

INSPECTION REPORT

THERFIELD SCHOOL

Leatherhead

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125252

Headteacher: Mr G Tuck

Lead inspector: Mr T Feast

Dates of inspection: 22nd- 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 259247

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1439
School address:	Dilston Road Leatherhead Surrey
Postcode:	KT22 7NZ
Telephone number:	(01372) 818 123
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Crutchley
Date of previous inspection:	14 th - 18 th September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Therfield School is a large, mixed, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is a popular choice with parents and has continued to grow since the last inspection. There are many more boys than girls in Years 7 to 11. Fifty eight per cent of the school roll is boys; this is partly because of the proximity of a single-sex, semi-selective girls' school. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the school is above the national average, but includes the full ability range. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below that found nationally and overall family circumstances are generally favourable, although there are some pockets of social deprivation. The number of pupils with mother tongues not believed to be English is a bit higher than in most schools, but the number needing additional support is very small. The percentage of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is above that at the last inspection and is above the national average; the range includes those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The percentage of pupils provided with statements of special educational needs by the local education authority (LEA), including those in the language unit with speech and language communication difficulties, has increased since the last inspection and is above the national average. A significant number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. The school has a designated unit for 20 pupils with language difficulties, currently with 22 pupils on roll. The school has identified a very small number of pupils from traveller families on its roll. There are no pupils who are identified as refugees or asylum seekers. The number of pupils who are in public care is very low and there are none in Years 7 to 11. The number of pupils transferring to and from the school other than at the planned time of admission in September is relatively small. The turnover of teaching staff over the last two years has been high and the recruitment to some posts, especially in science, has been difficult. There has been a considerable turnover of middle managers in the last two years. The school works as a "Beacon" school in partnership with other local schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team		Subject responsibilities	
3650	T Feast	Lead inspector	
9736	J Brasier	Lay inspector	

20527	J King	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English Drama in the sixth form
8552	W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology Chemistry in the sixth form
32169	G O'gan	Team inspector	Sociology in the sixth form Health and social care in the sixth form
11258	I Rushforth	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology in the sixth form
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology in the sixth form
22849	R Catlow	Team inspector	Geography
17732	D Martin	Team inspector	History Citizenship
30136	D Johnson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31673	J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	Physical education
12179	L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Business education in the sixth form
20832	M Galowalia	Team inspector	Science English as an additional language
20622	A Sydney	Team inspector	Special educational needs
30743	N Cowell	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism in the sixth form
22958	T Bailess	Team inspector	English in the sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Therfield School is a very good school, which gives very good value for money. The headteacher and leadership team have been successful in maintaining and building on an ethos of very high standards, very good teaching and learning, very good attitudes and good attendance. The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and the local community are very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards which are well above the national average in national tests and external examinations;
- very good teaching and learning;
- very good leadership;
- very good personal development of the pupils;
- the inconsistency in the setting of quality homework and the planning for different abilities in classes;
- the impact of the accommodation in some subjects is unsatisfactory; and
- not meeting all of the statutory requirements.

The school was last inspected in September 1998. Since then **the improvement has been good** overall. Levels of attainment and progress have improved well in information and communication technology (ICT) but the improvement in its use in other subjects to support learning has varied. The accommodation has improved in a number of areas including design and technology. The requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils are still not met, mainly due to inadequate accommodation. Pupils now do get their full entitlement to religious education in Year 11 and in the sixth form. There has been a very good improvement in the marking of registers and the use of that information to improve attendance. Since the last inspection the standards have improved well at GCSE and advanced level and the high standards in national tests at the age of 14 have been maintained. Attendance is still above the national average. The quality of teaching and learning has continued to be very good as has leadership of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance			All schools		Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	B	A	n/a

By the end of Year 11 pupils attain standards well above those nationally. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above the national average and well above those of similar schools nationally. The pupils' achievement was well above that nationally. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more passes at grades A*-C declined from the levels of 2002 and the school did not meet all the targets it was set for its GCSE results in 2003. However the overall trend in the results in the last five years has been broadly in line with the national trend. Girls' results were higher than the boys'. In work seen in Year 11 during the inspection there were variations between subjects. In English, mathematics, science and ICT it was well above national expectations. It was also well above national expectations in history, French and GCSE physical education. In geography and design and technology it was above. In art and design, citizenship, religious education and music it was in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9, students attain levels which are broadly well above the national expectations. In work seen during the inspection there were variations between subjects. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was well above that expected nationally and in ICT it was above. In other subjects it was well above expectations in history, above in design and technology, French and physical education. It was in line with that expected nationally in art and design, religious education, citizenship and music. Pupils' achievement is very good in the core subjects and very good overall and is linked to the positive attitudes of most pupils and the very good teaching they receive. The results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 in Year 9 in 2003 were well above those nationally but the trend over the last five years in the results has been below the national trend. Boys' results were higher than the girls' in 2003. Generally all pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and those with English as an additional

language make good progress against their personal targets. Pupils from minority ethnic groups generally attain and achieve very well.

The quality of pupils' personal development, through spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good overall. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good overall, although there is a small group of pupils whose attitudes and behaviour are poor. Pupils' attendance is above that found nationally.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11 is very good overall. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. However it is evident in the very good progress pupils make in the way that they learn in their time in the school that the quality of teaching is very good overall. Pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9 is good and it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour in class effectively overall. There is some inconsistent planning to meet the varying needs of pupils in lessons and there is some inconsistency between and within departments in the quality of homework, assessment of pupils' work and guidance given to pupils on how to improve.

The curriculum overall is good. The only subject where statutory requirements are not met is in the provision of 3-D work in art and design. The requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and in the language unit is very good. The partnership with parents, local schools and the community is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good and management is good. The headteacher, leadership team and middle managers provide very good leadership and management is good. Governance is good. There is a very positive ethos in the school in relation to standards, the valuing of all, the quality of teaching and the personal development of pupils and the valuing of all pupils equally.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

In the parents' meeting and in the responses to the questionnaires most parents indicated they were very satisfied with many aspects of the school's provision but some concerns were raised, including the standard of behaviour of some pupils, the incidence of bullying and the quality of homework. Most parents at the meeting indicated that where there was bullying it was tackled well by the school. The pupils are very positive about the school but some younger ones expressed concern about the behaviour of some pupils and the incidence of bullying.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to raise standards are:

- improve accommodation, particularly in music, art and design and physical education;
- improve the consistency in the setting of homework which extends the pupils' learning;
- improve the consistency of planning for the different needs of the pupils in lessons;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- in respect of a daily act of collective worship; and
- in respect of 3-D work in art and design in Years 7 to 9.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THERFIELD SCHOOL

There are 248 students in the Therfield School sixth form, making it larger than the average sixth form nationally. Most students join from within the school. The great majority study a wide range of academic courses to advanced level. A much smaller number study a more limited range of vocational courses. There are very few students with special educational needs in the sixth form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a very good education for its students. Standards are high, being well above the national average. There is a good retention rate within the sixth form and the majority of students go on to higher education. Students rightly value the opportunities provided. They play a prominent part in school life and enjoy a very good range of enrichment activities. Teaching is very good and leads to very good achievement. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Courses offered are predominately academic and meet the expectations of students very well. The sixth form is cost effective overall and provides very good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Students are well supported and receive very good academic and personal guidance.
- Accommodation for private study and access to ICT facilities are unsatisfactory.
- The sixth form does not meet the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in 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. The focus subjects were English, mathematics, history, French, music, ICT, chemistry, physical education, drama, design and technology, drama, sociology, leisure and tourism, business and health and social care.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are all very good. Provision in French is good, with satisfactory achievement and good teaching.
Mathematics	Provision is very good. Standards and achievement are good and very good in further mathematics.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good. Standards are above average. Teaching and achievement are good.
Information and communication technology	Provision is very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good. Standards are well above average and teaching and learning are very good. Provision in sociology is good: standards are average, whilst achievement is satisfactory but improving. In the one geography lesson sampled, standards were above average and students achieved well. In the two psychology lessons sampled, standards were above average. In the one politics lesson sampled, very good teaching resulted in above average standards.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology overall is satisfactory and standards are below average. Standards are in line with the national average in graphics and above average in food technology.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in music is good, although there is only one student in Year 13. Provision in drama is very good: standards are above average and students achieve very well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is very good: standards are well above average, whilst teaching, learning and achievement are all very good. Provision in leisure and tourism is good: teaching, learning and achievement in the course are good.
Business	Provision in business studies is very good. Standards are above average.

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

Most students are very satisfied with the degree of personal guidance and support they receive. The inspection confirmed the strength of this support, including careers guidance, which is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of the role of the sixth form within the school and how it can develop further. The sixth form plays a positive role throughout the school, with many students acting as good role models. However, despite monitoring, tutor time is not used consistently well and this is confirmed by students. As at the time of the previous inspection report, there is no daily act of collective worship for sixth formers, although a very good assembly was observed during the inspection.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about provision in the sixth form. They appreciate the commitment and skill of their teachers, the quality of advice and working relationships and the opportunities provided for them to be involved throughout the school. They would strongly recommend the sixth form to others. They are critical about the restrictions that accommodation places upon opportunities for independent learning and study and they sometimes find access to ICT facilities difficult. The inspection confirmed that sixth form accommodation is limited, particularly for private study.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

By the end of Year 11 pupils' standards are **well above** the national average and their achievement is **very good**. Their achievement is very good in comparison with similar schools nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills and reach standards well above the national averages in GCSE examinations and national tests for pupils aged 14.
- The performance of boys is higher than the girls' in the national tests at age 14.
- Gifted pupils do well in the national tests and in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups attain and achieve very well, in line with that of their fellow pupils.
- The lack of planning for the specific needs of pupils in some lessons slows their progress.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.5 (36.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.3 (38.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.0 (36.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 233 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (73)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.3 (42.0)	34.7 (n/a)

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

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	96.5 (91.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	48.9 (39.7)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	326.0 (278.2)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 124 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The pupils make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of subjects and in developing their skills from the time they start in the school in Year 7 to taking their GCSE examinations in Year 11. They come in to the school with attainment overall above that found nationally but in national tests and GCSE examinations in recent years their standards have been well above the national average. In

the most recent analyses by Ofsted and from the Fischer Trust the value added to pupils' results has been recognised as very good and in 2003 in the top 300 secondary schools nationally as reported by the Fischer Trust.

2. There are considerably more boys than girls in the school in Years 7 to 11. Overall standards in the national tests for pupils aged 14 in the period 2000-2003 have been consistently well above the national average and this represents very good achievement. In the last two years the boys have performed better than the girls and have been further above the national averages for boys than the girls have been against their national averages. Gifted pupils attain high levels in excess of the national average and their achievement is very good. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the tests and attain results above those overall in the local education authority for pupils with special educational needs and close to the national average for all pupils. There are no significant differences between the attainment of the different categories of special educational needs and their achievement overall is good. The number of pupils with English as an additional language and requiring support is very small. Their progress is more variable but good overall, with standards in line with those attained nationally. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve results in line with the very good results of their fellow students. Pupils eligible for free school meals attain levels in line with their fellow pupils in the school. In Year 9 last year about one in 12 pupils attended for less than 80 per cent of the time. This did have an adverse effect on their attainment which was below the national average.
3. Overall the standards in the GCSE examinations in the period 2000-2003 have been consistently well above the national average using the measures of pupils' average point scores and the percentage achieving five or more passes at grades A*-C. There was a decline in the overall performance in 2003 but this reflected the variations in ability between different year groups. Girls' results overall were better than the boys' but the school's results for both boys and girls were well above their national results. Gifted pupils do very well, achieving in the main a good range of results at A* and A grades. Overall the school's results at A* and A grades are well above the national average. The results of pupils with special educational needs are in line with the results of similar pupils in the local education authority. Examination results for many of these pupils exceed expectations based on their levels on entry to the school in Year 7. Their achievement is very good. In 2003 there were no pupils with English as an additional language and requiring support who took GCSE examinations. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve results in line with the very good results of their peers. In Year 11 in 2003 there were no pupils with an attendance record of less than 80 per cent.
4. The pupils' attainment seen during the inspection reflects the very high standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In Year 11 attainment in English, mathematics and science was well above that expected nationally. Attainment was also well above national expectations in ICT, French, history and in GCSE physical education. In work seen in other subjects during the inspection, attainment was above that expected nationally in geography and design and technology and in line with national expectations in religious education, art and design, citizenship, music and core physical education. Pupils are achieving very well overall and the school's monitoring shows that the pupils are in line to improve on the standards that the school attained overall last year. Gifted pupils are demonstrating very high standards. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the language unit, make very good progress against their targets and they attain well as a result. This is mainly as a result of the very good support they receive. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and their attainment is in line with that expected nationally as a result; mainly due to the very good teaching in lessons they receive. The attainment and achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with that of their fellow pupils, reflecting the very good teaching in lessons they receive.
5. In Year 9 pupils' attainment reflects very good progress and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science it is well above that expected nationally. It is also well above that expected nationally in history. In ICT, French, geography, design and technology and physical education attainment is above that expected nationally and this also represents very good improvement on their standards in the subject on entry to the school. In other subjects attainment is in line with that expected nationally in art and design, religious education, music and citizenship. Gifted pupils are demonstrating very high standards. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the language unit, make good progress against their targets and they attain well overall as a result. Support staff are very effective in ensuring the progress of pupils with special educational needs but in some lessons where this support is not available, the lack of planning to meet the pupils' needs slows their progress. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and attain well as a result,

mainly as a result of the good teaching in Years 7 to 9 generally. The attainment and achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with that of their fellow pupils and reflects the good teaching they receive generally in Years 7 to 9.

