

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SHAFTESBURY SCHOOL**

Shaftesbury, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113889

Headteacher: Mr D Booth

Lead inspector: Ian Stuart

Dates of inspection: 3 November – 7 November 2003

Inspection number: 259136

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Voluntary controlled  
Age range of pupils: 13 – 18  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 709

School address: Salisbury Road,  
Shaftesbury  
Postcode: SP7 8ER

Telephone number: 01747 854498  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr C Brickell

Date of previous inspection: 10 January 2000 (HMI inspection 5 December 2001)

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Shaftesbury School has a number of distinctive characteristics. As well as its status as a Church of England Voluntary Controlled school, it has been a specialist sports college for a number of years, and has just received a Sportsmark Gold award for its work as a Sports College. It also received a School Achievement Award in 2003 to mark improvements in its overall performance. It has a significant boarding element, with 75 pupils and students – more than ten per cent of the school roll – residing in the boarding house. The boarding provision brings to the school an important international dimension as many boarders come from overseas, and also brings many other white and non-white ethnic groups into the school; without these pupils and students, the school would have very few pupils from ethnic minorities. Thirty two pupils and students, virtually all boarders, speak English as an additional language, though none of them are at an early stage of acquisition of English. At present, the school caters for pupils and students aged between 13 and 18; however, from September 2004, it will become an 11-18 comprehensive school, taking pupils from the age of 11 into Year 7. This important re-organisation is being accompanied by a major programme of new buildings and the re-modelling of some of the existing accommodation. In addition to the boarders, the school serves a wide geographical area including Shaftesbury and surrounding villages in Dorset; a significant number also transfer from a middle school in a town in Wiltshire. Another distinctive feature of the school is the joint provision of sixth form education with another school eight miles away. Pupils and students come from a very wide range of backgrounds and overall socio-economic circumstances are average. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average, but sometimes below average in some subjects in some years. About one in seven pupils have special educational needs, which is broadly average, though fewer than the national average have a Statement of Special Educational Need from the local education authority. The most common needs are learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19639	Gill Anderson	Lay inspector	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English; post-16 English
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics; post-16 mathematics
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science; post-16 chemistry
17156	Edward Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology; post-16 design and technology
18638	Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design; post-16 art and design; information and communication technology (ICT)
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; post-16 French
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History; post-16 history; religious education
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography; citizenship
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Music
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education; post-16 physical education
15462	Cliff Blakemore	Team inspector	Vocational subjects; post-16 business studies
22685	Natalie Moss	Team inspector	English as an additional language
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Special educational needs; post-16 psychology

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

The school has moved forward very considerably and has been transformed since it was placed in special measures in January 2000. By December 2001, the school was judged to no longer require special measures as it was, by then, providing an acceptable standard of education. Since then, good progress has continued. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have shown great determination in their successful efforts to bring about change and improvement, despite some acute staffing and other difficulties. There is still plenty to do as it prepares for re-organisation, but the school has many strengths and good features; overall, it is providing a **sound education** for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. The high quality of the planning and vision for the enlarged and re-organised school in September 2004 gives the school, and the community it serves, cause to be optimistic and confident for the future.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most pupils achieve well obtaining better results than would be expected from their standards on entry because of generally good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are good, with a particularly effective governing body.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, with their support staff being very effective.
- Boarding provision is very good; boarders enhance the overall life and standards of the school.
- There are good opportunities for enrichment activities, with particularly strong contributions from the Sports College.
- The sixth form is a particular strength of the school, with good provision and achievement.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils adversely affect achievement in some lessons; attendance levels overall are declining and are unsatisfactory, also adversely affecting achievement.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning; assessment information is not used sufficiently as one way of raising aspirations.
- The monitoring and evaluation of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across all subjects are not yet effective enough in contributing to raising standards in these key skills.

The school's improvement since its last full inspection in January 2000 has been very good, with good improvement since the inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in December 2001. Standards at GCSE have risen at a faster rate than the national trend, though the improvement has not been steady each year. Despite some remaining weaknesses, the quality of teaching is much improved. There has been a good response overall to the issues of both inspections, though the attitudes and listening skills of a minority of pupils are still not good enough.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

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

*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.*

Overall, **pupils' achievements are good** from Year 9 to 11, though achievement is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9, where it is satisfactory at present. Standards rise from average to above

average by Year 11. In the core subjects, standards by the end of Year 11 have been higher in English and science than in mathematics. **Students' achievements in the sixth form are good; Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory.** Their attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall; most behave well, but a minority of lessons are disrupted by unsatisfactory attitudes. Attendance is unsatisfactory and is below the national average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory.** Teaching is good overall, but, in lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9, where there was more unsatisfactory teaching. Most lessons are well planned and structured, with good attention given to different groups within the class, though, sometimes, higher attainers are not challenged sufficiently. With good planning, interesting methods and high expectations by teachers, pupils learn well. However, sometimes, when the pace of lessons is too slow, learning is less effective. Some teachers do not develop pupils' study skills well enough, including opportunities for independent learning; as a result, there can be casual attitudes to learning.

The curriculum is **satisfactory**, with well planned pathways for pupils to follow in Years 10 and 11. Major planned changes to the curriculum structure in 2004 should minimise some present weaker features of the curriculum. Care, guidance and support for pupils, and links with parents and the community, are satisfactory. However, the school has correctly identified that the key to the success of the new Shaftesbury School from next September is the necessity for a strong focus on raising the aspirations of all pupils. The main challenge is to actively involve them as full partners in their learning, so that they want to attend school, behave well and feel valued. The care and support for boarders are very good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The tasks and challenges faced by the headteacher and senior management team in recent years have been immense. They have been successful in raising standards of attainment and teaching, despite serious staffing and financial problems, which are now less acute. The governors have provided admirable support. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and a clear vision for the future of the school. As indicated, there are areas which are satisfactory rather than good and where more progress is needed. However, the challenge of re-organisation is being seen as a tremendous opportunity to re-assess the school's values and beliefs, including a fundamental review of the school day, the curriculum, the care of pupils, and the buildings following extensive new building. The forward planning is bold and exciting. If the aims and objectives are successfully implemented, the school will be well placed to provide high quality opportunities 'to empower all individuals to realise their aspirations' (Blueprint for the new Shaftesbury School).

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

Most parents are supportive of the school and recognise the improvements that have occurred. Many do, however, express concerns about staffing difficulties and variations in the quality of teaching, and about aspects of communications with the school. Most pupils enjoy school and feel well supported, but they have concerns about immature behaviour and some bullying. Many of them do not think that the school sufficiently values their opinions.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Develop strategies, including better use of assessment information, that more actively involve pupils as full partners in their learning to ensure that they feel valued and want to attend school and behave well;
- In planning for the new school, continue to address the central issue of raising the aspirations of all pupils;
- Where it is weaker, improve the quality of teaching, and also ensure that the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are integrated coherently in the work of all subjects;
- Use the opportunities provided by re-organisation and new buildings to engage fully with the local community to encourage its active involvement with the school.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT SHAFTESBURY SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides an **effective** education for its students; its cost-effectiveness is **good**. Most students achieve well and are able to move on successfully to the next stage of their education or career. Provision for their personal development is good, and they are mature, well-rounded young people. In national comparisons, standards are average and sometimes above average.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most teaching is good or better, helping students to achieve well.
- The sixth form is very well run, with an emphasis on evaluation and there are very good opportunities to involve students through seeking and acting on their views.
- The curriculum meets the needs of most students, with a good range of extension courses; the planned developments from 2004 to enhance progression opportunities into the sixth form from courses now being taught in Years 10 and 11 will add to the good provision.
- The presence of many overseas students enriches the life of the sixth form significantly; relationships are good and the ethos is very inclusive.
- Although assessment information is extensive and monitoring of students thorough, not all teachers use assessment sufficiently well to track students' progress.
- Despite some good practices, there is scope for sixth formers to be more involved with the rest of the school and the community, and to be used as good role models.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Good in English literature</b> with students achieving well and enjoying good, lively teaching; standards are above average in Year 13. <b>Good in French</b> with good teaching; standards are above average. Students speak French well, and the large group in Year 12 is achieving well.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory in mathematics</b> , with average standards and good achievement in Year 13. Teaching is good, though with relatively little independent work in the large Year 12 class.
Science	<b>Good in chemistry</b> with good teaching and planning leading to good achievement in Year 13; standards in Year 12 are average and the large group is achieving satisfactorily. Teaching was <b>good</b> in the sampled lessons in <b>biology</b> and <b>physics</b> .
Information and communication technology	No ICT lessons were seen. Standards across the curriculum are <b>average</b> .
Humanities	<b>Good in history</b> ; standards are below average, but good teaching is leading to good achievement from students with a wide range of backgrounds. <b>Satisfactory in psychology</b> ; teaching is good, but some students are not achieving as well as they should because too little time is spent studying topics in depth. Teaching in the sampled <b>geography</b> lessons was <b>good</b> .

Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Good in design and technology</b> ; standards are average. Students in Year 12 have very wide range of backgrounds and are achieving satisfactorily. Teaching is good and meets students' needs.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good in art and design</b> ; standards are above average with good teaching encouraging individuality, creativity and good achievement.  Teaching in the sampled <b>theatre studies</b> lessons was <b>very good</b> with very good achievement from highly motivated students. Students in <b>music</b> are appreciative of the new teacher's efforts to refocus their learning; their playing standards are <b>above average</b> .
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good in physical education</b> with average standards and good achievement in a broad range of activities. Teaching is good in specialist and general courses.  Teaching in the sampled <b>leisure and tourism</b> lesson was <b>good</b> , with the practical focus of the course a particular strength.
Business	<b>Good in business studies</b> , with good teaching overall and one excellent lesson observed. Standards are above average with good achievement, especially in research and analysis.  Teaching in the sampled <b>economics</b> lesson was <b>very good</b> , with rigorous learning taking place.
Health and social care	No courses are taught in this curriculum area.
General education	<b>Good</b> provision is made in <b>additional studies</b> and <b>general studies</b> . Teaching was good in the two sampled lessons.

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*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

The school provides **good** advice, support and guidance for students, recognising their growing maturity whilst surrounding them with well-organised help and information, including very good induction arrangements and a good tutorial programme. Students are generally well assisted to make informed choices for their courses in school and for their moves forward into adult life.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **very good**. The strengths of the sixth form reported at previous inspections have been maintained, and there is a positive culture of self-evaluation and critical analysis of performance in individual courses and across the sixth form as a whole. The additional studies and general studies courses are well managed. Good opportunities are provided for sixth formers to be involved in managing the affairs of the sixth form. The collaborative arrangements with Sturminster Newton School are well managed and add significantly to the overall range of opportunities available to students based in both schools.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most sixth formers are very positive about their experiences believing the sixth form to be friendly with a good balance of activities and opportunities. Most believe that the school has improved noticeably in recent years despite major staffing changes. Sixth formers are strongly supportive of the international dimension of the school and the sixth form in particular; they think that the presence of several different cultures is most valuable. Members of the inspection team enjoyed very much their conversations with sixth formers and thank them for their help and co-operation.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is good overall from Year 9 to 11, and in the sixth form. In work seen during the inspection, achievement was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9, where it is satisfactory at present. Standards rise from average at Year 9 to above average by Year 11. By the end of Year 11, standards are higher in English and science than in mathematics. Although, in different subjects and different recent years there are significant differences between the performance of boys and girls, overall differences are similar to those found nationally.

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

- Most pupils achieve well obtaining better results than would be expected from their standards on entry.
- Results at GCSE have been rising at a faster rate than results nationally, though improvement has not been steady each year.
- Pupils with special educational needs have very good provision and achieve well.
- There are significant differences between the relative performance of pupils in different subjects at GCSE; subjects where pupils have regularly performed well include art and design, business studies, drama and Spanish.

#### **Commentary**

1. Year 9 results were average in 2003, though the proportion reaching Level 5 in science was above average. In 2002, they were also average, though English was above average. The trend of results is similar to the national trend. Overall, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.6 (34.5)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	35.7 (34.2)	35.3 (34.7)
science	34.4 (33.7)	33.7 (33.3)

*There were 148 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. Results have risen over the last five years, though there was a dip in 2002, largely related to the lower results at the end of Year 9 in 2000. The trend, however, over the last five years has been for results to rise at a faster rate than those nationally. The gap between boys and girls in 2002 was negligible. In 2003, although higher attaining boys did better or as well as higher attaining girls, lower attaining boys did less well compared with girls.

### Standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	58 (48)	53 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (82)	91 (87)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (93)	95 (95)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.6 (34.7)	34.5 (34.6)

*There were 174 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Pupils' standards on entry into the school at the beginning of Year 9 are broadly average and sometimes below in some subjects in some years. For example, standards in English in the present Year 9 were below average on entry. Standards on entry were also below average in French, information and communication technology (ICT), geography, physical education and religious education. Test results and teachers' assessments indicate that pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily during Year 9; in many cases, there is good achievement. However, achievement is satisfactory in Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. Good teaching in art and design, design and technology, drama, modern foreign languages, history and physical education is leading to good achievement in Year 9. There is a close correlation between the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement with less progress in some lessons in Year 9 because of the higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching that was seen. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are partly due to teachers' weaker classroom management, though better monitoring of teaching and more stability in staffing are helping to bring more evenness to pupils' achievements. In some subjects, there is a wider range of ability in Year 9 classes than there is in classes in Years 10 and 11; where teachers do not adequately match their teaching to the needs of all pupils, achievement declines.
- Standards, relative to national standards, by Year 11 are generally higher than in Year 9 and are above average in a broad range of subjects including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall, pupils are achieving well in Years 10 and 11. Standards in drama are well above average, with pupils achieving very well. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11, generally better matching pupils' needs, and, therefore, achievement tends to be better. However, there are still variations in standards between subjects and even, on occasions, within a subject, usually related to the quality of teaching.
- Most subjects make no particular provision for gifted and talented pupils nor to identify them especially; however, generally, higher attaining pupils do somewhat better in relation to their prior attainment than average or lower attainers. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables virtually all of them to make good progress in achieving their individual targets and in improving their reading and spelling; many make very good progress. Progress is carefully monitored and most pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence. They make good progress in most subjects, and especially in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, drama and art. Many achieve very well at GCSE, and a significant number do well in their subsequent GNVQ and AS courses in the sixth form. Comments about pupils with English as an additional language are made in the section on boarding.

### Sixth form

- Results at the end of Year 13 in AS and A level and VCE examinations in 2002 were broadly similar to the national average. National comparisons for 2003 are not yet available, but results in the school were higher and are likely to be around the above average score. In both years, the results represent good achievement in relation to students' attainments when they entered the sixth form.

**Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.4 (n/a)	94.8 (89.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	22.1 (n/a)	39.4 (37.9)
Average point score per pupil	231.6 (239.2)	263.3 (n/a)

*There were 82 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

7. Students enter the sixth form with a broad range of prior attainments, reflecting the inclusive nature of admissions arrangements, and a significant minority of students join the sixth form from other schools. Of these, many come from overseas and many speak English as an additional language. Therefore, students' achievements reflect the diverse backgrounds, previous educational history and, indeed, the varying length of time some students spend in the sixth form. Overall, however, most are achieving well, although there are variations between subjects. Over recent years, students studying business studies have done particularly well with above or well above average results, and, in most years, biology has also been a high performing subject. Analysis by the school of the 2003 results shows that students in Year 13 did well in relation to their GCSE scores, but that improvement would be needed from results at AS level in Year 12, particularly the higher grades, if the present Year 13 is to match last year's standards.
8. Overall standards in the sixth form are similar to those found nationally. In work seen in during the inspection, in most subjects, there is a noticeable difference in standards between Year 12 and Year 13, indicating how, at an early stage of courses, there is quite a gulf to overcome between GCSE and advanced level work. However, this gap has been successfully bridged in French with students developing good listening and speaking skills because of sustained use of the language. Standards in history are below average but, with a very wide range within the groups, overall achievement is good. Achievement is also good in physical education partly because of the broad and inclusive curriculum enabling most students to experience success. Standards in business studies in Year 13 are well above average with students achieving well because of good teaching and students' positive attitudes. Achievement in design and technology is satisfactory in Year 12, but improves to good in Year 13, and achievement is good in both years in art and design, mathematics and chemistry, where lively questioning helps to raise standards. In psychology, which is only taught in Year 12, present achievement is satisfactory, but some students are already making perceptive insights. English standards in Year 13 are above average with students achieving well, though more rigorous analysis in writing is needed to achieve the highest grades. Although not inspected in depth, achievement in theatre arts is very good as a result of very good teaching and students' own enthusiasm, motivation and commitment to succeed.

