

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WEST BRIDGFORD SCHOOL

West Bridgford

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122859

Headteacher: Mr D. Cokeham

Lead inspector: Mr D. Cox

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th January 2004

Inspection number: 259271

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1413
School address:	The West Bridgford School Loughborough Road West Bridgford Nottingham Nottinghamshire
Postcode:	NG2 7FA
Telephone number:	0115 9744488
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Pidgeon
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The West Bridgford School is larger than most other secondary schools and educates boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. It is set in West Bridgford, close to the southern edge of the City of Nottingham. The popularity of the school has resulted in West Bridgford being over-subscribed for a number of years. The school population reflects a wide socio-economic background but is above average overall. There are 1413 students on roll of which 197 are in the sixth form. These numbers represent an increase on those quoted in the previous report. The sixth form is larger than most other sixth forms.

The percentage of students' mother tongue not/believed not to be English is higher than in most other schools. There is additional support for 22 students whose first language is not English. There are three students who are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is well below average; the percentage of students that have statements of special educational need is below average. Most of these are on the register for moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia, autism, social and emotional and behavioural needs.

Overall, attainment on entry is above average at Year 7 and on entry to the sixth form is also above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10297	D. Cox	Lead inspector	
13395	J. Illingworth	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics.
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English. English as an additional language (EAL).
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science. Chemistry.
11933	D. Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology.
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design.
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form.
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism. Geography in the sixth form.
19206	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages.
18846	P. Priest	Team inspector	Music.
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education.
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education. Citizenship.
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs. English in the sixth form.
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Geography.
28199	P. Lawley	Team inspector	Psychology.
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History.

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good standard of education and provides good value for money. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Teaching, leadership and students' achievement are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form because of the consistently good teaching they receive.
- Students' attitudes are good; there is a strong work ethic and students are keen to learn.
- The school is well led and managed, with a strong focus on improving standards.
- Standards are reduced in practical subjects by the lack of curriculum time available in Years 10 and 11. Tutor times are not used well enough and there are not enough vocational courses to allow a clear progression for some students to move seamlessly from Year 11 into the sixth form.
- There is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students. This has resulted in students being confused when they try to compare how well they are doing in their different subjects.
- Students underachieve in Year 11 in leisure and tourism because of unsatisfactory teaching.

Progress has been good since the previous inspection. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have improved in line with the national trend. Results at A-level have improved from being below average to being well above average. Since the previous inspection, many new management systems have been successfully introduced. The library is now of very good quality. National Curriculum requirements are now met fully and the use of ICT is a strength. However, there is still work to be done on the use of assessment data to evaluate the progress of students.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The C in the box above indicates that compared to similar schools, students' achievement in GCSE examinations was satisfactory compared to their results in national tests at the end of Year 9.

Students' achievement is good. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form; their achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9; standards are again well above average by the end of Year 11 and by the end of Year 13. Across the curriculum, standards of literacy are above average. Many students are articulate and have a good understanding of what they read. Standards of numeracy are above average. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall. The achievement of the very highest attainers and talented students is good. The school admits very few students who are at the early stages of learning English. However, those students who need it are provided with a very good quality of support and so make rapid progress.

Students' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students' good attitudes to learning make a positive contribution to their achievement. Good behaviour in lessons and around the school creates an environment that is conducive to learning. Attendance is very good and enhances students' learning and achievement. Provision for students' moral development is very good and social development is good. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

- **The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching is good.** The major strength of the teaching is the high level of consistency in the quality of teaching that students experience, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This enables students to learn quickly and achieve well overall. In Years 10 and 11, teaching, whilst satisfactory, does not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and is not structured as tightly as it is for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in leisure and tourism in Year 11 because teaching lacks challenge.