Sixth form

6. The examination results in 2003 were well above the national average and this was an improvement on the results in 2002. Girls did better than the boys overall. The percentage of results at grades A and B improved, reaching nearly half of all entries. The average points score of the students rose significantly. The improvement has been maintained this academic year and in many of the subjects seen during the inspection, students were making very good progress in their courses and attainment was either above or well above the attainment expected nationally.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 to 11. Personal development is very good and attendance and punctuality are good in Years 7 to 11. There are however pockets of poor behaviour that have an adverse effect on learning overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour is very good in many classes and situations but marred by poor behaviour by a small minority of pupils on occasions.
- The majority of pupils shows mature and thoughtful attitudes to work and school life.
- The number of fixed term exclusions has increased since the last inspection, but this has resulted in a reduction in permanent exclusions.
- Personal development is well supported by a wide range of strategies, including that for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils in the remit of the behaviour unit.
- Good attendance is achieved through the very good efforts of both teachers and parents.

Commentary

7. Behaviour is good overall and very good in many classes and other situations around the school. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils however is of concern to the school, as exemplified by the rise in fixed term exclusions. It is also of concern to parents and most pupils, who dislike the interruptions to their learning. The school is using a wide range of strategies, including a number of external agencies, to find remedies for the situation. For example, a core of pupils with inappropriate attitudes has been identified in Year 8 and 16 teachers have volunteered to give these pupils individual mentoring for an appropriate period. Another example is the behaviour support unit, which is currently working with a group of disaffected Year 10 pupils, to give them a curriculum that they can relate to in a positive learning environment that is designed to mould and influence their attitudes. The school's behaviour policy is effectively implemented overall. It is supported by most pupils who consider it to be fair. Pupils also believe teachers to be fair, except for the practice of giving whole class detentions. The school's efforts to promote good relations and good behaviour are very good and result in very good behaviour in many lessons, around the school, in the dining rooms and in assemblies. The good attitudes of pupils are exemplified by their keenness to answer questions and they contribute their own ideas to lessons. Pupils in the language unit have excellent attitudes to their education. Very good attitudes are seen in the response of the pupils to the wide range of extra-curricular activities and they take full advantage of the opportunities to show responsibility and develop initiative. They listen with respect to others' viewpoints and can show pleasure in the achievements of others. Racial harmony is good in the school, which is helped by the school's ethos of valuing all pupils equally. Pupils' good relationships are exemplified particularly in many classes where they work together in pairs or larger groups. Bullying is relatively rare and usually dealt with well by the school, but a very few examples of pupils being upset by continued bullying emerged in pupil interviews. The increase in fixed term exclusions is in part related to the school's commitment to doing its best for all its pupils and keeping them in mainstream education. The school has a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs than is found nationally, in part, as it has a reputation for providing well for them. The increase in fixed term exclusions has led to a large reduction in permanent exclusions as the school persists very well in meeting the needs of some challenging pupils.

8. The confidence and self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs improves as they move up the school. Several pupils represent their forms on the school council. Pupils in the remit of the behaviour unit are given realistic coping strategies and these are having a positive impact on their behaviour and attitudes.
9. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply about problems. A good example is the special days devoted to topics covered in depth: politics in Year 8, with contributions from Amnesty International and from local Members of Parliament; citizenship in Year 9, with an emphasis on the work of charities such as Childline and UNICEF and health issues in Year 10.
10. Social and moral issues are well covered in assemblies, tutor periods and life-skills lessons. The school provides rich experiences to enjoy the arts, music, drama and literature, both of this country's culture and others'.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.7
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	1.1

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

11. Attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is below that nationally. Heads of year and senior managers have a strong commitment to improving attendance and their strategies include specific focusing on year groups showing a decline and participation in a local initiative to identify those at risk in a local area of social deprivation. The school's behaviour unit has had a positive impact on the attendance of those pupils in its remit. The provision of an alternative curriculum for some pupils in Year 10 has had a positive impact on their attendance. This proactive approach has helped to maintain attendance overall at a good level.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Black or Black British – Caribbean

No. of pupils on roll
1,347
38
1
1
18
1
11
4

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
73	1
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	13	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

Sixth form

12. Students in the sixth form have very responsible attitudes. They are good role models for younger pupils in the school. Some act as mentors for the younger pupils. The behaviour of sixth form students is very good. Students' attitudes are very positive and mature. Some students train as teaching assistants and help in local primary schools for one morning a week. During Rag Week the students raise significant sums for charity. They write the school magazine 'Green Bottle' and help compile the 'Therfield Yearbook'. Sixth formers participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award and especially in the World Challenge, for which £3,000 per head has to be raised. A recent challenge, which typifies the approach, was to visit Venezuela and help rebuild a remote village school in the country. There is an impressive involvement in helping younger pupils to learn, exemplified by an after school session in which modern language pupils preparing for their GCSE's, practised their verbal skills on a one-to-one basis with sixth formers. These examples demonstrate the proliferation of opportunities for sixth formers to show initiative, help others and contribute to society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is very good overall, as is the quality of pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching pupils receive has a very good impact on their capacity to learn and this increases as the pupils go through the school.
- Teachers are very good at preparing pupils for national tests and external examinations.
- There is considerable expertise in using behaviour management strategies very well.
- There is inconsistency in the setting of quality homework, the quality of assessment and the planning to meet the differing needs of pupils in lessons.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This very good teaching results in pupils' very good learning overall and pupils attaining standards well above the national average. In lessons seen during the inspection learning was very good overall, being good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In over three quarters of lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good or better. The main cause of the difference in Years 7 to 9 and the rest of the school was because there was slightly more teaching taken by inexperienced and temporary staff in these years. There has been considerable staff turnover during the last two years and nearly all departments have been able to cope with this without a diminution in the quality of teaching and therefore in the learning of the pupils. It is also clear that the very good quality of teaching overall has a very good impact on pupils' capacity to learn and that this improves progressively as pupils go up the school. Teachers are very good at making sure that pupils know what is expected of them when they take external examinations and they are prepared really well for them. There is much good and some very good support for developing pupils' literacy skills and this has a positive impact on standards. Nearly all staff manage the pupils very well and there is considerable expertise in using behaviour management strategies very well. There are a number of pupils who have poor attitudes to learning and sometimes teachers are less effective in managing this and learning both of these pupils and sometimes of the rest of the class suffers. By Year 10 pupils are taking subjects that they have chosen in the main and this reduces the level of inappropriate behaviour. The school has also made some alternative provision for pupils who are disaffected. This has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. There is evidence of much good homework and marking, which gives pupils a good idea of the level at

which they are performing and what they need to do to improve. There is also evidence of some very good planning to meet the differing needs of pupils within individual classes. These good and very good practices are not yet consistent across all lessons. This partly reflects the turnover of staff during the last two years and the difficulty in managing a consistent approach across all staff.

14. There were variations in the quality of teaching seen across departments during the inspection but it was particularly strong in the core subjects of English and science where it was very good overall and much very good teaching was also seen in mathematics. Teaching is also very good overall in history and physical education. In French, ICT, geography, religious education and design and technology it is good overall, whilst in art, music and citizenship it is satisfactory. The teaching in art and music particularly reflects the recent staffing changes.
15. The quality of teaching for and learning of pupils with special educational needs ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the best lessons, the groups contain pupils with similar needs, lessons have pace and are delivered with enthusiasm and the mix of activities matches the pupils' learning styles. In mainstream classes, pupils with low achievement frequently benefit from small bottom sets and extra staff to support them. Where mainstream staff use pupils' targets from their Individual Education Plans to prepare their lessons, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, for example, in English and science. However, support staff on occasions do not have enough information ahead of time to prepare adapted work for their targeted pupils with the class teachers and in these instances this slows these pupils' progress. The specialist teaching of pupils in the language unit is very good and meets their particular needs very well. This is helped in particular by the excellent assessment of pupils' learning and using the information to plan to aid their progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 198 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (1.5%)	58 (29.3%)	89 (44.9%)	43 (21.7%)	5 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

16. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good overall and this very good teaching results in students learning very well. The teachers use methods that enable students to learn very effectively. In the best lessons very challenging tasks were presented which motivated students to persevere, perform well and to follow their own lines of investigation. The students are given very good guidance from teachers on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The teachers prepare the students very well for their external examinations.

The curriculum

The school provides a curriculum which meets pupils' needs well throughout their time in school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a good curriculum, which is broad and balanced.
- Provision in vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
- Provision for literacy across the curriculum is well established and has a very good impact on pupils' attainment and achievement.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and students is very good.
- The quality of the learning support staff is very high.
- Deficiencies in accommodation make teaching and learning more difficult in some subjects.

Commentary

17. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements for pupils in Years 7 to 11 with the exception of the provision for 3-D work in art and design in Years 7 to 9. It is a largely academic curriculum, in keeping with the aspirations of the pupils and the community. The vocational education in Years 10 and 11 is limited to one course in leisure and tourism. This is open to all pupils. An alternative curriculum has been introduced in Year 10 to meet the specific needs of a small number of pupils. They attend the school twice a week when they are taught English, mathematics, science and ICT and at other times they attend the local college and do work-related activities. The provision to develop literacy across the curriculum is well established and has a very good impact on pupils' attainment and achievement. Provision to develop mathematics and ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, resulting in a good impact on pupils' attainment and achievement. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including that for pupils in the language unit, is good as it is for the pupils on the school's register of gifted and talented pupils. The school does well for pupils who have English as an additional language and is helping them to make good progress. The school has five pupils for whom English is not their first language and who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. These pupils are well supported by the school, through an experienced learning support assistant and a sixth form student. The school monitors the progress of pupils and makes curricular adjustments where these are needed, for example, an alternative curriculum for pupils who are less motivated by the formal curriculum. Personal, social and health education is satisfactorily provided for across the range of subjects. Equality of access and opportunity for all pupils is very good. Well-qualified support staff make a very good contribution towards equality for pupils with special educational needs. The needs of gifted and talented pupils and of pupils from minority ethnic groups are catered for well. Both long-term and short-term planning of the curriculum are good overall. It is very good in some subjects, for example, in mathematics, English and history. It is improving in some, for example, in design and technology.
18. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The Code of Practice is followed very well and is reflected in the curriculum modifications to meet these pupils' needs. Specialist support is provided to meet individual needs, for example, in the case of pupils who are at different levels on the autistic spectrum. Pupils in Years 9 to 11 can opt for a 'key skills' support option which helps with the coursework demands of their other subjects and gives them a greater chance of examination success. A small number of disaffected pupils have an alternative curriculum which covers GCSE courses in the core subjects, with vocational courses and a behaviour programme. This is successful in keeping pupils in school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by revision classes which help to prepare them emotionally as well as academically for tests and examinations. There are break and lunchtime activities as well as some withdrawal lessons for pupils struggling with literacy. This good provision contributes well to the school's successful achievement of its aim of "Best for all".
19. Opportunities for pupils to pursue new interests and to extend classroom learning are very good. These take place at lunchtime, before and after school and through a very wide range of visits. This range includes revision clubs in several subjects aimed at identifying underachieving pupils or for higher attaining pupils including those who are gifted and talented. There is a homework club that runs everyday. There is a booster club, a German club and French exchange programme. Several departments arrange visits to enhance pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in their subjects. This focus plays an important part in raising the level of attainment of pupils throughout the school. There are wide ranging activities for participation in the sports and the arts. There is an instrumental club which is so popular with the pupils that they are in school at 7:15 in the morning. There are lunch and after school drama clubs. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is popular with pupils from Year 9 onwards. There are theatre rehearsals, gymnastic and dance rehearsals, a symphonic band and an orchestra. Sports activities include clubs for basketball, hockey, girls' football and boys' football.
20. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. Staffing difficulties that some departments have suffered due to the significant turn over, for example, in science are managed very well. The impact is minimised, with the result that it has not been allowed to significantly alter the very good performance of pupils overall. The quality of the learning support staff is very high and their expertise is being developed well through relevant training. Some are graduates and some are trained teachers.

21. Resources including those for ICT are good. The library is a poor resource for mathematics, modern foreign languages and history and unsatisfactory for English because of the dated stock. Resources are good for pupils with special educational needs, although ICT is under-exploited, both for distributing information around the school and for supporting individual pupils. The behaviour unit is well resourced and has an attractive suite of rooms. There is a good range of rooms for the special educational needs department, but the building leaks and needs replacing. Much of the school is inaccessible to wheelchair users, but the school has an accessibility plan that it is gradually implementing. Accommodation in the school is satisfactory overall. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, for example in science and ICT. The quality of accommodation in some areas still has an adverse impact on standards. Some rooms are cramped and the huts are isolated, inconvenient and uninviting. Some departments, for example, mathematics and music have rooms in different parts of the school. These locations hinder the cohesion within these departments, for example, in the effective use of resources and consistent approaches to teaching and learning such as the use of ICT. Facilities for art and design, music and the indoor facilities for physical education make teaching and learning harder for teachers and pupils. In the case of art and design it makes it difficult to meet the requirements for 3-D work in Years 7 to 9. Good management of the school however, has minimised the adverse effect of accommodation on the performance of pupils.

Sixth form

22. The sixth form curriculum is good. It combines a very good range of academic subjects with a satisfactory range of vocational and work-related courses. The students receive very good advice on their selection of subjects and career prospects. Most students select four AS levels or three AS levels and general studies in Year 12. Both long-term and short-term planning in the curriculum are good. In some subjects, for example, in mathematics, the planning is very good. The school provides a very good range of activities outside the classroom. The range includes many activities that promote academic standards such as those concerned with data collection and analysis in science and geography and there is widespread participation in the sports and the arts. For example there are clubs for sailing, skiing, Amnesty International, drama, football and the highly popular trip to America. The students are encouraged to help the younger pupils, for example, in providing language support for early learners of English. The teachers are very well qualified to teach in the sixth form. Resources are good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, accommodation for private study and access to ICT are unsatisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Pastoral care is a major strength of the school and is **very good**. Support and advice is **very good**, backed up by very good systems for monitoring academic progress. Pupils' views are well represented to the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good management of health and safety.
- There is very good management of child protection and welfare.
- Academic mentoring and monitoring is very good.
- Advice on personal development is also very good.
- There are very good induction arrangements for new pupils.
- Good advice is provided on careers and further education.
- The school council is well used to reflect pupils' views.