**Boarding**

9. Pupils and students in the boarding house generally achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils in the school. The school makes special arrangements for the 32 pupils and students for whom English is an additional language, although, currently, there are no pupils or students in the school who are at the early stages of English acquisition. Those with English as an additional language are achieving rapidly and well because of the good level of support they receive from classroom assistants and the attention paid to them by most classroom teachers. This is a good improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Most of these pupils and students are resident in the school's boarding house, where they receive extra support in the evenings and at weekends, as well as benefiting from an ethos which encourages the regular use of colloquial English. As a result, their language skills advance quickly so that they are able to participate and learn well in lessons. Their test results in Year 9 and their GCSE results in Year 11 reflect this good level of achievement. Classroom support in

key subjects until the end of Year 11 ensures that their language use matures as they move through the school.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall, though a minority sometimes behave immaturely. Their punctuality at the start of the school day and for lessons is satisfactory, but attendance levels are below average and are unsatisfactory. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils behave well in classes and around school and have positive attitudes; however, as at the time of the 2000 and 2001 inspections, the unsatisfactory attitudes and immature behaviour of a minority disrupt the learning of others at times.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the good extra curricular activities which they enjoy and can participate in at lunch times.
- The attitudes of sixth formers are good; the atmosphere of the sixth form is very inclusive, and sixth formers enjoy taking responsibility.
- The attendance of pupils is unsatisfactory because the school's actions to promote good attendance are not adequate.
- A minority of pupils have low aspirations; they lack enthusiasm for school because they have low self-esteem and do not feel valued.

### **Commentary**

10. The monitoring of absence is unsatisfactory because the school lacks a clear understanding of why some pupils are absent and what to do about it. The school's efforts to promote good attendance have been hindered because support from outside agencies has been very patchy; notwithstanding this problem, the school has not succeeded in encouraging all parents to maximise their children's opportunities to learn by ensuring they come to school. This is clearly shown by the large number of pupils – about a quarter in the school – who, at present, have some unauthorised absence. Attendance this term is below the overall figures for 2001/2 shown below.

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2001/2) (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.8	School data	0.9
National data	9.0	National data	1.2

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

11. Most pupils like school and are happy with it. Whilst most of them behave well and the overall atmosphere around the school is good, there is some unsatisfactory behaviour, usually related to the unsatisfactory way some teachers control pupils in classes. Whilst most unsatisfactory behaviour is immature rather than unpleasant, it frustrates pupils who want to learn. Nearly four-fifths of the pupils who completed their questionnaire saw behaviour as one of the main weaknesses in the school. A few teachers are inconsistent in the way they manage pupils' behaviour and some resort to shouting. This does not help relationships between pupils and teachers. Relationships are satisfactory overall and often good, but many pupils feel talked down to on occasions. When behaviour is unsatisfactory, the 'time out' system is clearly robust and operated in an efficient manner. The number of fixed term exclusions is at expected levels, but three permanent exclusions in the last year are more than would be normally expected.

**Ethnic background of pupils (September 2003)****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	624	32	3
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Chinese	15	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	51	0	0

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

12. Although, in the questionnaire and in conversations, pupils report bullying, most say it is sorted out satisfactorily. There is no evidence of any racial tension, and the boarding provision contributes to a rich cultural diversity into the school; boarders are well integrated and there is a good feeling of inclusiveness in the school. However, quite a large number of pupils do have reservations about the school and aspects of their personal development. The school recognises that it needs to develop further strategies that involve pupils more actively as full partners in their learning, to ensure that they feel valued, want to be in school and behave well. It is very important that present work in the tutorial programme about participation and democracy, leading to reviving the school council and encouraging the involvement of pupils in aspects of running the school, is successful. The recent planning day for the new re-organised school involved some pupils, whose contributions were valued; this development is encouraging and needs to be built upon.
13. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards their learning. They mostly work hard in lessons, concentrate well and are keen to succeed. Behaviour and classroom relationships are good. Some however do find it difficult to concentrate, and work independently.
14. Pupils for whom English is an additional language approach their learning of English with interest and a good level of motivation and effort. They are anxious to learn the language as quickly as possible and work with enthusiasm to that end. They co-operate well with teachers and other staff who support them in lessons and show a desire to achieve as highly as possible. They are appreciative of innovations put in place to help them, such as the English-only speaking zone in the boarding house.
15. When they are given the opportunity, pupils work well together and relations between various groups are good. In sport, pupils have very good opportunities to take leadership roles and pupils working for their sports leadership awards, in particular, demonstrate confidence and are good role models. In art and music, pupils demonstrate sensitivity and a willingness to reflect on emotions and feelings. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection on Christian based issues, although there is little evidence of pupils' active involvement in them. Pupils' understanding of moral issues is encouraged and developed in a range of subjects, particularly in religious education where they consider contemporary issues such as fairness and equality. They are encouraged to consider those less fortunate than themselves in lessons and through fund raising; however they have little opportunity to take the initiative themselves in their charity work. Some pupils in Year 11 are rewarded for continuous effort and achievement by being

appointed as senior students with accompanying privileges. This supports the school's drive to raise standards, but the lack of additional responsibilities means these pupils are not used as role models of leadership throughout the school. However, pupils' social development is fostered successfully through their participation in extra curricular activities. They are enthusiastic about the good extra curricular activities which they enjoy and can participate in at lunch times. Whilst the presence of pupils and students from a range of cultural backgrounds gives a most valuable multi-cultural dimension and they are very well integrated into the school, their presence is not sufficiently actively exploited in ways that enrich the experiences of all pupils. The school has identified this as an area for development. Despite some reservations expressed above, the overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

16. The attendance of sixth form students is satisfactory. They are punctual at the start of the school day and for lessons. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good because they are interested in school life and the range of activities provided. The freedom from bullying and racism is very good and an impressive feature of the sixth form, because the overseas students are so well integrated into the sixth form.
17. The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of students in the sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form have a greater opportunity to demonstrate community involvement than pupils in the main school. They are enterprising and enjoy taking responsibility, volunteering to support younger pupils in reading, mathematics and sports. They lead the newly re-formed school council and their annual 'Rag Day' provides a good opportunity for initiative, planning and community participation. The community sports leadership award, and the contribution of A level art students to local organisations, support their feelings of social responsibility and confidence. Students demonstrate co-operation and harmony; they provide good role models which could and should be used further to enrich the life of the expanding school.

### **Boarding**

18. Relationships are very good between staff and pupils and students in the boarding house. They are also very good between the pupils and students themselves. They behave very well and welcome responsibility and respond very well to the very high expectations for them to do so. Boarding provision contributes very well to boarders' personal development. Pupils and students are articulate, confident and have very good inter-personal skills. They understand and respect other people's feelings very well. They appreciate the good quality of their lives and experiences at the boarding house, and value greatly living with pupils and students from other countries and cultures. Pupils' and students' experiences are enriched by their access to a very wide range of cultural and recreational activities which are very well matched to their age and interests. They have very good opportunities for private study and learning in both the boarding house and the main school.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is good overall, particularly in the sixth form and it is also good in Years 10 and 11; the quality of teaching is, however, variable, with more unsatisfactory teaching in Year 9. Assessment is satisfactory, but in need of further development. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good plans to improve it further. Care, guidance and support, and links with parents and the community are satisfactory; links with other schools are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Examples of outstanding practice are found in the English section, and in the business studies section of the sixth form subject reports.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects well and their subject knowledge gives confidence to pupils in their learning.
- Most lessons are well planned and structured and have a focus on what pupils should learn.
- Better teaching uses interesting methods that actively involve pupils, but some lessons are too dominated by the teacher and are dull.
- Assessment is not always used as a tool to inform teaching strategies nor to inform pupils how to improve.
- When teachers allow the pace of lessons to slacken and do not have high enough expectations of good behaviour, pupils' attitudes to learning become too casual.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 121 lessons (including the sixth form)*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	18 (15%)	64 (53%)	32 (26%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

19. The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection of 2000, when it was unsatisfactory, and the inspection of 2001, when it was satisfactory, though a key issue was to improve the quality of teaching further. Parents have expressed some concerns about the quality of teaching and are aware of very considerable staffing changes and staff absence that have led to many pupils having had several changes of teacher in recent years. Parents, and pupils, are right to be concerned by these circumstances, but the inspection team notes that the staffing situation is much more stable now and that many well-qualified teachers have been appointed recently. Nonetheless, pupils' learning has been disrupted at times despite the good efforts of the school. There is still too much variation in the quality of teaching, although procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching by senior and middle managers are helping both to identify weaker teaching and to put into place strategies to improve teaching.
20. Teaching is less good in Year 9 than in Years 10 and 11 because there are more lessons in Year 9 where teachers' planning does not fully take into account the needs of different pupils in the class and, in particular, does not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils. One consequence is that pupils behave less well because they are less interested and because such lessons almost invariably are slower with the pace of learning slipping. Another factor that contributes to less successful learning, and again more prevalent in Year 9 than in Years 10 and 11, is the tendency of some teachers to be less insistent on a crisp change between one activity and another. As a result, pupils' levels of concentration drop with two or three minutes being lost at crucial times in the lesson. Often such lessons are fundamentally well planned and structured, but the fault is in the detailed delivery of the lesson rather than in the overall objectives. With the arrival in the school next September of younger pupils in Years 7 and 8, a key challenge for teachers will be to fire the imagination of these younger pupils from the beginning with fast paced, tightly planned lessons that have an emphasis on enabling pupils to work independently by developing their study skills. Another barrier to the learning of some pupils is their poor listening skills; again, this is an important area on which teachers need to focus to bring about improvement.

21. There are many strengths in much of the teaching. In nearly all lessons, teachers know their subject material well and this gives confidence to pupils that teachers will take learning forward. In many lessons, and particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers do give attention to how best to meet the needs of different pupils. For example, interesting, and generally successful, work is taking place with single gender groups in some subjects that is giving teachers opportunities to explore the preferred learning styles of boys and girls. As stated in more detail later, most teachers give good attention to pupils with special educational needs and to those for whom English is not their first language. Teachers are generally helped in their teaching by good schemes of work. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been well used in many subjects to improve teaching and help pupils to focus on what they are expected to learn. The recommended methods have increased the pace of many lessons through splitting the lesson into three parts. However, the final review sessions are often unimaginative and merely involve the teacher re-capping what has happened during the lesson rather than positively engaging pupils in a variety of activities to consolidate their learning.
22. The most successful lessons are characterised by the fast pace of learning and the opportunities pupils have to work to their full potential. This frequently means that they are challenged by high quality questioning and given imaginative tasks that allow them to research in depth and work independently; sometimes this means that ICT is effectively used within the learning process and that pupils' literacy skills are extended. Furthermore, in these circumstances, homework is used better to take learning forward rather than being the time to finish work off, a task that higher attainers, if not appropriately challenged, can often do before the lesson ends. Where lessons are less successful, it is often the teacher who does most of the work, often over-dominating the lesson and sometimes having to overcome poor listening skills and casual attitudes of pupils. Whilst the best lessons do develop pupils' literacy skills well, not all teachers sufficiently plan the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills into their teaching programmes.
23. The school has good systems for the collection of national test and examination data, which is subject to rigorous analysis and perceptive interpretation. The information is used well for target setting and is increasingly used as a tool to raise standards and to inform teaching practices. Overall, the school's analysis of results is thorough and sophisticated. The school assessment team has produced a policy for assessment with the purpose of raising both pupils' and teachers' aspirations. It is a sharp, succinct, easy to read blue-print of ideas for teachers and departments for introducing and sustaining a culture of assessment for learning. If it becomes well used, it has the potential to be a powerful instrument for improving standards. Currently, departments are at different stages of development with some innovative assessment practices, notably in physical education and design and technology. Overall, at present, the thorough and constructive use of assessment, that responds to individual needs and informs teaching practices, is satisfactory. The principal issue for most departments is to give more understanding to pupils of how well they are progressing and what to do to improve. More use needs to be made in most subjects of level or grade descriptions in pupil-friendly language, in marking and in displays around rooms, as a way of increasing pupils' understanding of what they need to do to get better. Nonetheless, assessment practices are improving, with the introduction of the interim report and a pupil-by-pupil analysis of performance in Year 9 reflecting well the progress being made; however, computerised up-to-date central record keeping by departments is not fully implemented.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in most subjects, and especially in science, design and technology, history, religious education, drama and vocational courses. Pupils' learning requirements are well known and work is matched to their needs. They are very well supported by teaching assistants who work in close partnership with subject teachers. Progress is closely monitored through regular testing and review of individual targets. The shared checking of the achievement of targets by subject teachers and teaching assistants is a significant strength. The objectives set in pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs are fulfilled well and annual reviews are carried out effectively.

25. Teaching for pupils for whom English is an additional language is generally good. Each pupil has an individual education plan with specific targets, which are given to teachers and support assistants. The use of these plans helps teachers to plan for and ensure that pupils acquire the structure and vocabulary they need for their studies and that help is available to overcome difficulties. Not all teachers, however, use these plans as fully as they might. Assessment of these pupils is good. They are tested on arrival at the school and individual plans are written to assist classroom teachers and teaching assistants to recognise weaknesses and to help pupils to overcome them. These plans are regularly reviewed, with progress recorded and targets modified. Assessment of pupils' levels of competence is thorough and regular.

### **Sixth form**

26. Teaching in the sixth form is stronger than in the rest of the school. The bulk is good or better, and none is unsatisfactory. Most sixth formers value the teaching they receive, and many have welcomed the arrival of new teachers whose teaching they enjoy. Nonetheless, sixth formers' learning has, like pupils in other years, at times been adversely affected by staffing difficulties, and some say that there are occasions when they are not well cared for when their normal teacher is absent.
27. The best teaching provides challenge of a high order, and, where there are high expectations, learning is particularly strong. Where teachers have a strong passion for their subject, their enthusiasm rubs off on students, even where the teachers are relatively inexperienced at teaching sixth formers. Other characteristics of successful teaching in the sixth form are the support that teachers give to encourage students to take increasing responsibility for their own learning; teachers achieve the right balance between providing expert information and facilitating independent work. In most subjects, two teachers share the teaching; students find this very helpful as it brings them into contact with different styles of teaching and learning, but within a generally well-planned scheme of work. Less successful teaching tends to involve too much input from the teacher and too few teaching styles; in these circumstances, as many sixth form groups contain a wide range of abilities and backgrounds, their differing needs are not always met successfully.
28. The school collects and analyses examination data well and relates students' prior performance at GCSE to target grades at the end of Year 12 and Year 13. Theoretically, checks and balances pick up underachievement against academic targets. In practice, this is done better in some subjects than in others. The best and most consistent teachers' analyses of student on-going performance is in Year 13. Currently, Year 12 students are unaware of their target grades, though their first examinations are not far ahead. Overall, assessment practices are satisfactory, with particularly good practice in physical education, science and design and technology; most students believe that their work is assessed helpfully so that they can see how to improve it. Further improvements are taking place through in-service training, support from the local education authority and sharing good practice.