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school is intent on providing a broad curriculum in which all students receive their statutory entitlement and is entirely successful in its efforts. However, standards are reduced in practical subjects by the lack of time available in Years 10 and 11. Tutor times are not used well and there are not enough vocational courses to allow a clear progression for some students to move seamlessly from Year 11 into the sixth form. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has sufficient resources: a good match of teachers to the curriculum and good accommodation. The quality of support and guidance for students is good. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and there are good links with the community. It has good and effective links with other schools, and with colleges and universities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good. Governance is good.

The headteacher, together with the leadership team, provides good leadership and management. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. However, centralised assessment systems are not yet available to track students' achievements. Governance of the school is good because governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, governors do not ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship. The sixth form is well led and managed.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents are very interested in students' learning and are keen for them to do well. Their high aspirations influence their children, who come to school expecting to learn and to work hard. A substantial minority of parents feel inadequately informed about students' progress. Inspectors accept that they have some valid grounds for their concerns. The annual written reports on progress, although satisfactory, have weaknesses. The inspection's survey of students' views highlighted the large minority of sixth formers who feel that there is no adult in the school who knows them well. However, this was not supported by discussions with students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Improve the curriculum by:

- increasing the length of the taught week;

- improving the use of tutor time;
- providing more vocational courses for students aged 14 to 19.
- Improve students' achievement in leisure and tourism in Year 11.
- Provide better centralised tracking systems for monitoring students' achievement and progress.
- Improve the achievement of students in graphics in the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good and its cost-effectiveness is good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Examination results have risen significantly since the previous inspection report.
- Students achieve very well in English, geography and psychology. Results in A-level psychology are very high and are in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
- There is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students.
- Students' achievement in graphics is satisfactory compared to achievement being at least good in most other subjects.
- There are not enough vocational courses to allow a clear progression for some students to move seamlessly from Year 11 into the sixth form.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is very good . In 2002, results at A-level were well above average. Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . In 2002, results at A-level were above average. Students achieve well because of the good teaching.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . In 2002, results at A-level were above average. Students achieve well because of the good teaching.
Humanities	Provision in geography is very good . Very good teaching results in students achieving very well. The A-level results in 2002 were well above average. Provision in history is good . Good teaching results in students achieving well. The A-level results in 2002 were well above average. Provision in psychology is very good . Very good teaching results in students achieving very well. The A-level results in 2002 were very high.
Engineering, design and manufacturing	Provision in graphics is satisfactory . In 2002, results at A-level were above average but fell significantly in 2003, students did as well in graphics as they did their other subjects. Students' achievement is satisfactory because of satisfactory teaching.
ICT	Provision in ICT is good . In 2002, results at A-level were above average. Students achieve well because of the good teaching.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school gives good support and guidance to students in the sixth form, and has satisfactory procedures for seeking out and acting on their views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Examination results at A-level have risen from below average to well above average since the previous inspection report. The head of sixth form provides good support for students. The monitoring of students' performance is

satisfactory; however, there is not enough emphasis on academic tutoring; students do not always know how well they are doing in their different subjects. Governors have a good grasp of issues relating to the sixth form. Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties in providing a daily act of collective worship.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The inspection's survey of students' views highlighted the large minority of sixth formers who feel that there is no adult in the school who knows them well. However, this was not supported by discussions with students. The survey also shows Year 13 have a more favourable opinion of the quality of support and guidance than Year 12. Older students with more experience of the sixth form say that members of staff are approachable, and are very supportive over applications to universities. They also say that everyone receives good information and advice on careers and university courses. The inspection team has therefore concluded that the school helps sixth form students to make well-informed choices about their future.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The vast majority of students join the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment that are above average and by the time they leave Year 11 their standards are well above average; students achieve well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science are well above average. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching they receive.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall.
- Students are articulate and confident speakers.
- Whilst students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, it is not as good as that seen in Years 7 to 9.
- Students underachieve in Year 11 in leisure and tourism because of unsatisfactory teaching.