Commentary

23. There is very good management of the health and safety of pupils and staff on the site. Particular strengths are the regular safety inspections by governors and the premises manager and the organisation of child protection, with the services of seven child protection officers strategically placed within the organisation.

24. In the main school pupils' progress is reviewed every half year. For every subject there is an analysis of expected minimum grade, determined by reference to past performance, actual grade and attitudes to work. Targets for the pupils are agreed. Each pupil has an academic tutor, who may or may not be their form tutor, who follows their progress year on year and the pupil, tutor and parents meet to discuss progress twice a year. These procedures are very good practice for tracking academic progress. Teachers have good and trusting relationships with pupils. Support for pupils is also available from the Schools Christian Council Trust youth worker who attends twice a week and is very popular with the pupils for the help she gives. Pupils with special educational needs are very well cared for in the unit, especially at break and lunchtimes and there are a number of other support services for those who find life difficult. Pupils with special educational needs are getting the provision that is in their statements. Annual reviews and transitional reviews are well administered and parents and pupils take a full part in them. The school monitors the achievement of pupils who have English as an additional language effectively to ensure sustained progress. Whilst the school does support these newly-arrived pupils as well as it can, there is not enough specialist support to meet their needs nor is there always sufficient awareness in departments in how to meet their needs more effectively. However their progress is good and once the pupils become fluent, the school ensures their equal participation in learning.
25. Pupils told inspectors how pleased they are with the way they had been introduced into the school. There are very good links with contributory primary schools on curriculum matters and special educational needs and these links contribute successfully to the very good induction procedures for new pupils.
26. Pupils receive good advice on careers, including drama presentations on the worlds of work and study and the importance of the decisions made on course selection.
27. Pupils are well involved in the life of the school. The school council has been reconstructed to reduce the numbers of members to two members per year group. This has made it easier to tackle issues that require detailed examination. The council has a number of achievements to its credit and takes responsibility for a budget of £1,000 each year.

Sixth form

28. Students are very well supported by their tutors with the result that the course completion rate in the sixth form exceeds 97 per cent. Students are well prepared for the sixth form, with courses on study skills and logical thinking. Both the students in Year 12 and their parents say that students are well supported in course selection, although Year 13 students were less satisfied. Students in the sixth form also participate in the academic mentoring days. There is a good system of recording academic performance, giving a clear indication of students' progress. This can be accessed by students at school or at home. Students receive very good advice on their progress. They receive very good advice on careers and further education opportunities. They are encouraged to apply for bursaries and tester courses so that they get a better understanding of what university is like. When the advanced level results are available, members of staff give good advice to those who do not achieve the grades they wanted and help them to find alternative placements. All this support is underpinned by very good relationships between staff and students. Student opinion is sought through questionnaires and the sixth form takes an appropriate role on the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links with parents, the community and other educational institutions which have a **very good impact** on pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with very good information.
- Parents are given very good opportunities to discuss their child's progress.
- Parents give the school good support.
- Parental concerns are dealt with very well.

- The wide range of links with the community makes a rich contribution to school life.
- There are very good links with partner primary schools.
- Beacon status enhances links with other schools.

Commentary

29. The schools' newsletters, annual report from governors, prospectus and reports on students' progress are all of very high quality. There is a report on students' progress every term. Pupils and parents receive a full school report annually. Interim reports, which are more succinct but give a good picture of progress, are issued in other terms. Parents are invited to discuss Individual Education Plans where these are provided for pupils with special educational needs and receive and discuss their child's annual review. Parents are provided with courses on parenting. There is an annual progress evening when parents can meet all tutors teaching their children and two academic mentoring days when they meet with their children's academic tutor.
30. Parents give excellent support to school functions such as musical events and the recent cabaret performance. The parents attend and give much support at sports events. They subscribe handsomely to the Trust Fund. In the main they give good support to homework and some use the homework book for communication, although most prefer to telephone or write notes. The Friends of Therfield raise £7-8,000 per annum for the school, help pupils organise the Year 11 ball and coach the pupils in some of the fund-raising initiatives.
31. Parental questionnaires have resulted in the reshaping of sixth form general studies, a modified telephone system and refinements to the academic mentoring day. Concerns are dealt with very well. The headteacher runs a regular surgery that is available to any parent to raise any issue that concerns them.
32. The police and the school work in close collaboration on a number of fronts. Industry in the shape of Esso and Halliburton KBR are strong supporters of the school. Among many sporting links is that with Chelsea Football Club, particularly in relation to girls' football. The school attends The Mole Valley Youth Council and participates in the North Leatherhead Project. The youth worker also runs the under 18 night club at the Leatherhead Theatre. The elderly are invited to a Christmas party held by Year 11 and church groups visit the school. There are good links with a number of charities. These many and diverse links make a rich contribution to school life.
33. Partner primary schools participate in a pyramid group that examines common problems and a special group has been set the task of improving the transfer arrangements between Years 6 and 7. Parents and pupils are very pleased with the induction arrangements and these arrangements support the children very well and contribute to the pupils' very good achievement. A good example of these arrangements in practice is that mathematics staff at Therfield set tasks for pupils in local primary schools and mark the tasks and share the results when the pupils arrive at Therfield in Year 7.
34. Collaboration with other local secondary and special schools on the curriculum permits a Year 10 boy to study electronics at a local school, enables a girl from a local special school to study dance at GCSE level at Therfield and has resulted in a joint class from a local special school and Therfield to study an alternative curriculum together in Year 10. Beacon status has enabled the school to form a consortium focused on 'Achieving Success' and to initiate a programme to improve middle management that has attracted not only a number of local schools but been successful on a wider plane. The collaboration with the local special school supports very well the valuing of all pupils in the school and provides a suitable curriculum opportunity to all the pupils involved in this scheme. The involvement of staff from Therfield in the Beacon project for middle managers has contributed very well to the quality of leadership and management at Therfield.
35. The school is involved in initial teacher training. It provides lecturers for college courses and assists with the selection of candidates. It receives a number of trainee teachers and provides them with very good support in developing their professional expertise. These links have helped with the recruitment and retention of staff at Therfield and supported subject managers in their role in the promotion of effective teaching and learning.

Sixth form

36. Links with the community are very good. There are a wide range of links with local businesses which support well the sixth form curriculum. The sixth formers are involved with local activities such as the Mole Valley Youth Council and with local charities. The arrangements for the induction of the students into the sixth form are very good and help students make a positive start to their sixth form studies, which supports the progress they make very well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good overall and management is good. Governance is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations are excellent.
- The leadership of the leadership team is very good.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Not all statutory requirements are met.
- The school's Beacon status has had a positive impact.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.

Commentary

37. The school is very well led. The headteacher's leadership and that of the leadership team is very good overall. The headteacher's clarity of vision for the school, his sense of purpose and high aspirations are excellent. He has taken a very high achieving school, maintained the standards and refocused the work of the school so that it does reflect very well the school's mission "Best for all". He is prepared to look widely at examples of best practice and challenges colleagues to introduce and incorporate them into Therfield's practices where appropriate. He is ably supported in this by the school's leadership team who have their own clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They work very well as a team to meet the challenges presented to the school and to plan strategically for its development. The school's finances are satisfactorily managed and good quality financial information is provided on which strategic decisions can be made. The team provides very good role models for other staff and they manage very well to motivate and influence both staff and pupils. This is seen to very good effect on the impact on the very good leadership of many of the middle managers which has been sustained despite the considerable turnover in the last two years.
38. There is a very good partnership with the governing body. They play a good role in shaping the direction of the school and they have a very good knowledge and understanding of the weaknesses of the school. They act well as a "critical" friend to the school, providing good support and challenge to school leaders as appropriate. They have contributed well to the school's good improvement since the last inspection but there are still a couple of statutory requirements not met.
39. The management role is performed well overall. There has been good monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning by senior and middle managers. As a consequence the very high standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained and there has been an increase in the proportion of teaching which is good or better. In some departments the staff turnover has made it difficult to achieve the same high standards and consistency of provision, for example, in art and music, but there are signs that the new managers are having a positive impact. The school has managed very well the recruitment of staff in a situation where the school's very good provision for professional development of staff contributes to the high turnover. The school's Beacon status has helped maintain the quality of the staff by enhancing significantly the school's professional image and given staff the opportunity to celebrate their professional successes on a wider arena.
40. Leadership of special educational needs in the school is very good. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is well informed and effective. Management is very good. The special needs co-ordinator identifies pupils well and uses data very well to track pupils' progress. Every opportunity is grasped to help these pupils achieve. However there are three types of support in the school language, special needs and behaviour and this is an artificial division since many of the pupils with special educational needs have complex difficulties. The divisions are historical and in part relate to funding sources but some of the present pupils supported by the special educational needs department are there because

they failed to get a place in the language unit. The school has not yet made sufficient use of the shared deployment of support staff to meet the needs of individual pupils, nor have there been sufficiently close links for joint training but in all other respects the leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.

Sixth form

41. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. There is an experienced head of sixth form who has a clear vision for its future development. Governors have a clear vision for the sixth form at Therfield, but the statutory requirement in respect of collective worship is still not met, in the main due to the difficulties with the accommodation in providing for it across the whole school.
42. Management is very effective and provision is very cost effective. There is good monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and this has had a positive impact on students' attainment and achievement. Despite the monitoring and evaluation of tutor time it is not always used well.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,545,137	Balance from previous year	102,939
Total expenditure	4,533,583	Balance carried forward to the next	11,554
Expenditure per pupil	3,133		

The language unit

In the previous inspection report the unit was inspected as part of special educational needs. The overall judgement then was 'good'.

Provision for pupils in the language unit is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- The quality of staff is outstanding.
- The lack of a second speech therapist has an adverse impact on the support that can be provided.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress.
- Very good withdrawal lessons are closely linked with the mainstream curriculum.
- The very good practice seen in English lessons is not consistently seen in other departments.
- Deployment of support staff is not sufficiently planned with the special educational needs department to ensure a more even deployment of this scarce resource.

Commentary

43. The teacher in charge of the unit is dynamic and has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve, based on thoughtful evaluation of the unit's work so far. Assessment, data analysis and budget handling are exemplary. She has built up a confident team of support staff. Her leadership and management are very good.
44. Staff in the language unit are highly qualified and can work without direction, always focusing on the needs of the pupils. They provide support throughout the school day, either in class or in the unit. Speech therapy is provided fortnightly but between sessions the speech therapy

assistant puts the programmes into practice with pupils. The unit has a vacancy for a second therapist which would improve support further, but the Primary Care Trust has been unable to appoint one.

45. Small groups of pupils are withdrawn for extra help, for example in the run-up to examinations. Year 11 pupils are helped to complete the written part of their art portfolio. They are given writing frames and prompts and gain the confidence to complete the work. Pupils in Year 9 have extra lessons on 'Macbeth' concentrating on understanding and recording their answers. These lessons are an important factor in the school's higher than average results. Pupils in the language unit gain higher results than the Surrey average for pupils with special educational needs. Their confidence and self-esteem are high. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress and in Years 10 and 11 they make very good progress.
46. Pupils are well supported in mainstream lessons. Support works best where teaching groups are small, with extra support and teachers modify the work, explaining new words, giving short instructions and alternative ways of recording ideas. This provision supports very well the school's aims of valuing all pupils equally. In English lessons the good liaison between the department and the unit means that pupils achieve very well. In other subjects such as mathematics, the opportunities for joint planning are missing and mainstream teachers are not so adept at meeting the needs of language impaired pupils. Support staff are attached to pupils with statements of special educational need and because of the setting arrangements, this can lead to imbalances in deployment. The unit does not yet plan sufficiently closely with the special educational needs department but in all other respects its provision is very good.

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 **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very good, sustaining the faculty's well-deserved status in the school.

Commentary

47. In 2003, national test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above average nationally and above average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Girls outperformed boys but to a considerably lesser extent than they do nationally. The performance of boys and girls has been above the national median over the last three years and their average points score has been rising over that period. GCSE results in English, based on average points score, were significantly above the national average and English literature results were above average, representing continued very good achievement given pupils' performance in national tests two years before. Both boys and girls did significantly better in English than in their other subjects, though this was not the case in English literature. The department has picked up on this and is reviewing its approach, especially to the poetry section of the examination syllabus.
48. Standards in work seen are well above average by Year 9 and by Year 11. Most pupils develop analytical skills well, organise their writing well, show very good understanding of texts and write confidently about them at length. Pupils' understanding of media texts and their presentational or design features, their ICT capability and their ability to structure an essay through argument to conclusion are very good features of their attainment. Written work of higher attainers can be over-lengthy out of a natural desire to show their enjoyment, knowledge and understanding of texts. For examination purposes they do not benefit sufficiently from writing more selectively about key points and using a fluent and concise style.
49. Achievement is very good throughout the age range because of a number of very effective aspects of the department's approach. In Years 7 to 9 programmes of work are conducted with a common teaching approach that takes full account of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy's framework for teaching English. As a result pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and tackle interesting work that is particularly well structured to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and suitably challenging for higher attainers. These groups are identified in lesson planning and they achieve as well as others. Classroom assistants are knowledgeable about pupils' needs and provide very effective and discrete support for individuals and for teachers. This provision is very good in supporting the school in achieving its aim of "Best for all". ICT is often used imaginatively and creatively, both to develop pupils' capability and add to pupils' understanding. Good examples of this are 'The Cruise' project and use of the 'Kartouche' software to 'direct' Shakespeare plays. In all years pupils benefit from very effective assessment procedures. Accurate marking of written work explains well what they need to do to improve and pupils are set suitable targets for improvement based on clear descriptions of levels or grades. Pupils have regular opportunities to record an evaluation of their progress. Parents, too, are invited to comment - an unusual and appreciated opportunity.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Enthusiastic and committed teachers ensure through their high expectations, well-paced lessons and good relationships that pupils work with purpose and productively. They work very hard to enthuse and motivate pupils and usually bring out the best in them as a result. Their explanations, demonstrations and questions aid pupils' understanding considerably. They make very good use of drama techniques, whiteboards and focused group discussion to involve pupils actively in their learning. Teachers use assessment very well to raise pupils' aspirations. As a result pupils know what is expected to reach different examination levels and what they need to do to improve. Teachers also create attractive classroom displays that support and inform pupils' learning, show off their work and reward their efforts. Occasionally, because of the inexperience of a few members of the department, too much is attempted or activities are over-similar or over-prolonged. The pace of learning slows and pupils' attention and concentration slips. Overall, however, the high quality of the teaching team fully justifies the subject's status inside and outside the school.
51. Leadership and management are very good. Recent staff changes including the arrival of newly qualified teachers have been managed very effectively. The head of faculty, herself only appointed in September 2003, is a very good model for the teaching team and has established a common approach and clear direction for the faculty's work very quickly so that standards, achievement and teaching quality have been maintained. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the faculty is in a strong position to improve further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Standards are above average overall. Most subjects make a good and sometimes very good, contribution to the development of pupils' language and literacy skills. In history, for example, pupils have frequent and varied opportunities to develop fluent speaking skills. They develop analytical and extended writing skills very well. Teachers emphasise key subject vocabulary so that pupils use it

effectively in speaking and writing. In ICT, too, there are very good opportunities for extended speaking and explanation. Pupils can use technical vocabulary with fluency and understanding. The 'Outward Bound' project enables pupils to practise drafting and word-processing skills very well.