### **Boarding**

29. The procedures for academic and pastoral assessment are very good. Thorough and rigorous systems ensure that the progress of each pupil and student is closely monitored. The designation of a personal mentor for each pupil or student is a significant strength in ensuring on-going assessment, recording and reporting of progress.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and meets statutory requirements. Although the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship because of accommodation difficulties, it makes reasonable alternative provision for each year group. Opportunities for enrichment are good through a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is much better than it was at the times of previous inspection reports; the planned overhaul of the curriculum from September 2004 should enable further improvements to take place.
- The range of vocational courses has been extended to provide more opportunities for pupils, and further extensions, in collaboration with a college of further education, are planned.
- The sixth form curriculum is good, enhanced by collaborative arrangements with another school.
- Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language are good.
- Extra curricular provision in sport is very good and has led to the achievement of the Sportsmark Gold award; there is less extra-curricular provision to support other subjects.

## Commentary

30. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and caters for the different aptitudes and full range of pupils. The school is successfully working with other local providers to extend the range of activities for some pupils; for example, pupils have opportunities for vocational courses that prepare them for later work opportunities and some attend local places of work as part of their studies. Pupils are not deprived access to any courses or units of study as a result of individual circumstances or needs. The curriculum at all stages is much better than in 2000 and is continuing to improve. The continuing momentum will be enhanced by the enlargement of the school roll with the increased opportunities this will bring in terms of staffing and facilities. The curriculum is evolving well, adapting to meet the needs of all pupils.
31. Pupils are well prepared for their choices before they enter Year 10, and the principles behind the curriculum have been very helpfully presented through the 'Key Stage 4 Pathways' booklet. The concept of 'pathways' gives coherence and a strong rationale to the curriculum, and helps pupils and parents in making sensible choices for the different options available. Inclusiveness in the curriculum is being developed well through good use of colleges, and a course, particularly aimed at pupils who are finding difficulty with traditional courses, is about to start in conjunction with Yeovil College. There are now far more opportunities for tailor-made options outside the core range of subjects than in the past, and these are helping to increase the motivation of some pupils. There are several real timetabling problems in a relatively small school like Shaftesbury; some of the consequences, like double periods in the afternoon for some classes, adversely affect achievement. There are also some other weaknesses in the timetable, such as the below average amounts of time for some subjects, including English in Years 10 and 11. However, the re-structuring of the school day and greater flexibility, which the enlarged school will bring, should help to minimise curriculum difficulties. Progression from Years 10 and 11 to Years 12 and 13 should be enhanced next year as new courses in the sixth form will provide good pathways for pupils taking applied and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.
32. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is well planned to meet their specific needs. All pupils have full access to the curriculum. In addition, they have very well-targeted support in lessons from teaching assistants. A few are withdrawn for specialist support as needed. Every care is taken to minimise any disruption of lessons. Each pupil's programme is kept under careful review. The special arrangements for GCSE examinations, which enable pupils to achieve well, are a particular strength. Enrichment opportunities are provided through tutor time activities. Resources including computers are well chosen and used.
33. The curriculum is also good for those for whom English is a second language, since they receive strong support from both teachers and classroom assistants and are, therefore, included in all school activities. The curriculum is supplemented for boarding pupils by extra

help in the evenings from the co-ordinator for English as an additional language, other teachers and specific individual lessons by a specialist teacher at weekends.

34. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports, where it is very good. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is strong in the school. Extensive provision includes activities in the arts, opportunities for further study, homework support and use of ICT. Work experience placements are well planned and have a positive impact on most pupils' motivation.
35. Following a time of significant change and rapid turnover, staffing is much more stable now, though a few difficulties remain. The school is now appropriately staffed for the needs of the curriculum. Support staff are of very good quality and make an important contribution in enhancing individual pupils' learning. Staff are well supported by effective procedures for induction and professional development. Planning is well advanced to meet staffing requirements for the full 11-18 age range from September 2004. The need to appoint a large number of new staff presents many challenges, but also very many exciting opportunities.
36. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is good, and has a positive impact on learning, in business studies, English, history, science, and physical education (where outside facilities are particularly good). However, there are weaknesses, such as music where accommodation is unsatisfactory with a small and cramped teaching room, insufficient practice rooms and poor sound insulation. There is limited space also in art, and a shortage of sinks; this restricts activities such as sculpture and printing. A lack of specialist areas also limits provision in drama and gymnastics. Plans for the development of the site to accommodate the increased age range in September 2004 are well advanced, with major opportunities to provide good accommodation to meet the curriculum needs of the school. As well as major new buildings, with access for students with disabilities, improvements will include the use of devolved capital funding to update much of the present school accommodation.
37. Resources for learning are satisfactory except in music where they are unsatisfactory because there is, at present, insufficient equipment to cover the needs of the curriculum. The learning resource centre (library) makes a very good contribution to learning and book resources are supplemented by regular support through the Dorset school library service. The ratio of computers to pupils is above average, but difficulties of access in some subjects reduce the contribution of ICT to learning in some subjects.

### **Sixth form**

38. In the sixth form, the breadth and range of curricular opportunities are good. Whilst most of the courses are academic, there is reasonable provision of vocational courses. It is planned to expand this range next year in ways that provide sensible progression and good continuity from courses now being taught in Years 10 and 11. The collaborative arrangements with Sturminster Newton School work well, despite the distance between the two schools. The range of courses and possible subject combinations are enhanced by the arrangements. A significant number of students travel between the two sites so that their programme of study more successfully matches their needs. Curriculum provision is also enhanced through a well-planned and broad range of additional studies and general studies. This provision is better than is found in many schools, and enables students to obtain qualifications in general studies as well as benefiting from the experiences the different elements in the course provide. The additional studies programme gives good opportunities for sixth formers to engage in sport, take the Community Sports Leaders Award and develop their skills in areas such as music and ICT.
39. Staffing, teaching accommodation and resources for the sixth form have similar strengths and weaknesses as the rest of the school, but students are well provided with a social area and a study area for independent learning. Computers are available for writing reports and for research, and are well used. Plans are well advanced for the provision of a Business

Enterprise Centre within the sixth form building during the school expansion which should improve business links.

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

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is sound. There is satisfactory involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good so that pupils feel very welcome when they first arrive and know clearly how the school works; pupils feel safe in school.
- Although the local education authority gives good support to the school with asset management, the school is only beginning to regularise and formalise its own procedures for health and safety.
- Many pupils do not feel sufficiently involved as full partners in their learning in ways in which they feel valued.

### **Commentary**

40. The school prospectus puts considerable emphasis on the care of pupils, and there are several strong features of what it does. For example, heads of year move up the school with their year groups, and there is a good development plan for pastoral provision and the tutorial programme, which, if effectively implemented, should be a powerful agent for change. Pupils feel safe, and procedures for child protection and health and safety are sound. Induction arrangements are very good, and pupils speak very positively of the careful preparation they received before joining the school. However, there are weaknesses in some aspects of care and support of pupils which particularly affects the perceptions some pupils have of their role in the partnership between staff and pupils, and the way in which they feel valued. Forging a better partnership is one essential element of raising the self-esteem and aspirations of all pupils, and the school has correctly identified that the key task facing the new Shaftesbury School is the necessity for a strong focus on strategies to raise the aspirations of all pupils. The successful involvement of a number of pupils in the recent planning day for the new school is a pointer to what can be done, and this bodes well for the future.
41. Not all pupils feel they have someone to turn to when they have a problem, and feel inhibited about using peer mentoring and the counselling service; these valuable opportunities, that should enable pupils to 'drop in' informally and without embarrassment, are under-used and less successful than they could be. The school is recognising the need to listen to pupils and be alert to their needs, and, as stated above, this was demonstrated well during the training day at the beginning of the inspection week which included all 'stakeholders', including pupils and students, in planning the vision for the new school. Most staff recognise that there is work to be done on 'where children belong' and pupils are clearly 'saying listen to us, talk to us'. The governing body also recognises that a key task is to empower pupils and listen. This is an important part of helping to address how the low aspirations that some pupils have can be raised. The recognition of the important role an effective school council can play, and strategies to encourage that role, are part of the process of involving pupils and allowing them to feel valued; other indicators, such as ensuring adequate provision of fresh water, the provision of toilet rolls in all toilets all the time, and adequate provision of lockers are also important details that send powerful messages to pupils.
42. Good mentoring and target setting contribute to good progress, but open dialogue with teachers is not yet consistently well established and the tutorial times at the beginning of the day are not used consistently well. Whilst some are effectively used to discuss progress and record achievement, others are not sufficiently productive. Sometimes the unsatisfactory way pupils are managed does little to establish a good rapport, and tutorials are not always used as a

valued time. The opportunity to start the day well and build enthusiasm for the school can be lost.

43. The Pupils with special educational needs are very well cared for, guided and supported. Their learning needs are well known from the time they enter the school, and their progress, and academic and personal development are very closely monitored. They, like other pupils, receive sound careers advice and guidance, though, at present, temporarily, no teacher has specific responsibility for careers. Whilst there are no specific concerns about the health and safety of pupils on school premises, there is a need for more clarity in the school's policies so that no important matter is overlooked. The local education authority gives good support to the school with asset management, but the school is only beginning to regularise and formalise its own procedures for health and safety.

### **Sixth form**

44. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good and the school is very effective in involving students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The sixth form council is an effective body both in a consultative role and as providing sixth formers with opportunities to organise events and activities. Induction arrangements are very good and include a comprehensive programme to develop study skills; the tutorial programme in the sixth form builds on the induction programme and is comprehensive and relevant. The guidance students get for further study and career opportunities is good. Students feel valued and listened to and respond very well in their personal development, making them good role models for the main school. Indeed, as stated earlier, there is scope for them to be more involved with the rest of the school and the community.

### **Boarding**

45. Pupils' and students' welfare is seen as the prime focus of the work of the boarding house. Very clear policies provide detailed guidance for their protection and guidance. Policies are very well interpreted in stringent routines and procedures which are very well known by staff, pupils and students. Pupils' and students' well-being, together with their personal and academic development, are closely monitored and recorded by designated mentors. Supervision is of a very high quality both day and night. It is skilfully and sensitively adapted to pupils' and students' ages and maturity especially for recreational activities and visits. Child protection procedures are very detailed and thorough but liaison with procedures in the main school need to be more systematic to ensure consistency in the care of individuals. Accommodation is of very good quality and well maintained by staff, pupils and students. Attractive study bedrooms provide opportunities for companionship as well as good personal space.

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

The school has satisfactory links with parents and the community. Its links with other schools and colleges are good, with the Sports College having particularly good links.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Some positive partnerships with parents are developing, and the Parents' Forum, set up in 2000, has already made a good contribution to the comprehensive and useful school prospectus.
- The main strengths in the school's links with the community are through the Sports College; these are very good.
- Links such as those between art students and the local community are valuable, but there is scope for more active involvement with the local community.
- The school recognises the opportunities presented by the new building and resources to bring the local community into the life of the school and to enhance its reputation.
- The school makes good links with other schools to enrich curriculum and learning opportunities which can be limited in these small schools.

## **Commentary**

46. The school's own survey this year of pupils, students, staff and parents indicates that many do not believe the school is well thought of in the community. This is a nettle that the school recognises must be grasped as part of establishing confidence in the new Shaftesbury School. The school is beginning to take good advantage of the opportunities presented by its significant expansion next year by developing a dialogue with all interested groups to map the way forward, and to involve them in the preparations for the new school. This is a critical opportunity to develop pride in the school and so contribute to raising the aspirations of pupils.
47. Information for parents, particularly about pupils' standards and progress, is beginning to improve. Annual reports are satisfactory, but there is room for improvement in the detail given of what a pupil knows, understands, can do and needs to do to improve. The greater detail should help parents support their child's learning. The response of many parents to opportunities to engage with the school is disappointing at present. As the school grows, it needs to take all possible steps to encourage the involvement of parents in a partnership that is aimed at increasing the enthusiasm for learning of all pupils.
48. A very close partnership is encouraged with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are well supported in their understanding of pupils' learning needs and kept well informed about pupils' progress. Parents whose children have a Statement of Special Educational Need are fully involved in the annual reviews, and they visit the school frequently to discuss any particular concerns.
49. The school has good links with other schools which ensure that Year 9 pupils are keen to join the school. It is closely involving the first schools, which will become primary schools, in the planning of the new school. The good links with other schools and, for older pupils and students, with colleges are contributing to the enrichment of the curriculum and to the inclusive nature of the school. The Sports College's very good contributions to links with other schools and the community are reported on in detail in a separate section of the physical education report in Part C. These links make a significant contribution to the overall range of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and provide a firm foundation for further development in the future.

## **Sixth form**

50. Links with the community are satisfactory and links with colleges and higher education are good. The good collaborative arrangements with Sturminster Newton School have already been mentioned, and good flexible arrangements have been made with colleges, where necessary and possible, to access courses that widen curriculum opportunities. Many students enjoy work experience in addition to the block placements later in the year.

## **Boarding**

51. Priority is given to ensuring a very close on-going partnership with parents from the time pupils and students enter the boarding house. Formal boarding reports on personal development, in addition to reports on academic progress, are issued annually. Each pupil or student has a personal file recording progress and a central diary is kept of issues and concerns. Parents are kept well informed through regular formal reports and by e-mail and telephone.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have shown great determination in turning round and transforming a school, which, in January 2000, was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and where leadership, management and governance were poor and finances were out of control. The headteacher gives very effective leadership; overall leadership and management by the headteacher, senior staff and other staff with responsibilities are now good and governance is very effective. Improvement since 2000 has been very good, and good improvement has continued since the inspection by HMI in December 2001. There is still much to do, but there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done and a clear vision of how the school should move forward further.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong commitment to improvement with good self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses by governors and senior managers.
- The framework for strategic and detailed planning for the new Shaftesbury School, when re-organisation as an 11-18 school takes place in September 2004, is very good.
- There is a strong commitment to inclusion and pupils and students with a wide range of needs, including those with special educational needs, are well catered for.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs, the sixth form and boarding are very good, enabling students and pupils in these areas to flourish and mature very well.
- The Sports College is successful; its achievements have been recently acknowledged with the Sportsmark Gold award.
- Financial control and management are very good.
- Action to tackle some areas where there are weaknesses has not yet been sufficiently robust to secure as much progress as in other areas.
- Whilst performance data is very well analysed at senior level, its use in some subjects as a tool for improvement is not yet well used.

### **Commentary**

52. The tasks facing the leadership and management of the school in recent years have been immense. The key task of taking the school out of special measures, and effecting improvement in areas judged to be poor, was successfully achieved by December 2001. Since then, improvement has continued well, despite many difficulties, the most serious of which have been some acute staffing difficulties and the necessity of steadily reducing the budget deficit. More recently, the school has been faced with the very great additional task of preparing for re-organisation as an 11-18 school, including a very major building project and scheme for re-modelling the accommodation. It is to the very great credit of the headteacher, governors and staff that they have shown much resilience in coping with these challenges and, at the same time, have seen standards in the school rise at a faster rate than the national trend. Many challenges have been seen as opportunities, and, in particular, re-organisation is being seen as a very considerable opportunity to re-assess what the fundamental values of the new school should be and to try to re-engage more successfully with the local community, a vital aspect of the school's work that has not been as successful as it should have been. The key planning document – 'Blueprint for the New Shaftesbury School' – provides a first-rate basis for an evolving process which is regularly being refined as progress is made.