Commentary

Main school

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science and history. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of physical education, art and design and citizenship where they are average. Students achieve well in all subjects with the exception of design and technology, modern foreign languages, art and design and citizenship where achievement is satisfactory.
2. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science and geography. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of physical education, art and design, citizenship and leisure and tourism where standards are average. Students achieve very well in geography and well in science and music. They achieve satisfactorily in all other subjects with the exception of leisure and tourism where achievement is unsatisfactory.
3. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching they receive. Students' good attitudes also make a positive contribution to their achievement. It is the consistency of students achieving well, particularly in English, mathematics and science, that enables them to attain well above average standards. Students achieve well because teaching is exciting and incorporates a range of very really interesting topics that ensure students are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning.
4. In Years 10 and 11, there are two main reasons why students' achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Firstly, the amount of time that students spend in lessons is far below the national average and this leads to problems in some subjects. In design and technology and physical education, for example, there is not enough time to develop the practical aspects of students' skills so, despite good teaching, students' achievement is only satisfactory. Secondly, teaching, whilst satisfactory, does not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and is not structured as tightly as that for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well.

5. Students underachieve in leisure and tourism in Year 11 because teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not challenge students enough; the quality of written work is not monitored closely so that the standards reached are not high enough. The poor attitudes to learning of a minority of students are not always managed well enough and this leads to students' underachievement.
6. Standards of literacy are above average. Most students are articulate and confident speakers. Most students read with good understanding and are able to find information using appropriate reference materials. Most higher attainers have a particularly wide taste in their personal reading. Most students can express themselves clearly and accurately in writing. Standards of numeracy are above average.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers provide suitable work for students, and learning support assistants give well-focused support. The school admits very few students who are at the early stages of learning English. However, those students who need it are provided with very good quality support and so make rapid progress. Every effort is also made to provide personal support and to help students to understand British culture, which in some instances is strange to them. Students who are gifted and talented also achieve well.

The school set and met challenging targets for improvement in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.4 (36.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.7 (38.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	37.9 (36.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 252 students 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 students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	75 (71)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	42.0 (34.7)	41.9 (34.7)

There were 233 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Students' achievement in Year 9 was very good given their results when they were in Year 6. The trend in results is in line with the national trend.
- Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and students achieved satisfactorily given their standards at the end of Year 9. The trend in results is in line with the national trend.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with above average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 13, standards are well above average and students achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students achieve very well in English, geography and psychology as a result of the very good teaching they receive.
- Examination results have risen significantly since the previous inspection report.
- Results in A-level psychology are very high and are in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
- Achievement in graphics is satisfactory compared to achievement being at least good in all other subjects inspected in detail.

Commentary

8. In the subjects inspected in detail, students attain very highly in psychology, and well above average in English, mathematics, chemistry, geography and history. Standards are above average in ICT and average in graphics. Students achieve very well in English, geography and psychology. They achieve well in mathematics, chemistry, ICT and history. Achievement is satisfactory in graphics.
9. Students achieve very well in English, geography and psychology because of the very good teaching they receive. Most students demonstrate well above average investigative skills, and they become confident independent learners who express themselves well in writing. Achievement is satisfactory in graphics because there is little sense of urgency being instilled in the students.

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	99.1	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	45.7	39.4
Average point score per student	345.1	263.3

There were 89 students in the year group.

National comparisons for 2003 were not available at the time of the inspection.

- Results overall in the 2002 A-level examinations were well above average with both males and females attaining similar results. Students achieved well.
- Results have risen significantly since the previous inspection report, from below average to well above average. Results in 2003 are similar.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to school and behaviour are good. Their attendance and punctuality are very good. These strengths make a positive contribution to their achievement. Sixth form students have good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Their attendance is good and their punctuality is satisfactory. The personal development of students and sixth form students is good, in line with the quality of school's overall arrangements for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students and sixth form students want to learn and to achieve well, and their positive attitudes enhance their achievement.
- There is very good provision for moral development and good provision for social development.
- Provision for the moral and social development of sixth form students is good.
- Relationships between students and between students and adults in the school are very good.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- There are missed opportunities to promote students' spiritual development
- Some sixth form students have a relaxed attitude to punctuality, and procedures for registering their attendance at school lack rigour

