' commitment to learning is variable, and has sometimes been affected by absence, particularly in Year 12. During the inspection, teaching was sometimes mechanical with a lack of pace and challenge.
174. The leadership for A-level ICT is good. The leader has maintained the thoroughness and integrity of the work schedule for students so that they can be in no doubt what is required. The day to day management is good, despite the problems in staffing, and students have access to computers when they require it. The school has proposed, and offered, a more vocational course that they thought would be more suited to less able students. This was not a success because students were not able to see the new course as fulfilling their needs. Strategic planning, in the context of the whole sixth form curriculum, has been limited by the pressure of staffing problems.
175. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained. The level of resources has mostly kept pace with national expectations, although teachers are not using up-to-date technology sufficiently to motivate students.

HUMANITIES

No work in this curriculum area was seen.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No work in this curriculum area was seen.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No work in this curriculum area was seen.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

BUSINESS

The focus was on the AVCE course in business.

Vocational business

Provision in vocational business is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students tend to perform better than would be expected from their GCSE profiles.
- Good achievement reflects a careful concentration on assessment, so that students know how to improve their work.
- The students' written work is supported well by a careful focus on how language is used. Even so, it still tends to lag behind coursework standards, particularly in Year 12.
- Some students lack confidence in their ability to learn for themselves.

Commentary

176. The school offers the AVCE in business to students in Years 12 and 13. The small size of the groups makes comparison with national standards unreliable. However, in recent years, students of all levels of prior attainment have tended to perform at higher levels than would have been expected from their earlier GCSE scores. There are no major differences in the patterns of male and female students' achievements. Retention rates are good.
177. Achievement is good at all levels. In work seen, the range of standards at entry is a very wide one; overall, entry standards are below those normally expected for such a programme. By the end of Year 12, students show good achievement. Most of them are working at below average levels, but this is about a grade higher than that predicted from their GCSE profiles. By the end of Year 13, the small number of students produce work of broadly average standard, representing very good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Almost all students have a good understanding of the basic concepts of business, and most can then apply these in a suitable range of different concepts. For example, they can relate the activities of a confectionery group to the notion of the marketing mix. The students' coursework is, on the whole, of better standard than their work in preparation for examinations. The latter is sometimes limited by an inadequate grasp of the need to evaluate and exemplify, particularly in Year 12, where the impact of literacy weaknesses is greater.
178. The students show above average standards of key skills development in terms of communication and ICT; application of number is average. The subject insists on students using appropriately professional language within the classroom, this tone being set by the teacher. This leads to written work that is characterised by less use of casual style than is usual. There is a generally accurate and widespread use of technical terminology in spoken and written work. Students of all attainment levels produce substantial coursework reports that are well presented using ICT, with a clear target readership in mind, using text and diagrams to enhance the messages. Research is enhanced by an appropriate use of the Internet, for example to gain data about companies. Students have an average grasp of numeracy to support the needs of the course.
179. Teaching is good, as is learning. Teaching is rooted in a good knowledge of both the subject and the course requirements. A significant strength of the department is the very good use of assessment to focus the students' thinking about how to improve their work. Assessment criteria are stated explicitly, and frequently, during lessons; the students know what they must do to gain the next grade. The careful marking of work also provides good advice on how work could be improved. Relationships between the teacher and the students are good; this helps to create the professional and productive working atmosphere evident in the subject. Expectations of both work and behaviour are very good. Classroom management is unobtrusive but based on clear and high expectations; students behave well overall. Students work well together; for example, they teach each other how to use ICT to best effect. However, students are not always confident learners; some seek too often reassurance that what they are doing is right before moving on.

180. The leadership of the subject is good. The course is appropriate to the needs of the students, and assignments draw well on the wide range of businesses in the area. Students benefit from the good contact that the school has with companies. The many areas of strength identified at the previous inspection have been maintained. Improvement since then has been satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No work in this curriculum area was seen.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No work in this curriculum area was seen.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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