53. The present school development plan and the Sports College development plan are good, with coherent links between them. The very effective leadership and management of the Sports College have enabled many developments to proceed successfully. The participation of over half of all pupils and students in extra curricular sporting activities has been an important factor in obtaining very recently the Sportsmark Gold award. The school development plan is a logical development from the key issues identified by HMI in 2001, with additional strands reflecting current priorities; evaluation is systematic. Staff changes and difficulties of recruitment in some areas have meant that progress has sometimes been adversely affected, but the impact of leadership and management has been less strong in some areas than others. For example, there are still some areas of weaker teaching and behaviour is less well managed in some areas. Procedures to monitor attendance need tightening, and some whole school issues, such as numeracy across the curriculum, need a more coherent approach. However, the school's analysis of what needs to be done is perceptive. In particular, it recognises the importance of involving pupils more in their own learning so that their aspirations are raised, that they feel that they are partners with teachers and other staff in the educational process, and that they feel valued with high levels of self-esteem. How well these issues are put into practice will, to a considerable extent, influence how successful the newly re-organised school will be.
54. Examination and test results are analysed in some depth by senior staff as a means of discussing with heads of department and others how well the school is performing. Some of this evaluation, particularly in the sixth form, is sophisticated and a valuable tool for improvement. The extent to which data is used effectively is variable, and is an area for development in some subjects. In particular, the use of level and grade descriptors with pupils and students, as the basis for improvement, is under-developed. Most heads of year and department provide good leadership, and the quality of leadership and management at middle level is much better than it was at the 2000 inspection. There is some inconsistency in practice; whilst the oversight of subjects by senior managers is good, and monitoring of teaching by senior managers is well established, there is a continuing need for further training of middle managers in their complex role as catalysts for improvement. However, overall, in-service training for teachers and support staff is well managed to support school priorities, and performance management of individual staff is sound.
55. Provision for special educational needs is very well led and managed, with very high standards of provision and very good improvement since 2000. The relatively recently appointed special needs co-ordinator provides a very clear vision and direction for meeting pupils' special needs. Systems and procedures are highly efficient and effective and kept under review. Teaching assistants are very well supported and deployed. Very effective liaison systems result in a close partnership with parents, middle schools, heads of year, subject departments and external agencies. Systems for communication are very well devised and highly effective in ensuring consistency of provision.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,359,853
Total expenditure	2,344,613
Expenditure per pupil	3,453

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-151,534
Balance carried forward to the next	-136,294

56. In 2000, the school had a budget deficit of over £400,000 and finances were out of control. Governors and the school's financial managers deserve great credit for the very considerable accomplishment of reducing this deficit in a planned and structured way so as to have the least impact on the quality of education in the school. Inevitably, there have been adverse impacts as

the curriculum has had to be trimmed to cope with reductions in staffing levels and desirable improvements to the building have been postponed, but great skill has been shown in the way the school's finances have been planned and managed. Systems are very transparent and expenditure is well linked with priorities. Monitoring by governors is very good and the school follows the principles of best value well. The latest audit review by the local education authority identified no areas of significant concern. The expectation that the school's financial deficit would be eliminated by the end of this financial year will not now be realised because of the very difficult financial settlement this year. The difficulties are recognised by the local education authority and the school plans to use, if necessary, some of its devolved capital fund to alleviate the difficulties in ways permitted by the government. The governors' finance committee is, nonetheless, committed to the elimination of the deficit as soon as possible through prudent management of the school's finances.

57. The governors are very effective. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and a very clear vision of what the school should be. Under the very able leadership of the chair of governors, they have very effectively steered the school through the difficulties of the last few years. Their committee structure is strong, with very clear terms of reference and priorities for each committee, with the chairs of committees forming the standing committee to oversee the school's progress. The governors' annual report is a model of good practice with particularly clear statements about the tasks of the different committees. As representatives of the community the school serves, the governors, individually and collectively, have a particularly important role in the period of the establishment of the new school in engaging with the local community to encourage its active involvement with the school.

### **Sixth form**

58. The sixth form is very well led and managed contributing to the success of the sixth form as a vibrant and flourishing part of the school. The strengths of the sixth form, noted at previous inspections, have been maintained. There is a positive culture of self-evaluation and critical analysis of performance in individual courses and across the sixth form as a whole. This contributes well to raising standards. There are very good opportunities to involve sixth formers in managing the affairs of the sixth form and there is a good balance between giving sixth formers sufficient responsibility to exercise freedom in what they do and having a structured framework of guidance and rules. Most sixth formers respond well to this regime.
59. Collaborative arrangements with Sturminster Newton School work smoothly, and the additional studies and general studies programmes are well managed. The tutorial programme is coherent and well matched to students' needs at particular times. Analysis of results and seeking students' views of their courses are particular strengths, especially as the results of the analysis and views are shared with heads of subject departments, with great honesty at times when the outcomes are uncomfortable. As a result, strengths and weaknesses of provision are clearly known and, where possible, action taken.

### **Boarding**

60. The Director of Boarding provides a very clear direction for boarding provision which is securely founded on very high expectations and a strong commitment to ensure provision of the highest quality. A well conceived management structure and very good procedures for consultation and communication result in all aspects of provision being kept under regular review. Staff are very well supported, guided and monitored. Clearly stated routines and procedures are adhered to rigorously. Action planning to address the issues identified by the recent National Care Commission inspection is clearly focused.
61. Many pupils and students, who are boarders, speak English as an additional language. Provision of support for these pupils and students is good, with good leadership given by the co-ordinator. He ensures that early assessment is undertaken and that individual plans are tailored to suit each student's or pupil's needs. These plans are regularly reviewed and used to

move students and pupils on to the next stage of learning. He personally supervises the students and pupils in the boarding house, helping with difficulties in homework and independent study. Teachers and teaching assistants all have copies of students' and pupils' individual targeted plans and are, through training and reminder, constantly prompted to use them to maximum advantage.

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

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- The pupils' achievement is good because, by Year 11, they attain standards that are higher than would be expected given their earlier attainments.
- Specialist teaching helps the pupils make good progress on their GCSE assignment writing.
- Teachers' planning of lessons is good and they use a good range of learning tasks to enhance learning.
- Marking is good, but pupils do not always understand what they need to do to reach a higher grade or level.
- Some pupils do not approach their work during lessons with a sufficiently serious attitude.
- Some lessons lack pace and a clear sense of purpose. Teachers do not consistently make sure that pupils recognise the links between activities and objectives, both during and at the end of lessons.

##### **Commentary**

62. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were average and not as high as the school had expected. Scrutiny of the work these pupils have done in Year 10 suggests that the standards of some pupils are higher than they attained in the tests. In 2001 and 2002 results at the end of Year 9 were above average. At GCSE, the 2002 English language results were broadly average and as expected given the pupils' results at the end of Year 9. In literature, results were broadly average in terms of the average grade but below average in terms of the passes at grades A\*-C. The 2003 results in both subjects improved considerably, especially those of boys whose pass rate at grades A\*-C improved by 25 per cent in language. In literature, 84 per cent achieved grade C or better although the entry rate was a few percentage points below the national average. Nevertheless these results represent good achievement, especially as the amount of time allocated to English in Years 10 and 11 is significantly lower than in most schools.
63. When pupils in the current Year 9 took their end of Year 6 national tests, their standards were below average. Their current work, after one half term in the school, reflects these standards. The main weaknesses are the lack of the expected control in the paragraphing of their extended writing and the inaccuracy of their punctuation, formal expression and spelling. Consequently achievement in Year 9 is no better than satisfactory. However, higher attainers write at above average levels because of better accuracy, and most pupils are making good progress in their use of powerful written vocabulary. Standards of speaking and reading are average but standards of listening are below average. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils in Year 11 have maintained the good progress that resulted in above average standards in their end of Year 9 tests. Their course work suggests that between six and seven out of ten pupils are working at levels associated with grades A\*-C. Their writing in a range of genres is well-organised and substantial. Writing about a range of literature shows secure knowledge and understanding of plot, characters, settings, themes and contemporary attitudes. The proportion at the highest grades is small, however. Some pupils at the C/D borderline do not reveal the consistency of accuracy in punctuation and clarity of expression required in examinations to secure a grade C. Pupils with special educational needs

of all attainments achieve as well as other pupils. Low attainers benefit from very good support from teaching assistants. Very few pupils work at a level associated with the very lowest grades because of the high quality teaching they receive.

64. Teaching and learning are good. They are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The teachers' specialist knowledge, their clear demonstration of the skills of essay writing, and good expectations help the pupils to make good progress on assignment writing in Years 10 and 11. Although greater expectations are emerging in Year 9, the teaching and the schemes of work need to make greater demands of the pupils in terms of the frequency, length and quality of their extended writing to raise standards more quickly. Teachers plan lessons very well. Activities have plenty of variety and resources are engaging. However, the attitudes of some pupils can be too casual. As a result, they do not respond as well as they might and so achievement during the lessons observed was no better than satisfactory. In some lessons pace was too slow, both when a new activity was introduced and also during activities. A more rigorous approach to time and activity management is required to establish a more serious approach to learning on the part of some pupils. Although lesson objectives are communicated clearly, they are not referred to sufficiently during lessons to crystallise the pupils' understanding of their learning. The department has responded well to the school's initiatives on target setting for grades and levels, but the pupils need a better working knowledge of level and grade criteria to support their progress. However, marking is good: the best provides excellent guidance. Good expectations result in the lower attainers in Year 11 making good progress in their extended essay writing.
65. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has provided good leadership on important developments such as the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. She is very committed to raising standards and improving provision. Effective monitoring takes place but the assessment data could be used more rigorously to evaluate the department's effectiveness, to set even higher expectations and to monitor progress towards targets. There are good opportunities planned to develop the pupils' ICT skills but access to computers is restricted. Since the last inspection standards have been raised, so improvement is good.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In the lowest set in Year 11, pupils achieved very well because of the teacher's high expectations, encouragement and firm control.**

The regular period of silent reading for ten minutes established well-understood classroom routines and the importance of constantly developing reading skills. With a calm atmosphere already present, the teacher then led a vigorous discussion, revising pupils' understanding of 'outsiders' in the poems 'Nothing's changed' and 'Presents from my aunts'. Most skilfully, he drew out, at great pace, ideas from most pupils, many of whose social skills were weak, achieving a splendid blend of encouragement, challenging questions, firm control and the occasional ignoring of the odd indiscretion. Pupils were thinking all the time, making links between the two poems, and their understanding of concepts and vocabulary grew all the time – outsider, cultural symbols, alien, with one pupil making her own link to 'alienated'. At just the right time, the teacher moved to a comprehension exercise. A few struggled, but excellent, sensitive and focused help kept them on task, and this work enabled all pupils in the class to be engaged at an appropriate level for their capabilities. The final few minutes brought the class together with their linking lines in the poems with particular sentences in the comprehension task. Throughout, pupils enjoyed a very stimulating learning experience, with much focus on difficult and highly challenging moral and cultural issues.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. The standards of literacy observed across all subjects are average. The pupils' literacy skills do not impede their learning. However, observations and scrutiny of work shows that standards of writing improve in lessons where higher expectations are made. So, in business studies and history, for example, pupils respond very well to the wide range of written assignments expected and to the good guidance they receive on how to structure them.

67. The head of English is the literacy co-ordinator. In conjunction with the school's literacy consultant, she has ensured a good level of training to teachers in all subjects. This is continued in after school meetings. Most subjects have compiled lists of key vocabulary, but the good use of these terms seen in technology, physical education and geography is not embedded in all subjects. Good attention of writing techniques in history supports the pupils in producing more coherent extended writing. The school does not have well-established systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the provision. Neither does the school have a whole school policy to guide teachers and to support evaluation. Attention to these areas will help to ensure further improvements to standards of literacy across the school.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Challenging teaching is raising pupils' standards and leading to above average GCSE results.
- Nearly all pupils leave school with accreditation in a modern foreign language.
- The department offers opportunities to visit France to enrich pupils' learning.
- Planning does not always ensure that all pupils have active practice in the key skill of speaking.
- National Curriculum levels are not used to help pupils understand their attainment, and the use of computers is not an integral feature in the learning of all pupils.

### **Commentary**

68. In the 2002, GCSE examinations in French, the percentage of both boys and girls with higher grades A\*-C was above the national average. Pupils performed at least as well as in their other subjects. Overall results for 2003 are similar. Boys improved at the higher grade levels; girls did less well but still matched the national average of recent years. The percentage of pupils leaving school with accreditation shows a marked improvement since the last inspection. The provision of Spanish as a second language for more able linguists is justified by the results. In 2003, all gained a higher grade with half of them gaining an A\* or A grade.
69. The achievement of pupils is good in all years through the school. Assessment on entry indicates poor foreign language skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards that are broadly in line with national standards. The written work of pupils of all ages is the strongest feature of their work. By the end of Year 11, the work of higher attaining pupils shows the good features of extended writing and enriched vocabulary appropriate to the highest GCSE grades. Most pupils are confident in speaking but their speaking skills could be developed more by the use of the language in everyday classroom routines as well as in the planned activities. By Year 11, overall standards are at least at expected levels, and lower attaining pupils are on course to gain a GCSE grade because the teaching encourages a positive attitude to learning, enabling them to achieve well in relation to their capability.
70. Teaching is good for all ages with high levels of challenge through the use of the foreign language and the pace through lessons. As a result, most pupils can follow the teaching without asking for explanations. The variety of activities sustain pupils' interest; they concentrate on their work and their learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers insist on full answers rather than single words and the use of French for everything. In some groups, the unsatisfactory attitudes of some pupils limit the variety of speaking activities. Therefore spoken French is not as well developed. Learning for most pupils is good because they are ready to volunteer and they enjoy success. The neatness of most written work shows positive attitudes to the subject. Teachers mark work regularly but do not use National Curriculum levels with pupils in lessons. As a result pupils do not understand the standard they have reached, and the levels are not used to set specific targets for pupils to improve.

71. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department sets a good example through his own teaching and commitment to the subject. He offers good support to the other teachers, monitors their teaching and offers guidance for improvement. There have been some good initiatives in the use of computers but this has not been extended to all pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department now has a stable team of teachers who are raising the standards and status of the department and improving pupils' attitudes to the subject. This task should be helped from the next school year when pupils begin their language studies at this school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are clear objectives for improvements in mathematics, following a very difficult staffing period.
- The Key Stage 3 Strategy has been introduced well into lessons, though some aspects could be improved.
- Analysis of national test and examination data is thorough, but on-going assessment is not sufficiently influencing teaching nor informing pupils of what they need to do to improve.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning through investigative and collaborative work.
- ICT is under-used as a resource to raise standards.

### **Commentary**

72. Results in the Year 9, 2003 national tests were above average. The performance of boys was significantly better than girls. Overall, pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment was good. GCSE results in 2002 were below average with a significant proportion of pupils ungraded; underachievement by both boys and girls was significant. However, in 2003, GCSE mathematics results improved and were broadly average, though, based on their standards in Year 9, pupils' progress was unsatisfactory. Current standards of work in Years 9 to 11 are average overall. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Progress made by higher-attaining pupils is good because teachers have high expectations of them and teach them well.
73. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 9 is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge and lesson planning are satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well. For example, in one lesson, a good review of angles on a straight line enabled work to be extended to angles in a triangle and a review of its properties. The use of a 'mental starter' is well linked to the main topic of most lessons, though a whole class session at the end of a lesson is less well used. Satisfactory use is made of different work sheets where the range of pupils' attainment is broad, but these are not employed sufficiently to extend the higher attaining pupils, particularly with respect to homework. Work is marked up-to-date but the use of 'levels' and supportive comments to aid learning are inconsistent. As a result, opportunities to consolidate pupils' knowledge and give some understanding of how well they are progressing and what to do to improve are unsatisfactory. When teachers have well-planned lessons and high expectations of pupils' written work and behaviour, pupils respond well, progress is good and they achieve well. However, in the lessons observed, there were few opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own active learning through investigative work, by working collaboratively with others or through 'directed' questioning by the teacher; as a result, their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Lower-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and the use of 'bite-size' activities to sustain their concentration is overlooked. However, very good use is made of teaching assistants and, as a result, pupils with special educational needs make as good progress as other pupils.

74. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 10 and Year 11 is satisfactory. Of the lessons observed, the progress made by higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 is good. Relationships between teacher and pupils are mostly good though the unsatisfactory attitude and behaviour of a small minority of pupils undermines the performance and progress of others, particularly in Year 11, reducing overall achievement. Furthermore, limited teaching methods and a lack of challenge, with the focus mainly on the textbook and little use of ICT as a resource for learning, mean that pupils' achievements are sometimes not as good as they could be. The recording of key-words, statements and formulae by average and lower-attaining pupils to support revision is infrequent. Homework is set regularly and marking is up-to-date, though the use of supportive comments and on-going assessment grades is infrequent. As a result, pupils are unaware of their target grades and what to do to improve at GCSE.
75. Leadership and management are satisfactory; overall standards are now improving following a period of very difficult staffing problems, which have had a negative impact on standards. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed, with satisfactory improvement. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well. There are clear objectives for improvement, which are appropriate and are being tackled. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are resulting in improved consistency of classroom practice and delivery of the schemes of work. However, thorough and constructive assessment practices, that will respond to individual needs and inform teaching, are not yet sufficiently secure to contribute to raising standards. Clear policies, practices, roles and responsibilities are not stated in a department handbook, nor are there sufficient planned opportunities to share good practice.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

76. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons, and some other subjects have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In art and design, design and technology, physical education, geography and science, schemes of work identify what pupils are likely to know understand and can do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in handling data and shape, space and measurement. Overall, the contribution of lessons to mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory; however, this is not co-ordinated across the school so there are few references to numeracy in schemes of work in many subjects. Implementing a numeracy policy is an objective of the school development plan, but no audit has yet taken place across the curriculum, nor is provision in subjects sufficiently well monitored or evaluated. In-service training on raising awareness has taken place but changes of teaching staff mean that more training is now needed. Preparations for addressing the needs of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, particularly those with special educational needs whose prior attainment is Level 3 or below, are not yet underway. However, currently, pupils' skills are developed sufficiently in subjects to ensure all have full access to the curriculum.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Good leadership by the head of department results in very good teamwork.
- Teaching is good; standards are above average and improving.
- The increasing use of target setting is improving the motivation of individual pupils.
- There is insufficient use of ICT as a means of increasing learning opportunities.
- The monitoring of the work of the department lacks rigour, resulting in inconsistencies in practice.

## Commentary

77. Standards in Year 9 improved in the 2003 tests, and were above average. Pupils' standards in science were average on entry to the school, so this represents good achievement during their first year in the school. The overall improvement is above that of pupils in similar schools. Boys have consistently performed better than girls during each of the last four years. Overall results are better than those in English, and similar to those in mathematics. Standards also improved in the GCSE examinations, and are now above average. In the most recent examinations, boys obtained better results than girls, but both boys and girls achieved well compared with their standards in Year 9. Pupils did better in science than in most of their other subjects, and overall achievement is good.
78. Standards seen during the inspection are average in Year 9. However, achievement is good; the quality of written work in lessons is better than expected when one considers the rather casual approach to learning of a significant minority of pupils. In a lesson about the speed of sound, for instance, few pupils recorded their readings carefully, and only the teacher's persistence ensured that the class obtained creditable results. In a minority of lessons, there is a tendency for boys to dominate discussions. Most teachers are aware of this tendency, but their strategies for involving girls are not always effective. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall, particularly in Year 10, with good achievement. Higher attaining pupils are generally provided with appropriate work for their abilities, as seen in lessons on radioactivity and electrical safety, but, generally, there are no additional tasks for gifted pupils. Pupils generally respond well to teachers' questioning, but a minority persist in making immature comments, which are distracting for both teacher and pupils, and which restrict learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support, and make good progress.
79. Teaching is good overall, leading to good achievement and improving standards as pupils move up the school. Teachers have a good command of their subject, and they are conscientious, so that planning of lesson content is thorough. As a result, pupils learn in a methodical and logical way that helps their progress and achievement. The marking of books is regular. In the best marking, written comments include targets for improvement, but there is insufficient reference to national grades when assessing the standard of work. There is increasing use of lesson 'starters' to consolidate work from the previous lesson. However, teaching methods and strategies for improving pupils' listening skills and learning are not always given sufficient thought. There is sometimes a tendency for teachers to dominate lessons by talking for too long, and even to continue talking when pupils are working, which can be distracting. Apart from practical work, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work together, or to use their initiative. The quality of resources is good, but there is little use of ICT to improve learning opportunities. The use of long-term examination targets, and short-term targets for how pupils can attain these, is increasing motivation.
80. The leadership of the department is good, with very good documentation in place. As a result, teamwork is very good. The monitoring of the work of the department is satisfactory, with increasing use of comparative data. However, this is not used to develop strategies for improving standards. The coherence of the team is helped by regular team meetings, though more emphasis on discussing teaching skills should help to raise standards of teaching still further.
81. Standards are at about the same level as at the previous inspection, although recent results indicate continuing improvement in all year groups. Results remain better than in most other subjects. However, the last report indicated there was insufficient sharing of good classroom practice, and a lack of ICT in the department, so overall progress in science has been satisfactory rather than good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- The school has greatly improved its provision since the previous inspection.
- Standards have risen since the last inspection; achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Some subject departments are missing opportunities to use ICT to enhance learning.

### Commentary

82. Teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 to be average. Standards in the current Year 9 are below average. Pupils have below average skills to employ a range of software tools to collect, handle and communicate information. Fewer pupils reach the higher levels which involve developing and refining work, using complex lines of inquiry, and the use of models to make predictions. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Year 9 since pupils enter the school with below average knowledge and skills in ICT.
83. Standards in the short course GCSE examination last year were well below average. This year, around two thirds of students will take this course and standards are now average. There is no national comparison for the new 'double award' applied GCSE taken by the remainder, but judging by the examination criteria, standards are at least average overall. This represents good achievement overall and, especially, on the applied course where there is a greater proportion of lower ability pupils. Achievement has improved dramatically since the last inspection. This is due to the improvement in the quality of teaching as well as the improvements to the curriculum and the provision of resources.
84. Teaching is good overall and promotes good learning in nearly all lessons, although it is better in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in Year 9 is satisfactory. Teaching in Year 9 is less effective because teachers do not always pitch the level of the work to match the pupils' capabilities. Achievement in these lessons is usually satisfactory because good support is provided for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is generally more challenging and builds more systematically on the knowledge and skills pupils learned earlier. As a result, pupils are achieving well and making good progress. However, sometimes, the lack of organisation in some pupils' work folders restricts their longer term achievement. In lessons, teachers are not always placing enough emphasis on the speaking, listening and writing skills pupils need to learn and communicate their knowledge effectively. At all levels, pupils and teachers alike have had to adapt to new operating systems since, locally, there is a tradition of using 'non-standard' technology. This explains why standards are lower than might be expected, but good teaching and achievement are helping to make the change take place smoothly. Technicians provide very good support for hardware and software and teachers make good use of modern aids such as the interactive whiteboard. Pupils enjoy ICT lessons and work enthusiastically. One computer room is very cramped, with poor sightlines and ventilation. This causes some irritation and teachers have to work hard to keep pupils focused on their work. All pupils benefit from access to computers in the main suites and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes, so that homework plays an important part in the learning.
85. The leadership and management of ICT are good. Having ensured the provision of high-quality resources and the development of an inclusive curriculum, the leader is now developing appropriate assessment systems. She provides the lesson plans for non-specialist teachers to meet the changing needs of the pupils and is tackling shortcomings in the wider curriculum. Overall the improvement in ICT since the last inspection report in 2001 has been good. The department is well placed to make further improvements when the school re-organises in 2004.

## Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

86. Pupils are sufficiently competent in their ICT skills to cope with most of the ICT they encounter in lessons across the curriculum. They can make multi-media presentations, search the Internet and create a range of documents using a word processor. They get fewer opportunities to use more advanced tools such as desktop publishing or image processing and these skills are less well developed. Pupils learn to devise control programs during ICT lessons but are not able to exercise this competence in more practical situations in the design and technology department. Science does not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to learn how to measure events and log data using computers. Not all subjects of the curriculum make good use of ICT in teaching and learning. Mathematics, like science, is unsatisfactory in this respect. However, there are strengths in art, history, religious education and physical education.

## HUMANITIES

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist geography teachers plan lessons well and they have a good knowledge of the subject, applying it successfully in their teaching.
- Teaching methods in Years 10 and 11 help pupils to become independent learners and, as a consequence, they achieve well.
- The non-specialist teaching in Year 9 constrains both standards and pupils' achievement.
- Improved consistency of marking is needed so that all pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

### Commentary

87. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were broadly average, though pupils did not do as well as they did in their other subjects; boys outperformed girls. However, in 2003, results were above average with boys and girls doing equally well.
88. Pupils join the school with varying geographical experiences; overall, on entry, their standards are below average. By the end of Year 9 standards in geography remain somewhat below average. However, given their low starting base, pupils are achieving satisfactorily and are making sound progress. In Year 9, pupils begin to improve their knowledge and geographical skills. Some pupils' basic skills of labelling, shading, using titles, key and scales still need improving. Many pupils are beginning to learn the use of correct technical words which many had not previously encountered. In Year 11 at present, standards are average and pupils are achieving well. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good attitudes to the subject, show interest and want to do well.
89. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are better when, in the majority of lessons, the class is taken by a specialist geographer. Expert knowledge and a sure understanding of the geographical concepts result in methodical and well-planned lessons. When lessons are taken by non-specialists, learning is less secure. In some lessons, relationships are not strongly formed and, when linked with immature behaviour and poor listening skills, learning is unsatisfactory. Teachers generally structure their lessons well with appropriate objectives, which are shared with pupils and frequently checked at the end of the lesson. Where teaching is good, it is underpinned by good geographical knowledge. In some lessons, there is an insufficient range of activities and tasks to meet the needs of the full range of abilities. Improved use of models and photographs would help to overcome this by providing different levels of challenge within the class. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are actively engaged in a variety of interesting activities. Demanding topics engage them very well, and they respond by raising their standards of work.

For instance, in one lesson, pupils looked at farm systems in relation to input, process and output at quite a sophisticated level. Several pupils worked in a small group and did this very successfully for their own family farm. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are increasingly taking responsibility for their learning, so that when they are well challenged by the teacher, their level of achievement is high. However, lack of access to ICT constrains some of their investigative work, and marking is not sufficiently consistent and evaluative to help pupils to know what they need to do to improve further.

90. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection with improvements in teaching and documentation. The head of department gives a clear vision for the development of geography and has good plans for the curriculum to meet the needs of the imminent re-organisation. Standards are improving, and the 2003 results, which were above the target set, are a good omen for the future.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, with teachers involving pupils actively in their learning.
- The Year 9 research project provides a good opportunity for pupils to develop their research skills.
- Teachers provide clear advice enabling pupils to improve their work, but assessment procedures do not sufficiently involve pupils.
- The level of pupils' responses that are accepted is too low at times.

### Commentary

91. GCSE examination results in 2002 were below the national average for grades A\*-C, and average for grades A\*-G. Results in 2003 are better and are very similar to the national average, though the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades of A\* and A is low. In teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were average.
92. Present standards of pupils in Year 9 are below average, though achievement is satisfactory with improving standards. Pupils are beginning to develop the skills they will need to analyse the information they are acquiring. They have growing awareness of the changes that took place from 1750 to 1900; higher attaining pupils recognise the consequences of the rapid growth of towns and the need for the development of Government intervention. They are developing their research skills through independent projects that highlight a significant individual, and present their information clearly with the support of writing guidance. Lower attaining pupils collect information but do not link their research with an evaluation of the individual's contribution to history.
93. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well. In Year 11, they have a secure understanding of the conditions in post-First World War Germany. Higher attaining pupils can make links between the discontent that arose from those conditions, and the events that took place. Through the use of newspaper presentations, pupils demonstrate their understanding of the views of the people of the time; however there is little evidence of an understanding of the range of views across other countries. Lower attaining pupils have a general overview of the period studied, but detail is limited and they do not recognise connections between different factors contributing to change. Few pupils evaluate the relative significance of the range of factors affecting German society at the time. Local history studies enable pupils to undertake valuable first hand investigations of Shaftesbury Abbey. Work is well presented and clearly laid out.
94. The quality of teaching is good, contributing to pupils' good learning and achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11. The emphasis on active learning, and the involvement of pupils

in the use of information, support the development of their historical skills. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is helped by a series of planned activities that enable pupils to develop their understanding. Good use of question and answer reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding, and the use of brainstorming enables pupils to recognise the range of factors contributing to events. Where the pace of lessons falls, pupils lose concentration and talk, and achievement is limited. Day-to-day marking is thorough. However, whilst there are clear comments and advice, pupils are not involved sufficiently directly with assessment in ways that enable them to plan how to improve their work. Sometimes, there is insufficient insistence that pupils complete or develop their written responses.

95. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has been innovative and energetic in implementing her vision for the department. The humanities faculty has been developed to support individual departments within the faculty and the focus on implementing a full range of teaching and learning styles is raising standards and lifting the attitudes of pupils to their work. The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved; however there is still a need for greater consistency and more focus on the aims and outcomes of teaching. Improvement since the 2000 inspection has been good.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Topics chosen for study are relevant and of interest to pupils who are actively involved in their lessons.
- Teachers treat the responses of pupils with respect and encourage their participation.
- The use of single gender groups is encouraging the participation of girls.
- There is insufficient assessment to enable teachers to monitor the progress of pupils; overall, the monitoring of progress and of teaching lacks rigour and precision.
- The lack of specialist teachers affect the setting of key questions in lessons and the depth of pupils understanding.

### Commentary

96. Results in the 2002 and 2003 GCSE short course examinations were above average. The majority of pupils are entered, and achievement has been good.
97. Pupils arrive in Year 9 with below average standards in religious education. At this early stage in the course standards are still below average with limited use of specialist vocabulary. However, pupils are developing an understanding of the concept of discrimination through identification of examples, though their grasp of prejudice is less secure. With guidance, they make a connection with the Christian belief in equality, but knowledge of the theology behind the concept is limited. Higher attaining pupils have a grasp of some features of other faiths; however they have little appreciation of the effects of belief on the lives of believers. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory.
98. Present standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average, with satisfactory achievement. Pupils in Year 11 consider contemporary issues from a Christian and Islamic tradition; they also consider examples of discrimination, and the benefits and problems of living in a multi-faith and multi-ethnic society. Their levels of understanding are variable; some pupils demonstrate understanding of the Christian teaching against inequality, with higher attainers recognising the issues relating to living in a multi faith and multi-ethnic society. The majority of pupils however have very limited appreciation of the issues. When discussing the effects of war, higher attaining pupils reflect on the causes of conflict, but, generally, responses are limited in depth however, and links with theology are tenuous. However, the use of active learning strategies is enabling pupils to learn from each other and to share ideas on topics selected to interest and to

be relevant to them. The achievement of pupils with English as an additional language is sometimes limited when the vocabulary used is unknown to them or involves discussion of abstract concepts.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers involve pupils actively in a range of tasks and discussions to develop their understanding of contemporary issues. They treat the responses of pupils with respect and this encourages their confidence and participation. The use of ICT is supporting pupils' motivation and enabling them to gain access to a wider range of information. The formation of single sex groups is enabling teachers to raise the levels of involvement of girls, and use teaching strategies that are most appropriate to each gender. The lack of specialist religious education teachers is resulting in lack of identification of key questions in lessons. This means that the activity does not always lead to greater depth in understanding and the level of achievement is adversely affected. There is a lack of clear assessment procedures, and the low expectations by teachers of the tasks they set and the responses they accept from pupils means that pupils' potential is not always developed fully.
100. The head of humanities provides good leadership for the faculty and for the religious education department within the faculty; management is satisfactory. There is a clear vision and high aspirations for the subject. Despite the lack of specialist staff, managers are developing a relevant course that will enable all pupils to achieve a worthwhile experience in religious education. as a result, pupils' attitudes towards the subject have improved, and the accommodation is now bright, welcoming and interesting. The pilot project on learning styles and the innovative approach to single gender groups in order to raise standards are likely to be successful. Lack of assessment across the groups is reducing the opportunity to monitor teaching and individual progress, and the potential value of some governors or visitors as resources for the department's work is not exploited sufficiently. As there was no report on religious education in 2000, it is not possible to comment on improvement since the last inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well, progressing well in all years.
- Leadership and management are good with good teamwork and high expectations of work and behaviour.
- The schemes of work for Year 9 show some weaknesses of planning, and there is insufficient provision for teaching electronics and systems and control.