53. There are areas for improvement, however. Art and design pupils practise annotation and writing skills extensively, but teachers are inconsistent about the emphasis they give to key vocabulary and in providing opportunities for speaking. The latter omission occurs in design and technology, where teachers also overlook too many errors in pupils' writing. In mathematics, though there is a range of written projects involving analysis and interpretation, speaking opportunities are insufficient, there is little evidence of key words in wall displays and no evidence of spelling correction.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in French in 2003 were well above the national average.
- School leadership and subject leadership promote successful provision in languages.
- Very well planned lessons provide a wide range of learning activities.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient opportunities to practise speaking.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not provide sufficient guidance on how pupils can do better.
- The very good programme of foreign visits and after-school lessons raises standards.

Commentary

54. GCSE results in French in 2003 were well above the national average and boys did significantly better than girls when their results are compared with their results in other subjects. For current pupils, attainment is higher than national expectations at the end of Year 9 and is well above expectations by Year 11. The progress of the majority of students is good. High attaining students make very good progress and those with special educational needs achieve as well as all the others.
55. The school leadership team places a high value on modern foreign languages, with the result that all pupils in Years 7 to 11 study at least one language and the numbers taking two languages is much higher than is found nationally. The school's success in developing all pupils' literacy skills enables the languages department to support very well all pupils' full access to the curriculum on offer. Subject leadership is very good, with clear vision and an innovative approach to spreading good practice and improving teaching and learning.
56. Teaching is good. Lessons are very well planned to provide pupils with a wide range of learning activities and to ensure the progression of their learning through the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the best lessons, pupils are absorbed in their learning because of the very good pace of teaching. Teachers explain their expectations of learning clearly at the beginning of lessons and they convey their high expectations by their sustained use of the foreign language in class. The quality of teaching and support provided means that this is accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The learning of pupils in Year 7 to 9 is hindered by teachers giving them insufficient opportunities to practise speaking. Teachers prepare the older pupils very effectively for success in GCSE examinations; a good example occurred in a Year 11 lesson when pupils took on the role of oral examiners and developed a very good understanding of what they needed to do to improve their standards. Homework is set regularly in all year groups but is often insufficiently challenging to extend pupils' learning. Marking is inconsistent and does not provide enough guidance on how pupils can do better.

57. The faculty is well organised and its documentation is much improved. Staff arrange a very good programme of exchanges and visits to France and Germany; and the well-attended after-school lessons for pupils have a very positive effect on their attitudes and on standards in languages. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The faculty does not yet make sufficiently consistent use of its very good ICT resources to assist pupils in their learning.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE in German are not in line with the standards pupils attain in French.

Commentary

58. Although the focus during the inspection was mainly on French, German lessons were also sampled. French and German are taught within the same modern foreign languages faculty; and the teachers all teach both languages. The overall provision and strengths and weaknesses identified for French apply to both languages. GCSE results in German were in line with national averages in 2003 but are not in line with the standards pupils achieve in French.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above national averages.
- Pupils' achievement is very good and linked to the quality of teaching provided.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The use of ICT in mathematics is inconsistent because of accommodation restrictions.
- Good support is available to pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

Commentary

59. Standards are very good. The performance of pupils in national tests at the end of Year 9 is better than the national average and good compared to similar schools. Over a third of pupils attain the highest Levels of 7 or 8 and two-thirds gain Level 6 or above. In each of the last five years results for boys have been above those for girls. Average point scores are higher in mathematics than in English or science. By the end of Year 11 two-thirds of pupils gain A*-C grades at GCSE, well above national averages, though fewer than might be expected gain A*/A grades. Boys do consistently well, results for girls fluctuate year-on-year and were above the boys' results in 2002 and below in 2003. When results at the ends of Year 9 and 11 are compared to the standards of the pupils on entry into the school, the overall achievement is very good, for both boys and girls. A modular GCSE course is now being followed and initial results, alongside evidence from work seen during inspection, indicate further improvement in standards with more pupils attaining the highest grades.
60. The significant progress is attributable to the quality of teaching and organisation in the department. Leadership is very good, with many excellent features and management is very good. There is vision and dynamism. Assessment procedures are excellent. Extensive records of pupil performance are kept and systematically analysed to monitor progress. These are coupled with efficient marking, advice on how to improve and regular pupil self-assessment. Schemes of work are of high quality, as is other departmental documentation, with clear references to resource materials including software and websites. ICT is well used, including an electronic whiteboard, but accommodation restrictions mean that as yet not all pupils receive equivalent usage. There are good links in the subject with other local schools.

61. There is a good range of experienced and younger staff. Good practice is shared both through formal and informal meetings and training opportunities are taken up. Lessons are well planned. Overall teaching and learning are good, much very good. Where the enthusiasm of the teacher for the subject is conveyed, pupils are stimulated and very productive learning occurs. In many lessons this was evident, with a lively mix of teacher instruction, discussion and activity sustaining motivation and interest. Examples were Year 9 classes constructing loci or learning about sample spaces, various Year 11 classes graphing quadratics, the experimental probability work with Year 8 and the appreciation of capacity with a lower-attaining Year 10 class. By contrast some lessons were staid, lacking sparkle and pace, with an imbalance of teacher input and pupil tasks. Here pupils made progress but derived little enjoyment. In two lessons observed the unacceptable behaviour by small groups of pupils restricted learning.
62. The majority of pupils are well behaved, respectful and diligent. They set their work out well; this contributes well to the very good standards. Many are successful in mathematical challenges. Classroom relationships are usually very good. Good support is provided beyond lesson time and catch-up classes are available for lower-attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs receive classroom support enabling them to progress equivalent to their peers and this enables the department to contribute well to the school's ethos of "Best for all". The few who have English as a second language receive good help both from teachers and classmates. Classrooms are bright with many pupil-produced wall displays.
63. Many good features were noted in the last inspection. These have been maintained and further developed, with standards continuing to improve. This is a strong department with clear ideas and vision.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. The majority of pupils enter the school with mathematics levels at or above the national average. There is nevertheless a sizeable proportion with lower standards. Specialist support in class and lunchtime catch-up with the help of sixth-form students assists such pupils to progress. All pupils get sound grounding in mental and written numeracy and in graphical processes. They proceed to work on decimals, fractions, sequences, percentages and probability. Higher-attaining pupils develop by the end of Year 9 skills in Pythagoras, trigonometry and more involved statistical processes. Calculators are appropriately used and good training is provided. Investigative work facilitates further numerical and graphical development and a particularly interesting citizenship project for Year 8 pupils has been introduced.
65. Inter-departmental analysis of use of numeracy in the curriculum has improved awareness. Joint projects, such as in the use of co-ordinates, are undertaken, enabling pupils to use and broaden their mathematical skills in other subjects. The numeracy co-ordinator is a historian and a history research investigation on the Great Fire of London produced good graph work and analysis of data. Use of the principle of moments, calculation of speeds, and understanding the half-lives of isotopes were all well done in science. In geography a comparison of forms of energy in Japan and work on attitudes to migration made effective use of numeracy, whilst in art good use of perspective for street scenes and landscapes was seen. A useful supplement to the numeracy policy is being developed, giving exemplars of good practice. The intention is also to supply copies to parents in due course.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average in national tests and GCSE examinations.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Target setting is used very effectively to raise achievement.
- Leadership and management are very effective and have a positive impact on standards and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Higher attaining girls do not perform as well as the boys nationally and within the school.
- The improvement in curriculum planning seen in Year 7 is not yet consistent in Years 8 and 9.

Commentary

66. During the recent years including 2003, national tests results at the end of Year 9 have been maintained at well above the national average. Girls have not performed as well as the boys in the school in the period 2000-2003. This is partly explained by the fact that their attainment on entry to school is lower than that of boys. GCSE results during the recent years have also been well above the national average, despite a drop of about ten per cent in A*-C grades in 2003. Again the girls have not performed as well as the boys, partly for the same reasons as in national tests at the end of Year 9. The department is concerned about this, especially the performance of girls at higher levels. It is considering tackling it by having a set for girls only and in mixed gender classes by ensuring that boys do not dominate the girls in investigative work and discussions. The standards of pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and the support for pupils with special educational needs enables the department to successfully contribute to the school's ethos of valuing all pupils equally.
67. Very good teaching and learning has led to standards that are well above national expectations and achievement that is very good. Teachers use their subject expertise very effectively, more so in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. For example, they illustrate, demonstrate and explain scientific ideas in ways that increase pupils' grasp of these. This was convincingly demonstrated in a lesson by showing how total internal reflection of light works using laser light and a stream of water bending the light into a sink. Teachers set high expectations requiring pupils to make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding, for example, how can one increase the power of a generator. They make effective use of ICT, for example, of an interactive tablet and data projector to enhance pupils' understanding of the pattern of decay of radioactive chemicals and to calculate their half-life. Questioning and discussions are used effectively. Occasionally however, teachers do not involve the girls as much as they involve the boys. Whilst most teaching makes very effective use of time, occasionally teaching is rushed. Consequently not enough time is left at the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. In one lesson the pupils made substantial gains in knowledge and understanding of the products of electrolysis of salt solution as a result of exciting demonstration and pupils' own investigation conducted efficiently and safely in pairs. Thought provoking and pacy discussions rapidly increased the depth of their understanding, for example, of the uses of salt and the origins of its mineral deposits.
68. Target setting is used very effectively to make pupils aware of their potential and the level at which they are working. This is very effective in raising achievement. A brief discussion with a few pupils showed that whilst most pupils were making gains of at least one National Curriculum level, some pupils are making two to three levels from their attainment when they entered the school in Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similar progress to that of their peers.
69. Leadership as well as management of the department are very good and have impacted very positively on maintaining well above average standards and very good teaching, learning and achievement despite very significant staff turn over. There is thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and a clear vision of what needs to be done to keep pupils' performance and achievement at well above the national average. For example, work has started on curriculum planning to further improve its match with the range of needs of pupils in Years 7 to 9. The school has also benefited from the national strategy for teaching science in Years 7 to 9, especially scientific enquiry and lesson structure. Priorities for development also include the offering of applied science at GCSE level to engage a small proportion of less motivated pupils in more productive learning. Data on the performance of pupils is very well managed. This has been used effectively to optimise learning and achievement. Whilst this has worked very well for boys, this has not increased the proportion of girls at higher levels of attainment. Improvement since the last inspection is good, maintaining well above average results and improving teaching from good to very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is above the national average.
- The GCSE results in 2003 were significantly better than in 2002 and above the school average at the higher grades A*-C.

- Good teaching overall and the positive attitudes of pupils helps them to make good progress in lessons.
- The use of assessment data is not sufficiently developed in all the units to inform teachers' planning and target setting for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' access to ICT facilities both at school and at home has a significant impact on attainment.
- Leadership is good.
- The management, mapping, monitoring and assessing of cross-curricular ICT is not secure.