Commentary

Main school

10. Students' attendance and punctuality are very good and they have good attitudes to learning. They like school and enjoy participating in lessons and extra-curricular activities. They respond very positively to teaching that is intellectually stimulating. They concentrate, work hard and achieve well. On occasions, a minority of students lose interest in lessons and become easily distracted. Some lower attaining individuals also fail to take enough care over their homework. However, students who have special educational needs are usually positive about their learning. In general, attitudes depend on the quality of teaching rather than students' abilities. Lower attaining groups work well and develop their independence and confidence when they are very well taught. In contrast, some of the higher attaining students become inattentive and chatty in lessons that lack adequate pace and challenge.
11. Overall behaviour is good. The majority of students behave very well in lessons, and this helps to create a good environment for learning. Behaviour around the school is also good. Students are generally orderly and polite, and have very good relationships with one another and members of staff. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed and friendly. There are occasional lapses in standards of conduct. When they occur in lessons, they are usually related to unsatisfactory teaching. The school has effective procedures for dealing with poor behaviour and for preventing students who misbehave from disrupting the learning of their peers. The school uses exclusion for valid reasons and to good effect. The number of students who are excluded on more than one occasion is relatively small. The school's rate of exclusion is in line with the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.2
National data (secondary)	7.2	National data (secondary)	1.1

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

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1064	71	1
White – any other White background	48		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8		
Mixed – White and Asian	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	67	2	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	42	4	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	
Black or Black British – African	2	1	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18		
Chinese	16		
Any other ethnic group	30		
No ethnic group recorded	96	1	

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

12. The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual and cultural development of the students. Provision for their social development is good, and for their moral development it is very good. In Years 7 to 9, there are good opportunities for reflection and spiritual development in religious education. In Years 10 and 11, the pressure of time is resulting in a lack of opportunity for students to reflect on ultimate questions about themselves and the world around them. The school's focus on examinations in Years 10 and 11 is resulting in many missed opportunities for students to reflect and wonder about what they learn. The assemblies that marked holocaust day were sensitive and students were clearly moved by them. However, assemblies do not generally include opportunities for reflection or mark key religious festivals of any of the faiths represented throughout the school, and there is little use of prayer.
13. The moral development of students is very good. Students have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. In many subjects contemporary moral issues are discussed, and students are well aware of the standards expected by the school. Many students spend their free time supporting younger students in the paired reading scheme, or as peer mentors or in support of sports teams as well as raising funds for those in need.
14. With the opening of the sixth form block, the school has been able to develop further social areas around the school for younger students. This provides good opportunities for them to socialise and to develop a group identity. The anti-bullying campaign in Year 7 and the use of group and paired work in many subject areas are enabling them to develop good social skills and the atmosphere around the school is relaxed and friendly. Opportunities for development

through leadership, such as through the school council or through the links with the Youth Parliament, are not yet fully exploited.

15. Provision for the cultural development of students is satisfactory. They receive very good opportunities through the range of musical opportunities in school, and there are regular visits to concerts and 'Opera North' when it visits the area. When school performances of drama and music take place, a higher than normal number of students attend, demonstrating a general appreciation of the arts. The 'One World Assembly' for Years 7 and 8 was a good opportunity and enjoyed by many.