### **Commentary**

101. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were similar to the national averages for design and technology. As pupils enter the school with standards lower than expected, this represents good achievement. In lessons in Year 9, achievement is also good with standards already rising after a short time in the school so that they are at least average and sometimes above. Projects include a CD holder in textiles, a food task related to travel and a catapult structure in resistant materials. In their work in these projects, they gain a good understanding and use of the design process, undertaking a variety of research and design development tasks. Good graphical skills are developed and good progress is made with understanding product evaluation. There is also some effective use of computer aided design and manufacturing processes. However, there is some lack of technological challenge as there are gaps in electronics and systems and control work because of lack of facilities and gaps in the teachers' expertise. Homework is used to reinforce and support lessons but has not been

fully exploited or planned effectively to extend learning. In lessons there is good emphasis on developing literacy skills.

102. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in resistant materials and textiles, average in food technology, and well below average in graphic products. In lessons, the overall standard of work is above average in all the material areas including graphics. Achievement is good with design folios progressing well and pupils having a good knowledge and understanding of materials, research and design development. Pupils are able to successfully produce and evaluate a variety of design ideas. Presentation is generally good but limited use is made of ICT to enhance presentation, although the Internet is used well for research. Pupils are starting to make good use of computer aided design and manufacture, but this has yet to become well embedded and for the outcomes to impact on raising standards.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good. Teachers plan lessons well. They have a good rapport with pupils, share lesson objectives and set clear expectations for the completion of work. Where lessons are good, pupils progress well with their learning and the work is demanding, challenging and interesting. Behaviour in lessons is good. Teachers set a good pace in lessons and effectively challenge pupils to respond to questions and to become fully involved with the activities. They are fully aware of pupils with learning difficulties; as a result, these pupils' needs are addressed effectively by regular monitoring and, in some instances, providing tasks at the appropriate level. This ensures that they make good progress with their learning. For pupils following GCSE courses, teachers provide very supportive guidance material and details of assessment targets. This is used to effectively to monitor the progress of pupils as they complete coursework. Rooms are conducive for teaching and learning; they are well arranged and display is effectively used as a resource to inform pupils and identify standards.
104. The quality of leadership and the management is good. There is a clear ethos in the department of high expectations in work and behaviour. Staff work together well as a team to plan and agree strategy. The head of department monitors teaching and the progress of pupils well. Schemes of work are in place but, in Year 9, these lack all the required aspects of planning and links to the programme of study. The department has identified key development issues that need to be addressed in future planning. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Areas for development have been correctly identified. Problems associated with the variable experiences of pupils before they enter the school will be alleviated when pupils will join in Year 7 in future Remodelling of the accommodation should alleviate problems of small rooms and the lack of some facilities to cover electronics and systems and control.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

As well as the National Curriculum subjects of art and design and music, drama is taught in Year 9 and continues to be taught to some pupils in Years 10 and 11. Dance is part of the curriculum in physical education, and comments about dance are included in that section. Two lessons of **drama** were sampled, and some time was spent looking at overall provision, which is good. In Year 9, pupils are achieving well from a starting point of little or no experience in drama; by the end of Year 11, standards are above average in work seen and in recent examination results. In both the lessons that were observed, teaching was very good and, through careful planning of exciting schemes of work, pupils quickly acquire skills of stagecraft, improvisational skills, and confidence and self-esteem in the way they present themselves to others. The subject is very well led and contributes significantly to pupils' personal development.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11.

- Teaching is good and enables all pupils to achieve well.
- Good leadership has enabled the department to make significant improvements since the last inspection.
- The new vocational GCSE course has helped improve the achievement of lower ability pupils.
- Pupils' skills in writing and talking about art are weaker.

## Commentary

105. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils develop good drawing skills and are able to adapt and refine their art well. Achievement is good, since pupils come into the school with average knowledge and skills in art. At the end of Year 11, pupils reached well above average standards in the GCSE Art exam in 2002, around average standards in 2003 and are now above average. There is no national comparison for the new 'double award' applied GCSE students, but judging by the examination criteria, standards are at least average. This represents good achievement overall and especially good on the applied course where there is a greater proportion of lower ability pupils. Achievement could be better if the pupils' skills in analysing and writing about their own work and that of other artists were improved.
106. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers communicate their enthusiasm and commitment to the pupils who respond with interest and enjoyment. Teachers plan the lessons well; their demonstrations and explanations give pupils a very clear idea of what they should achieve. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher showed pupils an unusual method of observational drawing. Regular tips, demonstrations and encouragement enabled even the lower attaining pupils to develop useful skills. Teachers provide good support and help for individual pupils with special educational needs is also good. Teachers assess and discuss all the pupils' work at the end of a project. However they do not always regularly review achievement with the pupils by, for example, discussing levels or grades, which could be used as a means of motivation, as well as showing pupils how to improve. Teachers make imaginative use of the limited resources available and pupils make exciting 3-dimensional work using scrap materials, clay and plaster. Whilst observational drawing is also a strength, teachers are not yet supporting literacy sufficiently as a means of improving achievement. This is evident in the pupils' sketchbooks and in discussions. They can collect information from a range of sources, such as the Internet, but are unable to organise their arguments coherently using appropriate artistic vocabulary.
107. The leadership and management are good. The head of art has a clear vision for improvement. This has driven the department forward since the inspection in 2000, when art was unsatisfactory, and built on the good progress noted in 2001. The significant improvement in standards has been achieved by improving the curriculum, teaching and learning. There is a smaller range of art materials than in most schools. The accommodation also has some drawbacks, such as tables and chairs at different heights, and some lessons have to end early so that pupils can wash equipment in washing-up bowls as there are not enough sinks. Despite these problems, teachers ensure that pupils now enjoy a rich experience and learn about a wide range of artists. The new applied art course has very good links with the local community and businesses. The teaching on this course is particularly inspiring and the mainly lower attaining pupils on this course achieve well. Pupils can use ICT imaginatively to explore images and develop ideas for textiles, painting and printing. The monitoring, evaluating and development of teaching has produced very good teamwork. The detailed analysis of examination results and the use of the school and national data have given the department a key to planning future developments.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new music teacher is enthusiastic and is tackling a range of factors that will lead to improvement; very recent attempts to improve extra-curricular and performance activities have begun to re-establish a tradition of music making.
- A history in recent years of poor teaching and weak leadership has resulted in serious decline in musical standards throughout the school.
- Poor accommodation and, despite recent investment, inadequate resources have led to a significant lowering of pupils' morale and regard for the subject.
- The lack of time for music in Year 9 limits pupils' achievements.

## Commentary

108. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below average. At present, standards in lessons are below average in Year 9 and 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory. This reflects the unsatisfactory provision for music. The new music teacher has vision and is beginning to have a positive impact although he has to contend with low standards following an extended period of unstable staffing and low expectations. Other factors causing low standards include the cramped accommodation and too few resources to make learning enjoyable. The time allowed for lessons in Year 9 is below average and the lack, until recently, of appealing lesson schemes led to a rapid decline in pupils' enthusiasm. Many Year 9 pupils had good experiences of music in their middle schools, but weak provision at this school has left them feeling apathetic and indifferent. However, improvements are now underway as a result of the new music teacher's ambitious ideas and the recent generous financial support of the governors and diocese.
109. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection was satisfactory overall. The teacher is gradually overcoming older pupils' disdain of previous teaching, which, they claim, badly let them down. The new teacher is establishing a good rapport with pupils. In one successful Year 10 lesson, for instance, the teacher's lively account of modern serious music resulted in an intelligent discussion, with pupils contributing perceptive and discriminating comments. Lack of suitable resources has resulted in lacklustre teaching and learning. Some recently acquired new keyboards have provided more purposeful opportunities for learning and the teacher has gainfully begun to re-engage pupils' attention. Before this an over focus on theory-based learning resulted in boredom and a lack of relevance. The lack of suitable practice rooms and keyboard headphones has resulted in some noisy lessons where pupils don't have the necessary space or quiet conditions to achieve well. Visiting instrumental teachers provide skilful support.
110. Leadership and management are still unsatisfactory but are improving following the appointment of the new teacher, and some external support from music specialists is being provided. Several new visiting instrumental teachers have been taken on; there are thoughtfully prepared new schemes of work and the teacher is tackling pupils' low perceptions of the subject. He is working hard to establish extra-curricular performance work, but has not received the wholehearted support of some pupils who fail to turn up for rehearsals. Decline since the last inspection means that the issues of that time have not been fully resolved: GCSE results have dipped still further and pupils' composition work remains a weakness. However, there are now some very positive signs, and, with extensive support and encouragement at whole school level, there is potential for significant recovery.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in all years.
- The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The very good extra-curricular and Sports College's outreach programmes provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to extend their learning.
- At present, facilities for gymnastics and dance are inadequate.
- Boys' standards, overall, at the end of Years 9 and 11, are below those of the girls.

## Commentary

111. Standards, in lessons and work seen by the end of Years 9 and 11, match national expectations and show good improvement from previous years; most pupils are achieving well. Year 11 pupils' 2003 examination results in sports studies were above the national average and an improvement on the previous year's average results. Pupils generally achieve better grades in sports studies than in their other subjects. Standards, overall, are rising at above the national rate. The present Year 11 GCSE dance group - the school's first examination entries in dance – are attaining in line with national standards. This represents good achievement considering their lack of prior experience. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular talents achieve well. High attaining pupils are successful in a range of sports at area, county and, sometimes, national levels.
112. Both standards and teaching have improved well since the last inspection. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success, and is providing good leadership and management. In conjunction with the Sports College Director, she has succeeded in developing an innovative and broad curriculum that is fully inclusive for all pupils. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Management of improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage pupils well. Work is planned to suit all pupils. In a Year 9 football lesson, for example, lower attaining pupils improved well, because the teacher grouped pupils effectively, modified tasks for different groups appropriately and used demonstrations. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In Year 11 GCSE dance, for example, pupils lead warm-ups, plan movement phases and evaluate each other's performances. Learning is less effective in the few lessons where teaching is more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.
114. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes. Small numbers, however, do underachieve because of poor concentration. Most pupils, across all years, improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of pupils across the attainment levels. Pupils' ICT skills are enhanced through access to the Sports College's very good specialist ICT resources.
115. **Sports College status** is making a positive impact across the school and the wider community. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 are rising above the national rate. GCSE pass rates are consistently above national averages. The Sports College development plan is clear and well focused with measurable outcomes. The department is well positioned to move forward with the Sports College plan and achieve the aims of raising attainment in physical education and supporting development in the link schools. Specific enhancements for the school include: extended curriculum time; greater range of courses; increased specialist staffing levels and enhanced outdoor facilities. All these factors are helping to raise pupils' achievements. The school has recently received a Sportsmark Gold Award, in recognition of its very good programme of extra-curricular activities. The Sports College's outreach programme is well led and fulfils its community role well. The Sports College has

received the National Innovation Award for raising standards in the primary age range. International links are established through a three-year development project focusing on monitoring and improving fitness in 11-14 year olds. The partnership involves schools from seven nations. The Sports Leadership Courses have provided well-qualified volunteers to organise and support schools and community sports events. Obstacles to progress exist in some areas, though most have eased or will cease to be problems in the future. The accessibility of external coaches can be a problem due to the rural location. Staffing difficulties between 2000 and 2002 have adversely affected the progress of many pupils because of several changes of teacher, but the staffing position is more stable now; the school reports that some of the liaison with middle schools has not always been smooth. Currently, facilities for gymnastics and dance are poor. This adversely affects the range of work that can be undertaken in these areas, but this situation will change when the proposed new studio comes into existence in 2005.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

In addition to business studies, the school offers a number of vocational courses. Leisure and tourism is taught to a small group of pupils in Year 10; the course was sampled and brief comments about provision are made below. Applied art and design and applied ICT are taught in both Years 10 and 11, and comments are made in the relevant parts of the report. There is a group following the Junior Sports Leaders Award in Year 11, but the course was not observed.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 reach above average standards because of good teaching.
- Pupils achieve well in GCSE coursework because of the support and guidance they receive.
- The good use of ICT improves the quality of work and pupils' achievements, but achievement of some pupils is sometimes limited because the schemes of work do not give enough guidance on strategies to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment.

### **Commentary**

116. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well above average; overall pupils did better in business studies than they did in their other subjects. Boys' results were higher than girls in 2002, but this was reversed in 2003. The 2003 results were a bit lower than 2002, but still above average. Results have been consistently above or well above average in recent years.
117. By the end of Year 11, pupils are knowledgeable about business organisations and use case study information to support theoretical understanding of topics. They know an appropriate range of business terms, except for a minority who are weak in applying them in relevant contexts. Pupils use business links and ICT well in GCSE coursework, but ICT is less well used to research assignments. Higher attaining pupils analyse data and graphs well, but others do not explain answers in sufficient detail. Most pupils show good achievement given their standards of entry to the course. They understand how businesses are organised and financed and learn to interpret a firm's balance sheets in order to measure profitability, but many do not use examples enough in written work. Written work is well-structured with attention to grammatical accuracy, except for a minority where it is repetitive and weakly expressed.
118. Overall, teaching is good. Pupils benefit by being taught by specialist teachers. Explanations are clear so that they grasp concepts quickly and accurately, thereby enabling them to achieve well. In a Year 11 lesson on finance, for example, pupils made rapid gains in knowledge because the teacher planned challenging, timed tasks to use data and computers to produce a

business 'cash-flow' chart. They concentrated well, made good use of time and consolidated learning by working on more demanding numerical tasks. Assignments are regularly assessed but marks are not linked to pupils target grades and areas for improvement are not consistently identified. Occasionally poor attitudes of a minority, mostly boys, combined with weaknesses in class management, result in unsatisfactory learning.

119. The recently appointed subject leader is just beginning to establish herself and is giving satisfactory leadership and management at present. She has taken over a department of high standards, maintained over many years; she is wanting to sustain the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject and has begun to identify areas for improvement, such as further developing the business links with the local community. The schemes of work are rather out-of-date and do not give guidance on planning to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment. Although teachers work to improve pupils' writing skills, there is not enough attention given to planning for the teaching of literacy and numerical skills.

### **Leisure and Tourism**

120. A course for a double award at GCSE started in September 2003 for Year 10 pupils. At this early stage, standards are average. Pupils know about a range of customer services and are able to develop their understanding through studies of places such as the Doncaster Dome and local leisure centres in their work on facilities and the organisation of leisure complexes. Basic skills are sound, particularly when corrected and re-drafted; pupils achieved well in a lesson where they were required to plan and prepare correspondence to seek information from outside agencies. Overall, pupils are achieving well because they have good attitudes to learning and they co-operate with others so that lessons proceed smoothly.
121. Pupils are also achieving well because teaching and learning are good. Lessons have clear aims and pupils know what is expected and the planning of topics incorporates relevant tasks that pupils have a sense of purpose in what they do. Teachers support pupils' learning well; relationships are good and firm so that learning is orderly and it leads to pupils achieving well. The course is at an early stage of development; it is being soundly led and managed, and teachers are working well in co-ordinating the course's components so that the different units are integrated into the course.

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

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are delivered predominantly through the world studies course, which includes religious education, supported by work done during tutorial time, and work in history which incorporates political matters. Some other subjects, such as drama, physical education and English, also make significant contributions. The majority of tutorials observed during the inspection were devoted to administrative matters rather than the teaching of those parts of the overall programme for personal, social and health education which are specifically covered within tutorial time. It is not possible, therefore, to comment on the quality of work in personal, social and health education in tutorial time, though many tutors say they do not have enough time to cover the work as thoroughly as they would like to do so. However, the scheme of work is good and has the potential to contribute well to pupils' personal development.

#### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership by an assistant headteacher means there is effective co-ordination of personal, social and health education, world studies, careers and citizenship programmes.
- The world studies course makes a good and substantial contribution to citizenship; some other areas, along with the extensive programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, also make good contributions.
- Assessment procedures need further extending to check the progress that pupils are making in developing the skills of citizenship.
- Citizenship within subjects needs to be given a higher profile and made more explicit to pupils.
- Aspects of citizenship which are taught in tutorial time are less effectively covered because tutors frequently do not have time to do justice to the subject.
- A structured programme of monitoring and evaluation is needed to ensure that all aspects of citizenship are covered adequately.