Commentary

70. Many pupils in Years 7 to 9 reach the highest standards in the areas of ICT they work in and use the most. Standards are lower in the use of computers to take measurements and to control other devices because of the limited opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in these areas. Most pupils are confident, fluent users of a range of applications and can compare the relative advantages and disadvantages of different software for different tasks. Pupils' numeracy and literacy skills are well above average. They explain their work coherently and are adept at word-processing extended pieces, for example in Year 7 producing a newspaper report following their outward-bound experiences at High Ashurst. Pupils enter Year 7 with above average standards and these are maintained. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups. Girls and boys are often equally confident; girls work more accurately on the whole, but boys are more adventurous, but inaccurate.
71. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils develop their capability through examination courses. Standards are above average and continue to improve and pupils' achievement is good. This is reflected in the GCSE examination results, which have improved significantly and in 2003 results were above the school average at the higher grades A*-C. All pupils gain a good understanding of information processing and information systems. They are able to apply this knowledge to their major project 'Future Fashions' and provide a complete system answer, from identification of the problem to the final evaluation of their solutions. Coursework is a strength and many pupils produce high-quality work. However, some pupils are not completing all coursework sections, sometimes linked to their attendance records. Year 11 pupils speak highly of the support, guidance and time offered by their teachers which enables them to reach their full potential. The assessment systems for the GCSE course are constructive, giving advice to pupils on how to improve their GCSE coursework grades. In Years 7 to 9 assessment procedures have been revised, along with the revision of the course structure. This includes the introduction of work booklets for some units of work, for example 'Big Brother'. As a result pupils are taking more responsibility for their own learning and this contributes to the higher standards. Assessment procedures as yet are not fully embedded in all of these units of work and do not involve pupils sufficiently in setting and assessing their own targets.
72. Teaching and learning in the discrete ICT lessons are very much a team effort and are good overall. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and provide high levels of individual support to ensure they all make similar progress. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons, receive effective additional assistance from learning support assistants and progress at a rate similar to their fellow pupils. In a very small number of lessons, some pupils display immaturity, but are motivated to work on the machines and are appropriately supported. A minority of pupils are over reliant on their teachers and at times this is exacerbated by the teachers' willingness to solve the problem. There is not yet consistently good use of teacher questioning to check the individual level of understanding and challenging the more able would prove beneficial.
73. Pupils' attitudes to ICT are good and there is much demand for all of the machines during the lunchtime club, where the network staff provide very good opportunities for pupils to access the Internet, to complete homework, to improve upon their coursework and to explore computers using games. Access to their school files at home and the very high percentage of homes with ICT facilities has a further impact in boosting pupils' performance.
74. Leadership is good. There is a clear vision for the subject, supported by a committed team of specialist teachers and senior management. Management is satisfactory. Management, monitoring and assessing of cross-curriculum ICT is not secure and remains an outstanding area for development from the last inspection. Significant financial investment in the overall provision of ICT has resulted in a more favourable pupil:computer ratio than the national target.
75. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to make further improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. Where pupils have access to ICT facilities in their other subjects, they demonstrate good expertise and confidence with the technology and it contributes to the effectiveness of their learning in those subjects. For example, in English their skills in word-processing are evident in their effective use of fonts, layout and presentational features when completing the "Cruise" project. Good use was seen of an omnigraph in mathematics to investigate quadratic equations. In some subjects, however, insufficient use is made of ICT and this lack is attributable to limited specialist facilities within the departments, for example in art and music. In modern foreign languages resources are good but the good practice emerging is not disseminated sufficiently. Teaching using ICT across the school is developing well, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards, which are effective in helping pupils to understand processes, when they can see them clearly displayed. PowerPoint presentations are similarly well used.
77. Curriculum mapping across all subjects has not been completed and departments are therefore not aware of their contribution to developing ICT skills or the use of whole school assessment criteria to help judge pupils' performances.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE standards are above the national average.
- Attainment by Year 9 is above national expectations and achievement is good.
- Teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of texts and worksheets to cater for the differing needs of pupils within some classes.
- Classroom teaching is good and is reflected in the pupils' achievement.
- ICT is underused to support learning and independent research.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Fieldwork enhances what is learnt in the classroom for most pupils.

Commentary

78. Overall standards are above the national average. In 2003 in the GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was above the national average and the results of boys were above those of girls.
79. Pupils enter the school with below average geographical skills. By the end of Year 9 standards are above those expected nationally. Pupils' achievement relative to their prior attainment is good. As pupils progress through Years 7 to 9 they make good progress in finding information from texts, maps, graphs and diagrams but their skills in using computers are not so well developed. Pupils can in their writing show that they have a good understanding of the geographical processes and the impact they have on the environment. The subject does not use sufficiently a range of texts and worksheets to tackle the different levels of ability within some groups. Higher attaining pupils can, when given the opportunity, write well on a given topic but do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their thinking by extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in working towards their targets, especially when they receive specific support. The promotion of geographical language is helped by the displays of key words in classes and pupils' public reading in class to develop their language skills but there are too few opportunities to write at length.
80. Pupils' attainment is above national expectations at the end of Year 11 and this represents good achievement in relation to standards shown at the end of Year 9. Pupils continue to make good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. In their writing pupils of all abilities show a good understanding of the specialist vocabulary and use their skills with maps, diagrams and graphs to convey their ideas. The writing and presentational skills continue to improve over the final two years and this is particularly in evidence in the writing up of their fieldwork. On the whole pupils listen well to their teachers and many use their thinking skills and are prepared to take part in the lessons. Pupils benefit from good teaching and the opportunities to pursue independent lines of enquiry.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the classroom but the wider aspects of assessment for learning, monitoring and marking to guide pupils to improvement are variable. Teachers plan their lessons well with appropriate learning objectives which they often share with pupils and occasionally use at the end of the lesson to recap learning. Skilful questioning and good oral assessment when used in some classes help these pupils understand their learning but other pupils in some classes are not targeted sufficiently to experience similar benefits to their learning. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning to encourage pupils to use it as research tool. Teachers work hard but there are some pupils in a very small number of classes who do not respond with similar effort in their learning. Marking is regular with some useful comments but this does not consistently show the pupils how they can further improve their work and achieve better outcomes. Similarly, the department holds good information on pupils' progress, though this is not shared with them sufficiently to encourage them to take greater responsibility for their learning.
82. Subject leadership and management are good. Since September 2003 the new head of department has shown that by her vision and chosen direction the subject will make further progress. Good teamwork, both by experienced and new entrants to the department, help all involved to achieve the goals that have been set. Curricular planning is under constant review to see that it develops and reinforces key skills in all years. The subject development plan sets out a clear short-and long-term pathway with many points having been completed. Fieldwork continues to enhance what is learnt in the classroom for most pupils other than some pupils in Year 8. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and all staff benefit from the good practice that is available. While in some ways the accommodation is good, the absence of a departmental suite of rooms does not help staff or pupils. The subject area has dealt with nearly all the key issues of the last inspection and improvement has been good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average.
- The popularity of the subject as an option choice at GCSE is well above that found nationally.
- The quality of teaching is very good, leading to very good learning by the pupils.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

83. In the GCSE examinations in 2003 the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C was well above the national average, with especially high numbers achieving the very highest A* and A grades. The attainment of boys was below that of girls. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above national expectations. This constitutes very good achievement for pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs. Pupils show a very good knowledge and understanding of the syllabus content and, especially in Year 10, a growing understanding of examination requirements. All can describe events in the past such as the events leading up to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 whilst the higher attainers can explain clearly the causes of such an event. The quality of their written and oral explanations is very high and this is a result of teaching that challenges them to think for themselves and to discuss and debate on a regular basis. The pupils are very committed to their work and this commitment shows in their very good sets of notes and in the high quality of their coursework. History is a very popular subject with half of all Year 10 and 11 pupils choosing to study it at GCSE, well above the numbers seen in schools nationally.
84. Standards in the current Year 9 are well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, in relation to the standards they were achieving in Year 7. A particularly strong feature is the improved writing of pupils by Year 9. This is due in part to the explicit support for literacy within history teaching. Pupils of all abilities show very good knowledge and understanding of events and of peoples' motives. For example, Year 9 pupils were able to explain some of the key events of the Second World War such as the bombing of Dresden and were able to discuss maturely the motivation of individuals involved. Pupils have an equally good grasp of historical enquiry and the use of sources and interpretations.

85. The quality of teaching is very good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teacher questioning is very skilful and forces pupils to think and explain their ideas and is especially effective in drawing the majority of pupils into oral work. For example, Year 10 pupils in both higher and lower sets discussed who was responsible for the Reichstag fire in 1933 although they began by looking at different amounts of source material. Pupils respond positively to the well-planned lessons and work with interest. Teacher assessment is excellent. Pupils know exactly how well they are doing and have precise targets to help them to improve.
86. The leadership and management of history are very good. The teachers of history form a very skilled and committed team. There is very effective monitoring of teaching and learning and a common focus on high standards. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has had a very positive impact on teaching and learning. One area that requires development is the use of ICT. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection with increased numbers and higher standards.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were below the national average.
- Current standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with the national expectations.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Teaching and learning are good, although in some classes teaching does not meet the needs of the full range of abilities.
- Leadership is good.
- The scheme of work and programme of study in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not satisfactorily cover all the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.

Commentary

87. The standards of attainment in the GCSE course in 2003 were below the national average. Around 40 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades of A*-C. The results are below the results of previous years. Very large numbers of pupils are entered for the examination.
88. The standards of attainment seen during the inspection are very mixed. Overall in Year 11 they are line with national expectations but with variations above and below this. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of many aspects of Christianity. They can apply this knowledge to many ethical and philosophical issues such as the problem of good and evil and human relationships. Pupils have completed a satisfactory amount of written work in their books. Many pupils can make intelligent verbal responses to many of the issues raised in their work. Overall their achievement is satisfactory.
89. The standard of attainment currently in Year 9 is broadly in line with the standard indicated in the locally Agreed Syllabus but with many pupils achieving above this. Pupils are knowledgeable about many aspects of world religions. They can talk meaningfully about Buddhist beliefs and the beliefs of Islam. The pupils have a good amount of written work in their books, covering topics such as religion and equality and civil rights.
90. Across the years there is no very significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls though girls sometimes exceed their targets. Pupils who have special educational needs and who have English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, in line with that of their fellow pupils. In a few lessons, the less able and the more able pupils do not progress as well as they might through a lack of work suited to their abilities. Based on their attainment in the subject on entry to the school in Year 7 the achievement of pupils overall is satisfactory.
91. Overall the teaching and learning are good, but with some examples of both satisfactory teaching and very good teaching observed. All lessons are well planned and a good range of activities are used to put across the learning. All lessons have strong content drawn from world religions. In the stronger lessons, the learning and achievement are more significant due to firmer management of the classes. Occasionally there is insufficient provision for the range of abilities in the classes, particularly when

there is no additional support available. The use of ICT is limited. Assessment systems are in place but could be better in Years 7, 8 and 9. Homework is set. The teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

92. The leadership is good and the management is satisfactory. The staffing is satisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not developed sufficiently. Progress since the last inspection on the statutory issue in Year 11 has been good and now all pupils follow a GCSE course. The schemes of work and programme of study in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not fully reflect the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Accommodation is good. Resources are good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards in Year 11 are above the national expectations overall, but there are variations between different courses.
- Standards have recently improved in resistant materials and in Years 7 to 9 generally, where they are above national expectations.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Leadership is very good and management is good.

Commentary

93. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations were in line with the national average. Within this overall subject grade there was considerable variation. Results in electronics were well above those nationally. In food studies they were above the national average. Results in graphics were in line with the national average and in resistant materials they were well below average. The proportion of pupils choosing these subjects for GCSE is low. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with those found nationally. A good rate of improvement in pupils' attainment is now evident.
94. Standards in the work seen in Year 11 are above average. The best coursework is in food studies and in textiles. In resistant materials standards are improving, but in graphics they are too low. Computers are well used for presentation and designing. In general students do not annotate their work sufficiently to show their thinking from start to finish. Achievement is good in the different courses, except in graphics where it is satisfactory. Attitudes are mostly good and sometimes most impressive. The greatest overall enthusiasm was shown for food studies and for child development. Pupils are enjoying resistant materials. The best project, a box for storing equipment for use with textiles, was well presented by a female pupil. Some pupils do not work with sufficient precision.
95. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils use computers well for designing. The pupils gain confidence by following new guidelines for designing and making and gain good understanding of the process. However, they do not sufficiently use their own plans and their own research when making decisions. Achievement is good in Year 9. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, use computers well for designing and making, for example, decorating card boxes for pizzas. Most pupils make good use of the new subject booklets to improve their understanding of designing and making. However, a minority of pupils do not take sufficient care about accuracy and about explanations when

writing on their plans. They do not, therefore, develop the habit across all technologies of using prior knowledge and skills with creativity and independence.

96. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. In a very good lesson the teacher's enthusiasm and the very well managed group work ensured that all were keen to contribute at the end of the lesson. Sometimes the end of lesson review was less well planned. The teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 overall. The work scrutinized shows that the teachers mostly give very good guidance about what to do next to improve. In the lessons seen, deficiencies in the planning, notably in graphics, resulted in a loss of pace and purpose. Work sampled shows that some teachers plan and mark with sharper focus on the important criteria than others. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and this helps them progress at a similar rate to their fellow pupils.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The effects upon pupils' standards caused by changes through teacher supply and recruitment have been minimized. The specialist food rooms are worked to capacity. Changing from food to textiles in the same room is very challenging; good achievement is maintained only through an extremely effective collaborative effort and work-rate. Technical support is consistently good and supports the department's provision well. Improvement, thanks to very good leadership and good management, is under way. The complete team has only been in place since September 2003. Electronics is being offered again in the next academic year. There is a strong drive to improve but inconsistencies in approach between the key areas have not yet been sufficiently reduced.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GCSE results matched the national average in 2003.
- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum does not meet National Curriculum requirements in respect of 3-D work in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Commentary

98. GCSE results in art and design in 2003 were in line with the national average, with 65 per cent of the pupils attaining grades A*-C. Boys attain less well than the girls but better than their peers nationally. The attainment of girls is a little below the national picture. The achievement of the current Year 11 pupils is good and the school's monitoring of data indicates that these pupils should match or improve upon the previous year's results. Standards of drawing are satisfactory and sometimes high, as is the quality of painting and handling of colour media. The most able pupils draw and paint confidently and use mixed media to create imaginative compositions. Sketchbooks and research into the work of other artists is developing soundly and there is evidence of appropriate annotation in the development of their ideas. In Year 10, the achievement of all students is good. They extend their practical skills and use sketchbooks well to record their ideas and research when using the Internet and other sources of visual information.
99. In Year 7, the attainment of pupils on entry is generally in line with that nationally and, during the course of the year, an emphasis on the development of practical skills enables them to improve satisfactorily. They are introduced to using sketchbooks for a variety of purposes. In Year 8, students improve their skills in perspective and the rendering of distance in drawing and imaginative pattern in a study of the 'mandala'. They are able to create lively designs using their initials as a central motif around which they create rhythmic line work in pen and ink, inspired by their looking at Indian art. By the end of Year 9, attainment is in line with the national expectation and higher attaining students exceed this. Achievement of pupils is satisfactory in relation to their ability. In a portraiture project, pupils study Renaissance portraits as a starting point for paintings and produce bold charcoal studies from these. However, throughout Years 7 to 9, there is a lack of opportunities for pupils to develop their creative

skills using the computer and image-manipulation software or to work with three dimensional media and as a result the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements.

100. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is always satisfactory and with some good features. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, resulting in satisfactory improvement. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and helps these pupils to make similar progress to that of their peers. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and as a result pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and most behave well in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teachers give helpful feedback to pupils on how to improve their GCSE performance and assessment is well matched to the examination criteria. Lessons are soundly planned but not always sufficiently clearly focused on what pupils need to learn in Years 7 to 9. Planning does not always identify the ways teaching will meet the needs of the most able pupils.
101. The leadership of the head of department, appointed in September 2003 is starting to have an impact upon standards and leadership and management are satisfactory. Areas for improvement are identified and there is a sound departmental improvement plan to meet these needs. The art accommodation has been refurbished since the last inspection but the size and shape of the art rooms however, are inadequate for the large group sizes and to enable appropriate provision for work with three dimensional materials.
102. Improvement in art and design since the last inspection is just satisfactory. Standards have declined in GCSE examinations but the condition of the art rooms has improved.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the department is very good.
- The very good commitment of the school to music includes the Year 7 band scheme.
- Standards overall are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory.
- Departmental accommodation is poor.
- The lack of access to ICT facilities across the department is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory but does not consistently match the work to the differing needs of pupils in classes.

Commentary

103. The head of department, appointed in September 2003, provides very good leadership and direction for raising standards. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and there is very good monitoring and support for teachers. The departments' self-evaluation is very good and the department has set its priorities effectively.
104. The school's support for music is very good and the Year 7 band scheme is unique in that it provides free tuition and the loan of an instrument for a year to any Year 7 pupil. This is to encourage pupils to learn an instrument and develop ensemble skills quickly. The band itself rehearses before school every Wednesday morning with around 40 pupils participating. This is an excellent opportunity for pupils to develop their musical skills and contribute effectively to raising standards in music. Standards overall are in line with those expected nationally and achievement is satisfactory. Some talented musicians make good and sometimes very good progress.
105. Departmental accommodation is poor and has been highlighted as such in two previous inspection reports and this problem has an adverse effect on both standards and recruitment to the subject. Four separate and disparate teaching areas including a dining hall is unsatisfactory. Only in one of the two teaching rooms is making music with acoustic instruments possible and meaningful group work in the department is practically impossible. This has a constraining effect on standards and greatly inhibits departmental development. The use and access to computer equipment is unsatisfactory at all levels. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have opportunities to multi-track on keyboards but no evidence of the use of

computers was seen during the inspection. Very little evidence was available of the use of computers in Years 10 and 11 to extend and support learning.

106. Teaching overall is satisfactory. The very good teaching seen was characterised by very thorough subject knowledge, careful preparation, good pace and a variety of activities to engage pupils. In weaker lessons, poor behaviour management, open ended tasks, a lack of variety in the activity and work that was not matched to challenge all pupils inhibited effective learning. Assessment is good overall with useful self-and peer evaluation work. Consistency of marking and assessment across the department is an area for development, as is the recording and target setting of assessments in Years 7 to 9. The scheme of work at all levels does not reflect sufficiently tighter short-term planning and the more detailed structuring of practical tasks. Planning does not yet focus sufficiently on pupils' learning outcomes, particularly in Years 7 to 9 or in the planning for pupils with special educational needs, especially when support is not available.
107. There are regular concerts and performing opportunities in the school and community. A busy extra-curricular programme of events includes senior and junior choirs, the Year 7 band, orchestra and symphonic and swing bands with some reflecting very high standards of performance. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory as issues of accommodation and the use of ICT are still unresolved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well by the age of 14 and very well on the GCSE course, although girls achieve less well than boys.
- Standards in Year 9 are above national expectations and standards on the GCSE course are well above average.
- There is very good teaching and learning in all year groups.
- There is very good leadership and management of a successful department.
- There is a very strong and successful extra-curricular programme.
- The limitations of accommodation and limited curriculum time for pupils on the core Year 10 and 11 course restrict achievement and the quality of learning for some pupils.

Commentary

108. Pupils join the school with varying standards, although the majority of boys are in line with expectations, whereas many girls have standards below expectations. Pupils achieve well by Year 9, in response to very good teaching, although boys achieve better than girls. Pupils make good progress in developing their skills in performance in games, especially hockey and in gymnastics. Pupils also make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Those pupils with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those from ethnic minorities, all share in this good achievement. Year 10 and 11 pupils on the core physical education course achieve satisfactorily, with boys achieving better than girls. Although the teaching is very good, there is inadequate curriculum time to enable pupils to build well on skills learned lower down the school and the quality of learning is restricted. Girls also achieve less well because the rate of non-participation becomes marked by Year 11. In contrast, pupils on the GCSE course, both boys and girls, achieve very well. Pupils with different levels of ability and with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as other pupils.
109. Standards of performance, knowledge and understanding are above average for pupils in Year 9, although they are higher for boys than for girls. The 2003 GCSE results for pupils in Year 11 showed standards in line with national expectations. Results in previous years were much better. The inspection confirmed that standards of pupils on the current Year 11 GCSE course are well above average for both boys and girls, although standards are higher in practical work than in theory, where levels of knowledge and understanding are more variable. Standards for pupils in Years 10 and 11 on the core course are in line with expectations, with boys' standards being higher than those of girls.
110. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers are very knowledgeable and use a range of strategies to keep pupils motivated and focused well in lessons. This was evident in Year 9 hockey

lessons when various conditions attached to skills practices enabled pupils to make good gains in their tactical awareness. Teachers have high expectations and exercise good classroom management. They involve pupils effectively in their own evaluation and assessment, as seen for example, in dance and gymnastics lessons. Teachers give good feedback on how pupils can improve. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, activities lack pace and in some lessons, such as netball, where boys outnumber girls, boys are allowed to dominate activities and thereby restrict girls' achievement.

111. Leadership and management are very good. There is strong leadership of a team of committed specialists and thorough review, monitoring and evaluation are particular strengths of the department. The strength and enthusiasm of the department contribute directly to the positive attitudes of most pupils. The department runs an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, which have a good take-up. Both individual pupils and teams have a very good record in representative sport. The limitations of curriculum time for older pupils and the unsatisfactory nature of the indoor accommodation and the tennis courts, including the provision for any physically handicapped pupils, restrict the quality and range of the curriculum. However, the department works hard to compensate for this. Although accommodation remains an issue, strengths from the previous inspection have been maintained, whilst standards in Year 9 and the breadth of the curriculum have both improved. Therefore, overall there has been good improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for citizenship is well planned for Years 7 to 9.
- The potential contributions to citizenship of the majority of subjects across the curriculum are not made explicit.
- Pupils' attainment in citizenship was not reported at the end of Year 11 in 2003.
- Attainment in Year 9 and in Year 11 is in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

112. Citizenship is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and is well planned. Other subjects have the potential to make valuable contributions but only in a data handling project in mathematics in Year 8 is this made explicit. In Years 10 and 11 different parts of the citizenship curriculum are taught within skills lessons and explicitly in English. The potential contribution of religious education has not been made explicit to pupils and this is leading to some gaps in coverage. Pupils' work is regularly assessed in Years 7 to 9 including opportunities for self-assessment, records are kept and the standards pupils attain have been reported to parents, although the reporting form does not allow pupils to comment upon their own citizenship skills. Pupils' standards in citizenship are not yet assessed and recorded in Years 10 and 11 and have not been reported to parents. Plans are in place to address this gap this year.
113. By the end of Year 11 pupils demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens through their study of twentieth century drama and through the topical issues they have researched. In a Year 11 skills lesson, with the help of an outside speaker, pupils were able to consider those aspects of the legal system that related to drivers and to consider the responsibilities of the individual. By the end of Year 9 pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of citizenship such as those pupils in a citizenship lesson who could outline the two sides to the debate on whether we still need a royal family. Many see citizenship as exploring their place in the wider world around them. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.
114. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, in all years demonstrate an increasing sense of personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and to others in school. Many have taken advantage of the extra opportunities to take part in sporting and artistic activities as well as to take responsibility in school, for example, as members of the year and school councils. Others have

taken part in charity fund-raising work. There is now a good system in place, since September 2003, to record such participation by pupils, both in school and in the wider community.

115. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with some very good teaching observed in the week of the inspection. Teachers work hard to create an atmosphere in which the pupils can express their ideas and in which pupils are sensitive to the views and beliefs of others. Individual lessons are well planned with a good range of resources and activities designed to interest pupils and to make them think. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the poor work attitudes of some pupils were not effectively challenged leading to unsatisfactory learning and to poor quality written work.
116. Leadership and management of citizenship are good. The subject leader has been in post since September 2002. Since then improvements have been made to the planning, teaching and assessment of the subject in Years 7 to 9 including some whole year citizenship days. There is now a small team of teachers with a shared commitment to the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective with good remedial action taken, such as in-class support for colleagues.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	14	64.3	65.2	21.4	11.1	24.3	20.6
Chemistry	5	80.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	20.0	24.1
Drama	2	100	86.5	50.0	19.6	40.0	30.6
Economics	2	50.0	73.6	0.0	20.1	10.0	26.4
English/English language	5	100	82.9	60.0	17.5	46.0	28.7
English literature	3	100	85.9	66.7	19.1	43.3	30.2
French	3	66.7	78.2	66.7	18.9	36.7	27.6
Design and technology	3	66.7	74.9	0.0	15.1	20.0	25.3
General studies	104	90.4	73.9	50.0	17.8	40.2	25.7
Geography	6	66.7	74.3	16.7	19.8	20.0	26.5
German	1	100	81.5	0.0	19.3	30.0	28.9
History	2	50.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	15.0	28.6
Home economics	1	100	78.4	0.0	17.6	30.0	27.0
Mathematics	21	90.5	61.9	52.4	17.1	41.0	22.1
Other social studies	20	90.0	69.7	30.0	16.7	33.0	24.1
Physics	2	50.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	15.0	22.7
Religious studies	1	0.0	80.2	0.0	22.6	0.0	29.8
Sociology	4	75.0	71.8	25.0	18.4	30.0	25.4
Sports studies	2	100	73.2	50.0	11.4	40.0	23.1

The table above shows the results for Year 13 and 14 pupils in 2003. Pupils in other year groups are not included.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	16	100	96.4	18.8	39.2	78.8	78.6
Chemistry	11	100	97.6	36.4	49.0	81.8	84.9
Drama	12	100	99.5	75.0	40.1	98.3	83.6
Economics	23	100	98.9	65.2	52.0	96.5	88.3
English/English language	27	100	99.4	74.1	36.3	98.5	80.9
English literature	8	100	99.5	62.5	46.5	100.0	86.5
French	4	100	98.8	50.0	51.5	80.0	87.6
Design and technology	10	100	97.8	40.0	35.0	80.0	77.9
General studies	25	100	94.7	44.0	31.0	83.2	73.1
Geography	41	100	98.7	56.1	44.5	83.9	84.0
German	5	100	98.4	40.0	47.9	88.0	84.8
History	17	100	99.0	52.9	44.6	88.2	84.6
Mathematics	24	100	96.7	62.5	55.6	92.5	88.8
Other social studies	42	100	97.4	66.7	42.7	95.2	81.8
Physics	9	100	96.7	77.8	44.6	100.0	81.7
Sociology	10	100	98.2	60.0	44.3	88.0	83.6
Sports/PE studies	14	100	98.0	57.1	30.9	92.9	75.2
Vocational studies	1	100	91.4	100	25.8	100	66.5
Business	38	94.7	88.6	26.3	20.6	72.6	60.1
Health and social care	10	100	93.2	30.0	22.3	84.0	63.5
Information technology VQ	25	92.0	87.2	36.0	27.9	76.8	64.9
Leisure and recreation	7	85.7	88.1	14.3	15.0	62.9	57.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above average.
- Achievement is very good. Students are well motivated and work hard.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and communicate an enthusiasm for literature.
- Some large teaching groups create extra burdens for teachers.
- Opportunities for curriculum enrichment are limited.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

117. Advanced level results, in both the English literature and English language and literature courses, were well above the national average in 2003, as they have been consistently in recent years. All students gained pass grades, with more than two thirds reaching the highest grades of A/B. Results at AS level in 2003 were also well above average in English literature, although they were lower than expected in the language and literature course. Most students took this examination again in January, with a significant improvement in results. About three quarters of the students ultimately gained A or B grades.
118. Achievement is very good for current students, including those with special educational needs. Standards in Year 13 coursework are well above those expected for the course. Students contribute well to class discussions and are able to justify and defend views when challenged. They are well motivated and work hard to revise and improve essays, so that final drafts represent their best work. Writing by higher attaining students on a wide range of literature, including modern plays and Webster's 'The Duchess of Malfi', is informed by a sensitive personal response and well supported by detailed textual reference. In language coursework, original writing is fluent and expressive. The work of lower attaining students shows less capacity to evaluate style and technique and is sometimes marred by poor expression. Students make good use of word processing skills, however, to present their coursework to a high standard.
119. Teaching is very good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and characterised by positive working relationships between staff and students. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. A range of effective teaching methods is used to create a successful balance between teacher input and student contribution. Above all, teachers know their subject very well and are able to communicate their own enthusiasm for literature. This clearly enhances students' response to the subject overall. As a result, learning is very good. Teachers have high expectations for the range and development of written work. Essays are assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against examination grade criteria. Individual guidance sessions are timetabled where possible. Large numbers in some teaching groups, especially in Year 12, create pressure on staff time in this respect, however and also restrict teaching methods. Teachers expect students to read widely and to research and present topics to their peers. Guidelines and resources to support independent learning are good, though there are relatively few opportunities to enrich the curriculum through theatre trips and other external visits.
120. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good. The head of department brings wide-ranging experience to the post and has set a clear agenda for future developments. The planned introduction of AS level courses in media studies and English language from September will widen student choice and meet learning preferences better. The department's work is well organised with effective systems for monitoring standards of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is good. High standards have been maintained following the successful introduction of new advanced level and AS level courses.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

121. Students' communication skills are above average in most sixth form subjects. Teachers provide good support, making many opportunities for debate and discussion, for example in mathematics, physical education, history and sociology. Students reach high standards in written coursework in English and history in particular, developing balanced and well-structured arguments. Essays in most subjects are well supported by thorough research and use of detailed evidence. Good, original report writing, with effective evaluation of topics studied, was seen in design and technology. Technical vocabulary is generally used accurately and appropriately, with good practice in mathematics, chemistry, music and design and technology. ICT skills are used well in the vocational options of health and social care and leisure and tourism to improve presentation and accuracy of work portfolios. Standards are satisfactory in sociology and music, though there are not yet sufficiently high expectations for the development of written work in these subjects.

Modern foreign languages

Although the focus during the inspection was on French, German was also sampled. Standards in advanced level in German are in line with those expected nationally. In the lessons sampled, students were taught well and made good progress.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very high expectations of students.
- Teachers give students very effective verbal and written feedback on their work.
- French should be used more consistently as the principal medium of communication in class.
- The provision of authentic French reading material is insufficient to encourage extended reading.
- Students' social and cultural development is greatly enhanced by their extra-curricular activity.
- Advanced level results in 2003 were in line with the national average; AS results were below.
- Current standards are in line with national expectations.
- Teaching is good.
- Leadership is very good.

Commentary

122. Teachers have very high expectations and challenge students well, testing their understanding through probing questions. They provide them with very effective individual feedback on their progress, both verbally in class and through their constructive comment on written work. Students' impulse to speak French would be greater if teachers consistently used the foreign language as the principal medium of communication in class. There is insufficient provision of authentic reading material or encouragement of students to read more extensively in French, to improve their use of idiom.
123. The very high standard of students' social and cultural development owes much to their excellent work in tutoring younger students in after-school modern languages lessons and to their high level of participation in exchange visits. The results of the small number of students in Year 13 taking French advanced level in 2003 were in line with the national average and the progress from GCSE was satisfactory. The AS results at the end of Year 12 in 2003 were below the national average.
124. For current students, attainment in AS and advanced level work is in line with national expectations. Boys achieve as well as girls and the achievement of all students is satisfactory when compared to their prior attainment and their ability. They have a very positive attitude and enjoy a very good relationship with their teachers.
125. Teaching is good. Teachers build up the confidence of students successfully, creating an atmosphere in lessons where students can take risks in the language without fear of failure. They make good use of a wide range of resources, producing a good deal of material themselves, to meet the differing needs of students. Teachers use homework well to prepare students for complex speaking tasks in class. In one lesson, for example, students debated with some feeling the issues surrounding animal rights, using appropriate specialist vocabulary. Teachers also ensure that students engage in regular listening practice at home and systematically learn new vocabulary outside lesson time. They give students responsibility for their own learning, developing in them the skills to evaluate their own work.
126. Leadership is very good, with clear vision and an innovative approach to spreading good practice and improving teaching and learning. The subject is well organised and its documentation is much improved since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards are above the national average, with results in further mathematics well above.
- Students receive very good instruction from specialist staff.
- Good mathematics support is given to students pursuing GNVQ courses in other subject areas.
- Appropriate steps have been taken to improve end of Year 12 AS results.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

127. Standards are above national expectations and achievement is good. Results at advanced Level are above national averages. More boys than girls undertake the advanced level course. Three-fifths of candidates in 2003 gained A/B grades. Overall 2003 results were an improvement on 2002, higher scores in statistics and mechanics modules and better revision programmes contributing to this improvement. Candidates take two AS modules at the end of Year 12, the rest at various stages during Year 13. More students follow the pure/statistics combination than pure/mechanics. All students now include decision mathematics in their courses. This curriculum change, together with changes in entry policy, are intended to improve overall results, in spite of the summer 2003 Year 12 results showing a slight dip over previous years. A small number of students annually take further mathematics, with students attaining results well above the national average. In each of 2002 and 2003 all students gained A grades.
128. For sixth form students in other subject areas support is available for those who seek to improve their GCSE grades, many reaching the desired C grade. A very good and successful initiative is the provision of an FSMQ (Free-standing Mathematics qualification) on money management for students on GNVQ courses.
129. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are taught by specialist mathematicians and benefit from their accurate instruction and very sound grasp of syllabus requirements. Positive teacher-student relationships stimulate learning. In pure modules, Year 13 students were able to perform advanced differentiation techniques with assurance and in statistics select appropriate probability distributions for problem-solving. Significant learning on vector equations of lines and planes took place in an excellently taught further mathematics lesson. Year 12 decision mathematics students were given comprehensive descriptions of a wide range of network situations and extensive discussion in a pure lesson enabled extended practical problems in differentiation to be solved using both graphical and analytical techniques.
130. Many students show very good mathematical skills and are on track for high grades. Those who experience more difficulty receive very good assistance both within and beyond class and very few discontinue mathematics at the end of Year 12. Regular assessment and constructive marking of assignments assist progress. Leadership and management are very good. Staff are enthusiastic and keen to develop standards and inspection evidence confirms continuing improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

131. Support provided enables students with lower mathematical skills to achieve in their other subjects. Higher-attaining mathematicians have little problem in transferring their skills elsewhere. Data analysis is well done in chemistry, in design and technology, in economics and in business study coursework. Evidence is that the progress of students is well supported by their mathematical capability.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Advanced level results in 2003 were in line with the national average, AS results were below.
- Standards of achievement are improving because students with good key skills are now responding well and the quality of teaching has improved. Achievement is now good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students remain over-dependent on teachers in many cases.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

132. Standards in the advanced level examination in 2003 were in line with the national average. The results at the end of Year 12 were not as good as they should have been. Recovery, from disappointing results in 2002, is under way.
133. Standards of achievement for the relatively small number of students in Year 13 are good. They have made good progress because the quality of the teaching has improved. The students organize their notes thoughtfully and well. They link theory and practical work well by following the example set by their teachers. They work with accurately prepared chemical reagents in a safe and conducive environment, for example, when monitoring the characteristic reactions of the transition metals. Resources and technical support are of very good quality. They confidently use computers for research. However, there is limited evidence in their notes of the presentations they have chosen to make.
134. Standards of achievement in Year 12 are good. The number of students has increased from nine to 13. They regard the provision as good. They are keen on the subject and are making good progress, for example, when getting to grips with the naming of a range of unusual organic compounds. Students with differing backgrounds and levels of confidence are given very good advice and they respond accordingly and staff support students with special educational needs well. The students do not refer sufficiently to their own notes to develop their ability to recall and use concepts previously learned and to become more independent as learners. As with Year 13 students, many have very high aspirations and very good attitudes.
135. Teaching and learning are good in both years. The two teachers complement each other well. They share the teaching in both year groups. Students know how well they are doing because of the clear focus on the requirements of the examination and the regular and accurate marking of test papers. The teachers' confidence to explain patterns and exceptions to the rule build confidence and encourage thoughtful responses. In one lesson the teacher compared everyday and academic concepts associated with words such as 'metallic' or 'oxidation,' so enabling the students to build on what they already knew. They were, in another lesson, given a good stake in the proceedings whilst working alongside the teachers. In theory lessons they were encouraged to adopt the role of teacher for short periods and to take turns in this. Confidence was somewhat lacking, however, when they were not given time enough to talk things through before being asked to explain orally. They remain over-dependent, in many cases, upon their teachers.
136. Numbers taking the subject are now increasing and standards are rising, despite a short period of staffing turbulence. Priorities to improve the provision are good. Leadership and management are good because time deadlines are being met and expertise is being shared. The students have positive attitudes and no regrets about choosing the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AVCE results in 2003 were well above the national average.
- Achievement is good in the current Years 12 and 13.
- Students' capability in evaluation, design documentation and testing is less well developed than their practical expertise.
- Teaching and learning is consistently good in lessons and over time very good and students have impressive technical skills in software handling.
- Leadership and management of the course are very good and this has led to the rapid rise in standards.

Commentary

137. The 2003 results for the AVCE ICT Single Award are well above the national average and there has been a brisk upward rise in the results in the last two years. The results achieved by girls are a little better than those of boys, especially at the highest grades. The achievement of both boys and girls is impressive with most students awarded results significantly higher than their predicted grade. All students in Year 13 last year successfully progressed onto further study in higher education.
138. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above course expectations and in line to match those of the previous year if their current progress is maintained. They achieve well and many demonstrate high technical skills in webpage design and construction for a driving school client which successfully incorporates fluency of construction and an understanding of the needs of the user. Lower attaining students, whilst achieving well as a result of very good levels of support from their teachers, are weaker in their capacity to evaluate and test their work from the perspective of the client. In Year 12 student achievement is very good and they produce work of a very high standard in designing multimedia presentations and authoring using a range of industry standard software. In common with their peers in Year 13, technical skills in designing multimedia presentations manipulating images, text, sound and video are impressive and the most successful meet the needs of their target audience effectively. Boys and girls achieve equally well as do the small number of students with identified special educational needs. A common weakness across both years lies in the documentation of the design and implementation process, in evaluation. The teachers are working hard to improve these aspects of the course requirements.
139. Teaching and learning are consistently good in lessons and over time are very good as shown by the impressive results and high student achievement. Teaching is very carefully matched to the demands of the course and staff deployed well to teach to their strengths and as a result the students achieve well. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and this helps them to model processes for the students and the use of the interactive whiteboard in lessons is effective in engaging their attention. Assessment is used very well to plot student progress and to plan lessons focused on improvement and as a result students are very clear what they have to do to achieve higher grades and how to do it. Learning resources are of a good quality and the provision for learning outside lessons is effective through access to the subject materials using the school intranet network. Students support each other well in lessons and to solve problems in relation to the practical tasks and are well motivated. They are increasingly independent learners, especially the higher attaining students, whilst others require a greater level of teacher support and guidance.
140. Leadership of ICT is very good and management is very effective. The subject benefits from a clear vision for development and strategies for improving teaching and learning. The teachers work well as a team and share their varied expertise and experience so that there is increasing consistency and continuity of practice. This has had a significant impact in raising standards quickly over the past two years.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

141. Students' ICT skills effectively contribute to the high standards they attain in other subjects, for example, they are used well in the vocational options of health and social care and leisure and tourism to improve presentation and accuracy of work portfolios.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average and students' achievement is very good.
- The popularity of history, as evidenced by the large numbers opting to study it.
- The very good teaching leads to very good learning in the current Years 12 and 13.

- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

143. Results at advanced level are well above the national average. In 2003 11 students gained the highest A or B grades and all of the 17 students entered passed. This represented very good achievement. This was even better than the above average advanced level results in 2002 when all the 11 students entered passed. At AS level in 2003 20 of the 31 students gained the highest A or B grades and all 31 passed. This represented very good achievement for these students. History has maintained its popularity as a subject with even higher numbers now, 25 students in the current Year 13 and 23 in Year 12. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work in these years confirms that the standards they are attaining are also well above those expected nationally and that this represents very good achievement for them all. Students demonstrate an increasing ability to analyse the past such as the Year 13 students who reached plausible conclusions on whether Britain experienced a 'Great Depression' in the years 1873 to 1896. Students are very committed and work very well independently both in lessons and on their personal investigations into such varied topics as Mao's Cultural Revolution or the Unification of Italy. They speak with enthusiasm about the different periods of British and European history they are studying and the way in which teachers still use the same variety of teaching methods that the students so enjoyed at GCSE. For example, some Year 12 students cited an interesting lesson where they debated who was the better Foreign Secretary, Castlereagh or Canning. Students are very clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve thanks to the detailed guidance they receive from teachers' marking. Significant numbers go on to study the subject in higher education.
144. The teaching of history is very good and based on a strong subject expertise and enthusiasm that is communicated to the students. Strong features of this are very good planning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson introducing a new economic history topic the teacher began by checking on students' understanding of the key terms before challenging the students to find the patterns in a set of economic statistics. The skilfully judged mix of support followed by the opportunity for independent work led to very good learning. Students had the confidence to work things out for themselves. The teachers plan very well for students with special educational needs. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, creating an atmosphere where students are confident to test out their own ideas and take risks. There is a strong oral and group work element in history lessons that serves to deepen students' understanding of the subject.
145. The leadership and management of history are very good. Teaching is underpinned by very good planning in the schemes of work with opportunities for overlaps between different options being well exploited. The teachers work well together as a team. The introduction of the new courses has been carefully managed with some good decisions and changes made in the light of early experience with some modules.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in advanced level in 2003 were above the national average.
- Last year's staffing difficulties have been resolved and students now make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Committed, imaginative teachers use a wide range of interactive methods to stimulate good learning but there is too little class discussion and debate.
- Good leadership and management by the recently appointed head of department are contributing to the rising standards.

Commentary

146. Advanced level results in 2003 were above the national average. The standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with those found nationally. Students' knowledge of facts, concepts and empirical sociology are strong and coursework is of a high standard. Their skills of comparison and evaluation are weaker. The achievement of students now in Year 13 is satisfactory. A shortage of specialist staff last year, though now resolved, has held their achievement back. Unaffected by this problem, the achievement of Year 12 students is good. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
147. Teaching and learning are good. A team of imaginative specialist teachers provides well-structured lessons with good pace. Their use of a wide range of teaching methods and resources stimulates learning, with good opportunities for collaborative paired work. Teachers have very good knowledge of the examination requirements and prepare students well to gain maximum marks. Probing interactive questioning enables students to link facts and concepts but sometimes lacks precision in comparing and contrasting sociological interpretations. Opportunities to consolidate learning through a final summary or plenary are sometimes rushed or missed and there are insufficient opportunities for class discussion and debate, thereby minimising students' opportunities to consolidate learning. The teachers work hard, offering ample opportunities for extra tuition outside lessons.
148. Student attitudes are good. They work conscientiously, collaborate well and appreciate the individual help they receive from their dedicated teachers. Assessment is good. Students' progress is tracked carefully, they have suitably challenging targets and extended essays are marked thoroughly. Students have a clear idea of what is required for their examinations and this has a positive impact on grades. Written feedback on other work is not consistently provided and the use of student self-assessment is in its infancy.
149. Leadership and management are good. There is a firm focus on continuous improvement with well-judged priorities. Since her appointment in April 2003 the head of department has gained an incisive awareness of strengths and weaknesses. Detailed evaluation of student performance is well used to identify areas that could be improved further. New members of staff benefit from a high level of attention and focused support. However, the monitoring of teaching and assessment is not consistent and there are insufficient opportunities to share good practice formally.
150. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The subject has become more popular, the AS course has been introduced and detailed schemes of work have been drawn up to guide teaching.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**; it is **good** in food technology.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Advanced level standards in systems and control were well above the national average in 2003; in food technology they were in line with the national average.
- Current attainment in food technology is above national expectations; in graphics it is below.
- Teaching is good in food technology; it is satisfactory in graphics.
- Leadership and management are good in food technology; they are satisfactory in graphics.