## Commentary

122. Pupils join the school with a wide range of experience in personal, social and health education and citizenship. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and all pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a clear understanding of the debating process, though a minority still find the conventions of debate in small groups difficult. They show a basic understanding of public health issues. By the end of Year 11, pupils have an above average understanding of law making and a basic knowledge of government. In a Year 10 lesson on racism and Year 11 lesson on farming systems, most pupils showed good listening skills and most were willing to voice their opinions. By the end of Year 11, pupils have investigated such issues as sexism, racism and prejudice. They demonstrate a sound awareness of the problems of these issues in the world. Higher attaining pupils recognise the need to support their views logically. Work experience successfully teaches teamwork and about health and safety. All Year 11 pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue, achieve well.
123. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Good planning, especially in world studies, history and tutorial periods, ensures that the work carried out by different classes is consistent, though time in tutorial periods is often too short. Aims of lessons are shared with pupils and checked at the end of the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers have thought about the delivery of these plans and have identified how they can develop pupils understanding of the issues. Lessons include practical activities ensuring all pupils are kept well involved; this was very apparent in a Year 10 lesson debating racial prejudice. Year 11 pupils are challenged about topical issues, helping them to become better-informed citizens about national and international issues. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to share opinions with others and develop their own ideas through group activities. However, there are instances where immature behaviour by some pupils means that it is sometimes difficult for all pupils to participate fully in lessons. Physical education offers good opportunities for leadership through Sports Leaders Awards and many opportunities outside of school. Marking and the assessment of pupils' progress in citizenship are still at an early stage. Teachers also need to make citizenship more explicit in some topics that they are teaching so that the concepts of citizenship become more coherent and recognisable. For example, in science lessons on healthy eating and when a good software package on drug education was used in tutorials, pupils were often not aware that they were studying aspects of citizenship.
124. The co-ordinator gives a good clear vision and direction to developing citizenship. Working with colleagues, she has brought some consistency and structure through an analysis of the citizenship programme. However, though leadership is good, management is satisfactory, and the status of the subject needs a higher priority across the whole school so that its importance as a new National Curriculum subject is fully recognised. The co-ordinator has identified areas,

like monitoring and assessment of the programme and assessment of pupils' work, as areas which now need further development. At present there is insufficient information to enable her to monitor progress fully or to judge achievement over time.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Information is only given for subjects for which there was an entry of at least five candidates.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100.0	90.0	14.3	42.7	28.6	39.0
Biology	11	72.7	81.6	9.1	33.2	19.1	33.2
Business studies	7	100.0	89.1	14.3	31.7	35.7	35.4
Economics	5	100.0	86.2	40.0	41.5	40.0	37.0
English	6	100.0	92.0	0.0	29.9	25.0	35.7
General studies	30	90.0	78.6	23.3	25.7	31.7	30.0
History	5	100.0	91.8	40.0	37.2	34.0	37.8
Mathematics	12	75.0	74.2	25.0	34.3	27.5	31.3
Media studies	5	100.0	94.2	60.0	36.1	42.0	38.5
Physics	6	83.3	82.0	0.0	36.2	21.7	34.3
Psychology	15	100.0	83.2	20.0	32.5	33.3	33.6
Sociology	5	100.0	83.7	0.0	33.6	26.0	33.8
Total of all subjects taken	143	92.3	86.0	22.4	33.6	31.0	34.8

### Level 3 GCE A level

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	17	100.0	96.1	41.2	48.7	78.8	85.1
Biology	16	93.8	91.6	18.8	36.3	68.8	74.1
Business studies	23	100.0	96.4	39.1	32.8	85.2	76.5
Chemistry	8	100.0	94.0	25.0	45.9	67.5	81.1
Economics	13	100.0	96.2	15.4	45.8	70.8	83.1
English	23	100.0	98.3	26.1	36.5	67.0	80.1
English literature	13	100.0	98.5	0.0	43.7	67.7	84.3
Design and technology	11	90.9	95.3	0.0	35.5	54.5	76.5
General studies	33	84.8	90.1	9.1	29.1	47.9	69.3
Geography	14	100.0	97.1	42.9	40.5	82.9	80.9
History	5	100.0	97.1	0.0	41.0	56.0	81.2
Information technology	11	100.0	89.1	36.4	22.4	78.2	64.1
Mathematics	8	100.0	93.3	12.5	52.2	65.0	84.7
Physics	8	87.5	92.8	12.5	42.8	57.5	78.6
Religious studies	9	100.0	96.3	11.1	44.0	66.7	82.2
Sports studies	13	92.3	85.4	23.1	29.5	67.7	73.2
Total of all subjects taken	231	96.1	94.8	22.1	39.4	68.1	78.6

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature and French were inspected in depth.

### English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 13 are above average and the students are achieving better than might have been expected from their earlier attainments.
- The course is popular and the students' attitudes are positive.
- Teaching is good and the lessons lively and engaging, despite the relative lack of experience at this level.
- The subject is well led and managed at sixth form level.
- The writing of some students does not reflect the high standards they show during lessons; they need more precise attention to this aspect of their studies, and to the criteria and objectives used to assess their work.

## Commentary

125. In 2002 students sat the examination in the combined English language and literature course. Results were below average but improved significantly in 2003. The school decided to offer literature only courses from September 2002. In the 2003 AS literature examination, the average point score is likely to show an above average rating when national comparisons are available. Although no students gained an A grade, most were at grades B or C, and all gained at least a D grade. The literature course is proving popular with over 40 students in the current Year 12, a high proportion of the year group. Completion rates on English courses have been good.
126. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average, reflecting the students' current AS grades. Achievement is good. The department operates a flexible admission policy and the range of the students' prior results at GCSE tends to be wider than often seen. Those starting the course with below or only just average attainments are doing very well and gaining grades higher than expected because of the security of their knowledge about the themes, plots and structure of the texts they study. All students develop a secure awareness of contextual and historical influences on texts. Higher attaining students occasionally reach standards associated with the highest grade, but, to secure grade A, require more rigorous analysis in their writing with consistent evaluation of their work. Some of these students still tend to describe, summarise or paraphrase too much instead of consistently analysing. They also need to comment more closely on quotations and especially the impact created by an author's use of language. During lessons, the quality of thinking and analysis demonstrated by most students was higher than they are achieving in their writing. One group of male students displayed high quality conceptual thinking when quickly inferring a critic's key judgements about Keats' "Ode to Autumn". During a discussion on the relative importance of female characters in "Othello", all students used a wide range of quotations to support their strongly - and in many cases passionately - argued opinions. Students in Year 12 have made a satisfactory start to their post-16 work but some have still to adjust to the greater degree of independent, critical study expected at advanced level.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Although the teachers have no previous experience of - and have had little professional development for - teaching at this level, their knowledge of the texts is secure. Their very good planning and high expectations result in the students working well during lessons and in completing a full range of notes and assignments. Teachers deploy a good range of learning activities that make demands of the students through group work and individual presentations. In addition, they also provide good support and guidance through hand-outs and references to electronic sources. Marking is good: it makes effective use of grades and generally gives precise evaluation of what is good and what needs to be better. Comments on some pieces lack this precision. The lessons have good pace and purpose but not enough use is made of effective whole class sessions to consolidate learning objectives. Students are making good gains in textual analysis during lessons, but require more frequent guidance, exemplification and practice in the precise techniques of writing evaluative assignments. Their knowledge of assessment objectives and their implications for essay writing, course and examination work is not as secure as it needs to be. Year 12 students do not receive target grades quickly enough and students in both years require a more effective working knowledge of grade criteria.
128. The leadership of the subject is good and it is well-managed. The head of department is clear-sighted about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision and takes effective action to improve provision. She has managed the successful introduction of a popular course and the students' achievement is good. The capacity for further improvement is good with the forthcoming expansion of the school giving an excellent opportunity to recruit teachers with successful experience at this level, and for present teachers to undertake further professional development. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## French

Provision in French is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good recruitment of students into Year 12.
- Shared teaching enables students to benefit from the strengths of both teachers.
- The overseas students are well integrated into the group.
- The very small group size in Year 13 inhibits learning because of the limited opportunities for interaction between students.
- There are no opportunities for able linguists to study a second modern foreign language in the sixth form.

### Commentary

129. Over recent years entry numbers for both AS and A level examinations have been too low for valid national comparisons of results to be made. However, three of the four candidates who took A level in 2003 were awarded a grade B. This shows good achievement.
130. Standards are above average in French in the sixth form and much higher in Year 12 than in Year 13. Students in Year 12 show good achievement and have already bridged the gap from GCSE to the independent learning expected at this level. Listening skills are good and benefit from the sustained use of French by the teachers. In speaking, all students have the confidence to try, and they succeed in communicating even where there are errors. Higher attaining students already have levels of fluency above the standards expected at this stage. One very able student gave a presentation without notes on a region of France at an excellent level of oral competence. There is a wider range in the levels of written work where standards are average. This is because the GCSE does not require much independent writing. As a result, students are not secure in some basic areas of grammar. Students' independent learning is encouraged through the use of computers to research the topics studied. In Year 13, listening skills are good in following the teacher's presentation in French. The standards of spoken and written work are below average. The students have a limited vocabulary and their written work shows weaknesses in basic grammar.
131. Teaching is good. A strength of all the teaching is the teachers' personal competence in French which they use throughout lessons. As a result, students become used to the pace and intonation of the language. Teachers have identified the need to reinforce grammar and give this a strong focus in Year 12. This is having an impact in the quality of written work. Teachers ensure that all students are engaged in oral work in class. This enables all students to have some success and gives them greater confidence. Learning is good. This is because the expectations of the teachers are matched by the mature attitudes and focus of the students. The students in Year 13 have very positive attitudes to learning but, with only two students in the group, there is not enough interaction for them to benefit from the contribution of others.
132. The leadership and management are good. The department is capitalising on the good GCSE results and attitudes which have resulted in the growing numbers choosing French. Results from the much smaller entry in 2003 show the successful capacity of students to meet the requirements of study at this level.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good or better.
- Teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of the subject effectively.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Below average teaching time in Year 12 and Year 13, coupled with large class sizes and the wide range of backgrounds of many of the students, limits progress.
- ICT is under-used as a resource.

## Commentary

133. In 2002, GCE AS level mathematics results were well above average and students' achievement in relation to their GCSE performance was good. In 2003, AS level mathematics results were well below average compared to the previous year and students' achievement was unsatisfactory. GCE A level results in 2002 were well below average and students' achievement was unsatisfactory though all students entered achieved a pass grade or better. In 2003, A level results were above average with a high proportion of students achieving A and B grades. Current standards are average and students are achieving well in Year 13. Their files are generally well organised, with much work included, and provide a good record for revision. Year 12 students make good use of their past GCSE work to move into new areas and are well into the course. For example, they used the rules of algebra well when completing the square with respect to solving quadratic functions. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In a mechanics lesson, for example, students working in pairs established an experimental link between the speeds of approach and separation of an object bouncing on the floor, for the co-efficient of restitution.
134. Teaching is good overall. Teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of the subject effectively, though too little use is made of ICT to extend their independent learning further. Students work hard and relationships with teachers are good, so achievement, especially in Year 13, is good. In Year 12, teachers face several challenges; the class size is large with many students from a range of diverse cultures and with a broad range of ability, and the amount of teaching time is limited. However, teachers respond well to these circumstances and conduct lessons at a brisk pace with demanding work. However, achievement is not quite as good as it might be because lessons are strongly driven by the teacher and relatively little independent developmental work.
135. Leadership and management are satisfactory with effective planning. Student numbers in Year 12 have increased though the proportion continuing into Year 13 is relatively small. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed and there is a commitment to establishing consistent high standards. Work is set regularly and marking is up-to-date, though teachers' comments to help the learning process are infrequent and do not give sufficient guidance to students in achieving their target grades. Teachers are approachable and prepared to use their time outside lessons to provide additional support.

## SCIENCE

The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled.

In **biology**, two lessons in Year 12 were observed. Teaching was good in both lessons, with very good practical opportunities provided for students. There are 45 students taking the subject in Year 12, a very good take-up. Examination results were below average in 2002. However, from a very wide range of entry, nearly all students obtained a pass grade, and overall achievement was satisfactory.

In **physics**, two lessons in Year 13 were observed. Teaching was good, with very good planning and progression in the work. Take-up for the subject is good. Results in 2002 were well below average,

but students' achievement based on their standards at the end of Year 11 was satisfactory. Results improved in 2003.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, and very good in Year 13, leading to a very good working atmosphere in lessons.
- There is mutual respect between teachers and students; students appreciate teachers' approachability, and the extra help available at lunchtime.
- The course is well planned, with clear learning objectives in all lessons.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to extend learning opportunities, and few enriching activities beyond the requirements of the syllabus.

### Commentary

136. Students with a wide range of standards in Year 11 are permitted to study AS and A level chemistry, and there is a very good take-up in chemistry with 12 students in Year 13 and 25 in Year 12; a high proportion of students complete the course. Standards at A level in the 2002 examination were well below average, but there was a significant improvement in the 2003 results. In both years, all students taking the examination obtained at least a pass grade, with a higher proportion of A and B grades in 2003. Comparisons with earlier standards indicate that students' achievements in Year 13 are good.
137. At AS level, the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade is lower, but is still in line with national figures. Achievement is satisfactory. Overall, there are no consistent or significant differences in the examination results obtained by male and female students, or of students from ethnic minorities.
138. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average and reflect the results obtained in national examinations. Students in Year 13 are fully absorbed in the course and are clearly enjoying the work. A number are intending to pursue a career requiring a knowledge of chemistry. The teaching clearly demands them to think about their work, both in practical and theory sessions. Folders are in good order, and regularly monitored by teachers. In Year 12, students in a large class are only a few weeks into their course, and they are still adapting to the requirements of the subject at AS level. They do not yet ask enough questions when they require additional help, partly because they are not encouraged to do so. For a minority, calculations pose difficulties.
139. Teaching is good overall; it is very good in Year 13, where groups are smaller, and relationships between teachers and students are more relaxed and confident. In both Years 12 and 13, lessons have clear learning objectives, and a good pace is maintained. In a Year 13 lesson on chemical reactivity and energy changes during reactions, lively teaching and questioning led to high quality understanding by students. All students were very involved, relationships were very good, and they showed a positive approach to learning from their mistakes. In a Year 12 lesson about reversible reactions, learning, although satisfactory, was less thorough because the teacher was less well organised, and did not ask such demanding questions.
140. The good achievement of students in A level examinations reflects the good leadership and organisation of the subject. However, the monitoring of work is less effective as a way of raising standards further. More use could be made of examination data to measure and compare the achievement of each year group. Teachers are beginning to share good practice in order to ensure that provision is more consistent. The marking of work contains insufficient reference to examination grades, and is inconsistent. Not enough use is made of ICT to extend strategies

for learning, and there are few opportunities for enriching students' experiences beyond the requirements of the syllabus. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

A course in ICT is taught to a small number of Year 12 students, but it was not sampled.

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

In the sixth form, Internet research, presentations and word processing form the core of the students' average levels of competence, which enhances their learning. Art students develop above average skills in using digital cameras and image processing.

## **HUMANITIES**

History and psychology were inspected in depth. **Geography** is also taught; recent results in geography have been below average, partly because of specialist staff absences. Two lessons were sampled; teaching and learning were good leading to good achievement and average standards. Year 12 students used their fieldwork to identify recent changing patterns of gentrification in inner cities, and Year 13 students successfully compared the development of tourism in less and more economic countries, analysing and contrasting their differences.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good subject knowledge enables teachers to give clear guidance to students.
- Tutorials enable teachers to provide individual advice for students.
- Students' files are not well organised in order to support revision and to demonstrate their understanding.