Commentary

151. Two courses were the focus of the inspection in design and technology: GCE AS level graphic products and food technology. Results and entries in the different courses in design and technology have varied greatly from year to year. In systems and control in 2003 at advanced level four of the students achieved pass grades at A-B and all the students gained pass grades. These results represent standards well above the national average. This course has been replaced in 2003 with graphic products as a direct result of changes in specialist staff. In food technology in 2003 at advanced level none of the four

students achieved pass grades at A-B but all the students attained pass grades. This represents standards in line with the national average and good achievement for these students on their results in the GCSE examinations.

152. Currently attainment on the two courses in Year 12 is variable. Attainment is higher in food technology where it is above national expectations than in graphics where it is below. This is partly due to the level of prior attainment in the subject that the students bring to their studies.
153. Students were generally enthusiastic about their course and in food technology they spoke highly of the teaching and level of individual support they received. Within the sixth form, students learn principally through a mixture of practical project work and taught theory sessions. In graphic products there is some evidence that students take risks when designing, but their understanding of materials technology is less well developed along with sketching techniques and this slows design fluency. Examples of naïve cut and paste drawings displayed a lack of understanding of rendering and or shading techniques. The impact of ICT is clearly evident in standards of work produced and in some instances depth of research. Good use is made of the digital camera to record not only outcomes but also stages of disassembly, for example, when designing a logo and gift associated with the launch of a new airline company. Good use was made of computer assisted designing, but unfortunately the principles of orthographic projection were not technically correct. Use of the Internet for research was well developed in food technology, for example students researching Quorn products. Students generally show independence in their work, however not all make suitable intellectual, physical and creative effort in producing their work and some folders have limited evidence of amount of work produced.
154. The quality of teaching and learning is variable. In food technology it is generally good, it was at best satisfactory in graphic products. Here there were some good features, but the lesson lacked sharpness and pace and the focus for the lesson was directed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. Generally there is good provision for students with special educational needs.
155. Leadership and management are good in food technology and satisfactory in graphic products. Here schemes of work are detailed but there is need to formalise planning between the teachers that deliver the course and ensure monitoring and assessment procedures are consistent in helping students identify targets to improve.
156. There was very little reference to A-level in the last inspection and any reference to progress would therefore prove of little value.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the department is very good.
- Current standards of attainment are in line with national expectations.
- Teaching is satisfactory.
- Management is good
- There is a lack of specialist teaching areas.
- Access to ICT facilities is limited.

Commentary

157. The new head of department, appointed in September 2003, is committed to raising standards and provides very good leadership for the subject. There were no advanced level music entries in 2003 and only two students at AS level, who gained a C and D grade. Standards seen during the inspection in both advanced and AS level classes are in line with national expectations.

158. Teaching overall is satisfactory and is shared between all departmental staff. In the best lessons, work was carefully planned and prepared which combined with very good subject knowledge, enabling good learning to take place. In the less successful lessons work was not prepared thoroughly and students tended to be passive. Opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning through presentations to others in the class were lost and work was not sufficiently tuned to individual needs.
159. Management of the department is good with teaching responsibilities well planned and managed between all departmental staff. There is very good support and guidance for students with thorough marking and useful feedback on work. Students' independent learning is promoted well in some lessons where research and enquiry is encouraged. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Teaching needs to be more systematically monitored to ensure consistently high quality teaching across the department. Students have many opportunities to perform and take part in the musical life of the school. In a recent concert, sixth form students were able to perform their solo, ensemble and their own compositions in front of an audience.
160. Accommodation is poor for the department generally and most lessons take place in the sixth form block where there is a lack of specialist equipment. The use of computers and access to listening and research resources are unsatisfactory.
161. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory due to these constraints.

Theatre studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at advanced level were well above average in 2003
- The achievement of current students in Year 12 and 13 is very good.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers provide significant opportunities for students to improve their drama skills and enrich their experience.
- Very good leadership and teamwork has brought about good improvement since the last inspection.
- The use of a mobile classroom for some lessons has a negative impact on learning.

Commentary

162. Advanced level results in 2002 were well above average. They were also well above average in 2003, when 75 per cent of students obtained grades in the range A/B. All students in the past two years have obtained at least a pass grade and achieved as well as or better than expected from their GCSE results.
163. For current Year 13 students, standards are above average and students are achieving very well. Students take responsibility for the direction and content of their work. They collaborate very well and make perceptive evaluations of their own and others' work. They adapt their presentations of Lorca and Ayckbourn texts well to meet the needs of an audience sitting 'in the round'. Though students understand the main emotional emphasis of their chosen sections, they miss some of the clues about character and relationships which come from understanding fully the subtleties and nuances of dialogue. Nevertheless, their performance skills are above average overall, representing very good achievement given students' often limited experience of drama when they begin the course. Their achievement is supported by the very effective use of group 'work books' in which progress over each unit is monitored and evaluated. Committed teachers provide opportunities for frequent after-school and weekend rehearsals to support achievement and raise standards. In Year 12 standards are also above average, again representing very good achievement at this stage of their course given the very mixed standards on entry. Students with special educational needs are achieving equally as well as others and benefiting from opportunities such as taking part in a recent successful production of Brecht's 'Caucasian Chalk Circle'.
164. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements and dramatic theory and methods and convey these to students with enthusiasm, energy and pace. They have high expectations that students will become independent learners and structure lessons very well to allow students time to work independently and to reflect on and improve their work. They give up much of their own time to support students' achievement. As a result students apply themselves very

well and make very good progress. As very good models themselves, teachers develop performance and production skills very well. They could, however, give more emphasis to interpretation of texts.

165. Curriculum leadership is very good, with clear direction and very good teamwork. There are very good opportunities for enrichment through theatre visits, visiting theatre companies, workshops and productions. The drama studio provides flexible, well-equipped accommodation, but the mobile classroom provided for some lessons is not satisfactory as it affects students' learning. The cramped, shabby and ageing building restricts practical responses and illustration. Despite this limitation there has been good improvement since the last inspection because results are higher, teaching quality is better and students continue to achieve very well.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure and recreation

Provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Students have good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and work well together.
- Assessment is formative and contributes to improving standards for individual students.
- Leadership is satisfactory and management is good.
- Recruitment, retention, gender balance and small class size issues have not yet been rectified.

Commentary

166. Standards for the seven students who were the first to complete the AVCE leisure and recreation single award course in 2003 were above average. Students achieved as well as they did in their other subjects. Their achievement was good relative to their results at GCSE. They achieved above their expected levels of attainment. The attainment of the boys was better than that found nationally. The five students who are preparing for AVCE this year are making good progress from a below average overall standard at GCSE. They are currently achieving above their target grades.
167. Teaching is good on the evidence of one class observed in Year 12 studying AVCE leisure and recreation, together with analysis of the students' work and interim results. Lessons are well planned and teachers are enthusiastic about teaching the course and students appreciate this. Students have good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning particularly in organising a live public event. Independent study standards are satisfactory and good use is made of ICT in lessons and in home study. Students work with confidence individually and co-operate very well in group activities. Communication skills are good and reflect the higher grades all students attained in English at GCSE. Opportunities to develop mathematical skills are not sufficiently exploited. Assessment is well organised and closely focused on examination criteria. Marking is of good quality, both valuing the work students have done and giving good guidance on raising standards. Teachers know students' needs well, monitor their work carefully in lessons and give good individual teaching that improves the attainment of all students, including those who experience difficulties with learning. Students work and behave very well in a purposeful, quiet working atmosphere. Students appreciate the practical elements of the course and comment on its relevance to their interests and their plans for the future.
168. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory but issues of recruitment and gender imbalance have not been tackled. Classes are too small to represent good value in the use of teaching time. Organisation and management of the course are good. Students express high levels of satisfaction with their choice of course. They are very pleased with the content and teaching of the course and appreciate its practical elements. They see it as a good continuation of

GNVQ studies and as complementary to courses and interests in physical education and business. Some feel they need more help with managing their workload.

169. Leisure and recreation was not reported at the previous inspection. Standards are similar year on year, but are subject to changes in the composition of the small teaching groups involved, so no clear trend of improvement is apparent.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Students achieve very well in response to very good teaching.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

170. The 2003 advanced level results for students in Year 13 were well above average, with students gaining a high percentage of A/B grades. The inspection confirmed that standards in Year 13 are well above course expectations, with very good levels of knowledge and understanding. Students also show a very good capacity to research and write up extended topics, for example, for their personal exercise programmes.
171. Students join the sixth form course with above average standards. They build on this very successfully and all students achieve very well. In addition to increasing their knowledge and understanding, they make very good progress in developing their ability to discuss their work confidently and articulately. Students' attitudes are very good. They enjoy the subject, work hard and appreciate opportunities for discussion.
172. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively, in particular to promote active learning and independent thought by students. This was particularly evident, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on sport and society, in which the teacher was careful to involve all students in discussion, with the result that a vigorous debate led to clear gains in understanding of the role of government in sport. Assessment is used effectively, for example, to show students how to meet assessment criteria effectively in their examination work, as seen in a Year 12 lesson.
173. Leadership and management are very good. There is detailed review of the provision and also very good monitoring of standards and progress, with a clear vision of how the subject can progress further. The department benefits from good assessment policies and the input of committed subject specialists who have formed excellent working relationships with students. Standards are as high as at the time of the previous OFSTED inspection. There is too little other evidence available to enable a judgement to be made on overall improvement since then, although the department clearly retains its successful status.

BUSINESS

Business studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results on both the AVCE and AS courses in 2003 were above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is very good and so students achieve very well.
- The teachers have strong subject expertise.
- There is insufficient development of business links for students on the advanced level course.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

174. Of the 38 students entered for the AVCE qualification in 2003, 26 per cent of them gained the higher grades of A and B. Around 47 per cent of the students who sat the advanced level gained the same grades. Both results are above the national average. The AVCE results are the best ever for the department.
175. The standards of attainment seen during the inspection are broadly above the course expectations. Students can talk with confidence about many aspects of business such as financial planning, business legislation, interest rates and 'e' commerce. Occasionally a small number of students need prompting to remember some of their learning. The students are good at independent learning and there is a good range of written work in their folders. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Not many girls opt to take business studies as a subject. Due to the demands made on them in the teaching, the achievement of the students is very good.
176. Overall the teaching is very good. All lessons are well prepared and a very good range of activities are used to put across the learning. The objectives of the lessons are made very clear to the students and so they make significant progress in the time available. The most significant aspect of the teaching is the strength of subject expertise that the teachers demonstrate. This enables them to present the learning with confidence and flair. It also enables them to give highly intelligent one-to-one support in many of the lessons. High quality assignments are set for the students. Contacts with the world of work are characteristic of the learning in the AVCE courses. This is insufficiently developed in the advanced level courses. ICT is used in some of the teaching but could be developed further. Occasionally not enough is done to help a wider range of students participate in the activities of the lesson. The teaching makes significant demands on the students and so they make very good progress from the levels at which they started the course.
177. The leadership and management are very good. The accommodation is very good. The staffing and resources are very good. Much work has been done developing schemes of work and programmes of study. No particular issues were raised at the last inspection. The progress since then has been very good with the introduction of an advanced level course and very good achievement in the AVCE course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2003 were above the national average at advanced level and in line with national GNVQ results.
- Student achievement is good in the AVCE course and very good in the GNVQ course.
- The quality of learning is very good because of good teaching and well-motivated independent learning.
- The subject is very well led and teachers have used their extensive experience to hone the courses.

Commentary

178. The school offers the single-award Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) at advanced level, and the full GNVQ at intermediate level. Students' prior attainment is in line with the national average for the former and below average for the latter. In 2003 VCE results were above the national average while GNVQ results were in line with results nationally. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in both courses, reflecting good achievement among VCE students and very good achievement by GNVQ students. There are no boys taking either course at present and students' knowledge is particularly strong in relation to child development and care. Those with special needs or whose mother tongue is not English achieve very well in the GNVQ course.
179. Teaching is good and learning is very good. The teachers are very experienced and have used this knowledge to refine and improve the way they teach to very good effect. Lessons have a clear structure, most including individualised questioning and personal guidance. The teachers have intimate knowledge of each individual's capabilities and current progress and they set high expectations. Communication skills are enhanced and students have good opportunities to use ICT for word processing and Internet enquiry. Lessons lack variety though, with insufficient interactive whole-class teaching and too little collaborative group work. Students with special educational needs and whose mother tongue is not English enjoy particularly good support
180. Student attitudes are very good and they are set challenging homework tasks. They work very hard, for much of the time independently and extract maximum benefit from the teaching. As a result, the quality of learning is even higher than the quality of teaching. They are very positive about the subject and appreciate the informed personal help they receive.
181. Assessment is very good and further boosts students' learning. Work in progress is marked thoroughly, offering detailed suggestions for improvement. Students have very good understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve. Links with a wide range of care organisations in the community are exploited to full effect and opportunities for learning outside the classroom are very good.
182. Leadership is very good. The subject leader is ambitious for students and provides a very good role model. Management is good. Performance data are scrutinised, close teamwork is evident and the subject is well organised. However monitoring and other procedures for ensuring the consistency of teaching are underdeveloped.
183. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Results have risen, the subject has become more popular and teaching is more confident.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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