### **Commentary**

141. Examination results at AS and A level in 2002 were below average, partly because the open access to the advanced courses results in students joining the course who are without recent study of history, or with lower levels of achievement at GCSE, or whose command of English does not always match the needs of the course. Results in the AS level exam in 2003 were higher and achievement was satisfactory.
142. There is a wide range of standards, reflecting students' widely different starting points. Overall, present standards on both the AS and the A level courses are below average, though higher attaining students are above average. Nonetheless, for most students, achievement is good, though the achievement of some students is adversely affected by problems in attending lessons due to timetable clashes. Students with special educational needs are achieving well. Students in Year 13 have a secure understanding of the effect of economic prosperity on government popularity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Higher attaining students identify the strategies used to combat inflation in the 1960s and respond to questions in carefully planned and well present essays, with the support of teacher guidance and in class planning. Lower attaining students include relevant details, but do not use them to target their responses to the question posed. Notes are not well planned and there is little evidence of the use of statistics and census material to support understanding.

143. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the examination. They encourage students to develop their understanding through good questioning and individual presentations. Students are encouraged to participate actively in lessons and so gain confidence in developing their skills. They receive good support for the development of their essay writing and the use of specialist vocabulary. They are beginning to identify the strengths and areas for development in their own work through self-assessment, using clear examination marking criteria. The additional time set aside for one-to-one tutoring enables teachers to provide individual tailored advice; this is particularly valuable with the wide range of ability in the teaching groups.
144. The quality of leadership and management is good. The courses are well organised and reviewed, and changes to the syllabus have been introduced to support students' interest and achievement. Numbers choosing to follow the course are rising. Students with special educational needs are supported well although more support is required for those with English as an additional language when considering abstract concepts. Greater use of ICT and a wider range of methods of arranging and recording information would enable students to identify and analyse information more clearly. Overall, improvement since the 2000 inspection has been satisfactory

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and numbers have risen over the last three years, but some students are not achieving as well as they should.
- Students enjoy psychology lessons, but do not give enough time to independent study and revision.
- Teaching is good but there is too little time to study topics in depth.
- Arrangements for the leadership and management of psychology are unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

145. Psychology is offered to GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level only. The results in AS examinations in 2003 were average. Achievement was satisfactory with most students achieving what would be expected from their attainment at GCSE; however, a significant number did not do as well as expected. There was no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. The standards seen during the inspection, after six weeks of study, are also average with students demonstrating a sound knowledge and understanding of psychological research, and an ability to compare and evaluate psychological theories and studies. This was shown well, for example, in a lesson where students systematically evaluated research on attachment, identifying cultural influences, and changes in research and theories over time by the same researcher. Higher attaining students show a good grasp of a range of psychological concepts, and show very perceptive insights in their evaluation of theories.
146. Early essays show that most students are competent in selecting relevant evidence to answer questions. Points made are usually backed by reference to published studies, but much work tends to be too superficial. There are weaknesses especially in explanation, argument and the forming of conclusions. Students' files show little evidence of independent reading or of the use of ICT for research. Literacy and numeracy skills are adequate but not well developed.
147. Teaching and learning in lessons are good, but their impact on longer term achievement is reduced by too little time overall to study topics in depth, and the lack of priority given to the subject by some students out of lessons because, in their perceptions, it leads to AS only. Students respond very well in lessons and are keen to discuss and contribute their ideas. Classroom relationships are very good and support learning very well. Clear presentations help

students to understand complex concepts. Topics are skilfully related to both students' own experiences and psychological theories and research. Questioning tests understanding but could be more probing in requiring students to develop their ideas. Brisk, purposeful approaches and the good pace of learning, result in students being thoroughly involved, though there are some lessons where they are working compliantly rather than being challenged to take initiative in exploring issues in greater depth for themselves. Students' progress is tracked closely by thorough marking and assessment; this is helpful in identifying areas for improvement.

148. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The two teachers responsible for teaching psychology have been successful in improving numbers and standards, and work hard to ensure that the subject is delivered effectively as a one-year course. Neither has overall responsibility for the leadership and management of the subject, and while day-to-day management procedures are secure, there is no long term direction for psychology nor a vision of its place within the overall sixth form curriculum. The current arrangements do not provide for the rigorous monitoring, review and development planning needed to take this popular subject forward, and to address the factors which are hindering students' achievement.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teaching is good and students achieve well in Year 13 whatever their backgrounds in the subject.
- Good leadership and management, and good planning by teachers ensure that the course meets the needs of all students.
- The use of ICT, including computer aided design and manufacture, needs to be developed further as a way of developing skills and raising standards further.

#### **Commentary**

149. There were no entries in 2003 for A level design and technology. In 2002, although all but one of the 11 students passed, their average points score was well below average. However, present students in Year 13 are achieving well with average standards. They are developing good projects and a variety of themes are being covered, including environmental situations and product development. In some instances, graphical presentation is very good and design development shows real creativity. Students have undertaken detailed research from a variety of sources and used this well to develop a range of ideas, demonstrating a good understanding of materials. The use of ICT and computer aided design and manufacture is developing satisfactorily, but this is not firmly embedded into the work produced by students. In Year 12 there is a wider range of ability and some students do not yet have the design experience and technological knowledge required to meet the demands of the course. Case studies are variable in quality and content, but they are at an early stage of development. Overall standards in Year 12 at present are average with satisfactory achievement from most students at this early stage of their course.

150. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons well and have a good working relationship with students. They share lesson objectives and set clear expectations for the completion of work. A good pace is set in lessons and students are effectively challenged to respond to questions and confirm their knowledge and understanding. Teachers plan well to address the needs of students who do not have the breadth of experience required. With the wide range of ability in the Year 12 group especially, this good planning is an essential part of strategies to raise the achievements of some students. The planning includes strategies to

enhance students' understanding of the design process, their technical knowledge, and their understanding and use of computer based design and manufacture, and graphical presentation. Teachers work hard to teach the necessary practical skills that students require. They have also arranged and organised the rooms to create a very positive environment for teaching and learning.

151. The quality of leadership and the management of design and technology in the sixth form is good; the teaching is well organised to be shared and planned effectively between two teachers. Activities are assessed and monitored well and results in providing good guidance for students to improve and extend their work. There has been sound progress since the last inspection. Students starting the course continue to have a wide range of different experiences when they start the course, and the effective way the subject is managed enables students to be well catered for and to achieve well whatever their prior attainment.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

152. In this curriculum area, art and design was inspected in depth. Music and theatre studies are also taught and provision was sampled. One lesson of music was sampled, but it was possible to see three theatre studies lessons and look at some written work.
153. Provision for **theatre studies** is very good. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching and students' own enthusiasm, motivation and commitment to succeed. Students are able to perform, direct, improvise and learn some of the theories of outstanding practitioners, such as Stanislavski and Artaud, with increasing competence and confidence. Their written work varies in the quality of their literacy skills, but is always thoughtful and well researched. The teacher has very good subject knowledge of the required areas of theatre studies and presents students with a good role model. Her teaching is imaginative and encourages students to use independence and experimentation in their approach to their work. Assessment is very good and is used well to help students produce their best work in all areas of the course. Much is done to enrich the social and cultural development of the students, by, for example, residential theatre trips to London and New York. The subject is very well led and managed by the specialist drama teacher, who encourages students to have and fulfil high aspirations, and work to their full potential. However, the lack of modern ICT resources hinders students' achievement in the technical areas of direction.
154. The single **music** lesson that was seen in the 6th form was not sufficient to provide secure judgements about provision or the quality of teaching and learning. However, conversations with students and a scrutiny of their work show that they are capable instrumentalists who are reaching above average playing standards. Their understanding of musical theory and history is more limited. The new teacher is successfully refocusing students' attention to ensure they meet coursework expectations. The students appreciate the teacher's efforts and are mature and willing participants.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good.
- Students' skills in writing and talking about art are weaker.

## Commentary

155. Results in the A level examination have been below average for the last two years but were above average in the recent AS level; standards are above average in the current Year 13. Students on the sixth form art courses come from a wide range of starting points. Although more than half achieved an A or a B in the GCSE exam, others have C, D or no previous art qualification. Overall achievement at the end of Year 12 and Year 13, therefore, is good. Strengths lie in thoughtful expressive work, thorough research and imaginative use of materials. Achievement could be better if the students' skills in analysing and writing about their own work and that of other artists were improved.
156. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. It enables students to develop individuality and maturity. From a firm base of observation and drawing, the teaching gives pupils wide ranging technical skills and a sound understanding of how other artists work. Students make very good use of a good range of visits to museums and galleries in the United Kingdom and abroad. This is evident in the lively and painstaking sketchbooks made by most students. These studies are then developed as a base for art work using painting, textiles, sculpture, photography and digital imagery. There is less evidence in the sketchbooks and in lessons that teaching is designed to improve the students' ability to analyse and write about other artists' work in relation to their own. This particularly affects lower attaining students who lack skills in organising their thoughts coherently using appropriate artistic vocabulary and examples.
157. The leadership and management of the advanced level art courses are good. Although art in the sixth form was judged good at the last inspection, A level standards subsequently spent a period in the doldrums. Recent initiatives, which have developed teaching and learning, have improved achievement. Teamwork and consultation are particularly good, enabling very good support for individual student's development. Other initiatives, such as the GCSE applied art course in Years 10 and 11, have proved to be a spur to developments on the A level course. As well as new beginnings in textiles and digital media, links with the community are having an important impact. In one Year 13 lesson, a group of students confidently presented their designs to representatives from a local retirement home who wished to commission murals for the residents. The best students had sensitively adapted elements from their own work to the needs and constraints of the clients. Quite clearly these experiences, and others, are enriching the lives of the students and preparing them well for life beyond school.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected in depth, but the intermediate level GNVQ course in **leisure and tourism** in Year 12 was sampled. Standards are average and achievement is good, with good teaching and learning. The programmes of study are well organised and have a clear focus on practical learning. The students enjoy this approach. In one lesson, for example, students showed good personal skills in telephone simulations and handled unexpected situations well, enthusiastically achieving the objective to explain and arrange an interview to discuss the business enterprise.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The two co-ordinators and the subject leader have a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- AS and A level students are given good support and guidance, though the number following the A level course is low.
- All sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in physical education during the school day.
- Students are offered a wide-range of courses, including sports leadership and vocational courses.

## Commentary

158. The GCE results in 2002 were in line with the national average and represented good achievement for most students. The provisional 2003 results are similar. The proportion of students obtaining a higher grade pass (A or B), in both the AS and A level examinations, continues to rise. Girls' and boys' standards are broadly similar. Standards, in lessons and work seen in the current Year 12 and 13, show good improvement from students' attainment on entry to the sixth form. High attaining students are successful in a wide range of sports at area, county and, sometimes, national levels. The good levels of teaching and achievement mentioned at the last inspection have been maintained. The head of department provides good strong leadership and management in conjunction with the Sports College Director, and has succeeded in developing an innovative and broad curriculum that is fully inclusive. All sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in physical education within the overall curriculum, including examination, recreational, vocational and leadership award courses. The Community Sports Leaders' Award courses have provided well-qualified volunteers to organise and support schools' and community sports events. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Management of improvement since the last inspection has been very good, but numbers on the Year 13 A level course are disappointingly low.
159. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both years. Enthusiasm for the subject, clear objectives and wide subject knowledge enable staff to motivate and interest students. Learning is enhanced by access to high quality sports facilities. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which students learn and work hard to use methods and resources that meet their needs. In a Year 13 biomechanics lesson, for example, students improved their understanding of velocity and acceleration, because the teacher involved them in research, problem solving and graph work. A significant minority of students finds the initial change to sixth form study difficult, particularly in taking more responsibility for personal learning, but teachers give good support and guidance by easing them into research and further reading. The school and department learning resource areas provide good access to relevant material to enhance learning opportunities.
160. The school's enhanced ICT provision, through its sports college status, enables students to analyse performance through video recordings, research information through the Internet and present test results in graphical form. Because of this, most students' confidence and achievements rise, but a few students do not make sufficient use of ICT to enhance their learning. Students use appropriate technical vocabulary, because teachers place high emphasis on key words; extended writing skills are variable. Their communication skills are good due to the numerous opportunities to engage in discussion such as a high quality discussion on the social factors affecting participation in sport and recreation. Students' numerical skills, overall, are good, and their work is marked consistently and good diagnostic comments ensure that they know how to improve.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on business studies, but **economics** was sampled. Results in economics and standards in work seen are above average. Students have good knowledge of economics terminology such as 'elasticity of demand' and use these in context to show understanding of demand and supply graphs of products. Students achieve well in the subject because they show a mature attitude to learning and the very good, high quality of teaching ensures that learning is rigorous and high standards are reached.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCE A level standards are well above average because of good teaching and students' good attitudes to learning.
- Coursework is of high quality because students make good use of ICT to research and present assignments.
- There are insufficient links with the business community and with higher education.

### **Commentary**

161. Results in the 2002 A level examination were well above average with male students achieving higher than females. The above average results were maintained in 2003 and many students achieved higher results than would be expected from their prior attainment. It is rare for students not to complete the course.
162. Present standards are above average. By the end of Year 13, students are knowledgeable of business concepts, such as how business is organised and of the factors influencing the decision making process. They can understand what the data in a company's balance sheet says about the success of the business. Students have a good foundation of knowledge of business terms such as 'economies of scale' and understand why price change will affect the demand for some products more than others. They draw accurate demand and supply graphs to show the equilibrium point for products and successfully write accounts to explain likely changes in customer demand, but do not always develop answers enough particularly by reference to real examples. Above average standards are evident in coursework because students show good achievement in researching and in analysing information. The written reports are well structured and ICT is well used to illustrate work. In a minority of cases however, students reveal shallow understanding of business terms and do not use them in appropriate contexts such as in business finance.
163. Teaching is good. Teachers are well qualified and explain business concepts clearly so that students develop good understanding of topics and this leads to the achievement of well above average standards. Most lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and students respond well to the high expectations of the teacher by concentrating and applying themselves to tasks so that much is accomplished in the time available. In the most effective lessons, students achieve particularly well because the planning and structure of the lesson provide on-going challenges that captivates the interest of students, and leads to in-depth discussion and high quality outcomes. Occasionally however, learning is not so effective because the teacher imparts knowledge without engaging students actively in the lesson, resulting in low levels of concentration and boredom.
164. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department is being well supported by other established and experienced colleagues and this helping the department to maintain the very high standards that exist. The marking of

assignments is thorough but assessment is insufficiently linked to the minimum expected grades that have been identified for students. The schemes of work provide an overview of topics but do not give enough guidance on resources and time scales for coverage of topics. Links with the business community and higher education need further development so that the practical applications of the subject can be explored more thoroughly.

### Example of outstanding practice

**A lesson on the profitability of a fruit and vegetable wholesale company explored whether the owner had made a judicious decision to commit expenditure on a family holiday cruise.**

A highly stimulating lesson began energetically with rapid-fire questions to assess understanding of earlier work and 'sharpened up' the students' thinking and answering skills. The group work in the main part of the lesson was most effective because the teacher gave very clear direction and provided resources for them to evaluate the appropriateness of the expenditure. The students rose to the challenge and were totally absorbed in the activity. They fully analysed the data, were bursting with ideas about the impact of the cruise's expenditure on the business and then they prioritised their findings in order to make a report. The subsequent discussions had students sitting on 'the edge of their seats' as they supported and challenged the findings of others. As a result students significantly improved their understanding of how a business weighs up expenditure proposals and evaluates the choices available to the firm. The teacher's expertise fired and excited the students' enthusiasm throughout an excellent lesson.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses are taught in this curriculum area.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

165. The school provides a good range of courses within its **additional studies** and **general studies** sessions. This provision is more extensive than is found in many schools. As it was possible to sample only one general studies lesson and one additional studies lesson, it is not possible to judge the overall quality of the provision. However, most students welcome the range of courses. Conversations with those responsible for leading and managing the programme indicate clarity of purpose and organisation in the range of courses, and coherence in the teaching programmes. There are appropriate opportunities for accreditation, including A level qualifications in general studies and the Community Sports Leaders Award for those taking that course. The requirements for religious education are covered within the general studies programme. Teaching and learning in the lessons that were observed were good, and results in general studies are broadly average from a large entry.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

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

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