Sixth form

16. Students have good attitudes to school. They are glad that they stayed on in the sixth form and enjoy their chosen courses of study. In most lessons, students show high levels of motivation and concentration. They rise to a challenge, use higher thinking skills, and are willing to persist with difficult tasks. However, some members of Year 12 do not always complete the homework that they are asked to do. Some students also have a casual attitude to punctuality which procedures for registering attendance in the sixth form fail to address. The system that is currently in operation lacks rigour and does not create high expectations regarding time keeping.
17. Students' behaviour is very good and their personal development is good. They have very good relationships with members of staff, with younger students, and with one another.
18. Provision for the spiritual and cultural development of students is satisfactory. Provision for their moral and social development is good. The new sixth form block is enabling students to form a clear identity as senior students in the school. Relationships in the sixth form are positive. A good example of this was when all students were able to combine caring with sociability when raising money for charity by participating in a school bowling event. They take regular responsibility for the welfare of younger students through their contributions to the various clubs and sports activities, and in the paired reading and mentoring schemes that enable them to contribute to the work of the school. Many sixth form students support the extra-curricular music groups of the school as performers and as leaders, and act as good role models for younger students. The sixth form council members take on much responsibility for the extra-curricular activities of their peers, whether planning for the 'Leavers' Ball' or raising funds for charity. They have good opportunities to develop their leadership skills and confidence. Other students have fewer opportunities, however: some develop these skills through the 'Young Enterprise' groups or through individual issues that they identify. There is no system, however, to promote the personal development of all students through planned exposure to the arts or through the development of leadership and confidence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The quality of support and guidance for students is good and has a positive effect on academic achievement and personal development.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form; teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of assessment of students' work is satisfactory.

Main school

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good within the support department.
- In Years 10 and 11, teaching prepares students well for tests and examinations.
- Teaching is very good in geography and, consequently, students achieve very well.
- In Year 11, teaching is unsatisfactory in leisure and tourism and as a result, students underachieve.
- In Years 10 and 11, teaching, whilst satisfactory, does not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and is not structured as tightly as that for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well.
- There is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students. This has resulted in students being confused when they try to compare how well they are doing in their different subjects.

Commentary

19. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good in all subjects with the exception of art and design, modern foreign languages and citizenship where it is satisfactory.
20. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in geography, and good in science, design and technology, religious education, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects, with the exception of leisure and tourism where it is unsatisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 163 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1(1%)	34(20%)	70(43%)	51(31%)	6(4%)	1(1%)	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.

21. When teaching is most effective it is characterised by very good knowledge of the subject; which is used well to ask searching questions and stretch the students within lessons. Teachers plan their lessons very well. In the best lessons a quick starting activity energises students and gets them involved quickly. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and also how students should behave. In Years 7 to 9, students learn well because teaching is exciting and incorporates a range of really interesting topics that ensure students are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Learning is consolidated well at the end of the lesson and students are given time to reflect on what they have learnt.
22. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know the requirements of the examination syllabus well. They work hard to cram in enough information in a short space of time to ensure all students are able to take examinations at the end of the courses. An important strength of the teaching lies in the preparation of students for tests and examinations. Teachers provide well-planned revision activities, plenty of practice with examination questions and revision classes after school for those at risk of not achieving as well as they should. Students' books reflect very positive attitudes as they produce high quality work and assignments.
23. However, the low curriculum time and the necessary focus on examination preparation result in a range of teaching styles that does not engage all students as fully as in Years 7 to 9. Teaching, whilst satisfactory, does not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and is not

structured as tightly as that for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well. Learning is less successful where teachers dominate discussion and deliver information in order to cover the syllabus, rather than enabling students to investigate for themselves. Where tasks are undemanding higher attaining students underachieve and fail to become intellectually involved. Students generally complete the task, but do not consider the implications of the activity.

24. Occasionally, when teaching is unsatisfactory, as seen in leisure and tourism, teachers do not exercise effective discipline, students behave inappropriately and the learning of the whole class is disrupted. When the work lacks variety, or the lesson tends to be dominated by the teacher talking, students tend to lose interest and so learning is slow.
25. The quality of teaching and learning of students with special educational needs is good within the learning support department. Teachers know students very well and plan lessons which suit students' needs. They vary the tasks, involve students closely in their own learning, and have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Teachers' positive approach encourages students to try hard and they learn rapidly. In the Youth Awards and study skills lessons, teaching and learning are very good because teachers maintain a brisk pace, manage behaviour well, and give work which students see is relevant to their lives.
26. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Procedures for assessing the progress of students are good within most departments. In nearly all subjects, work is marked effectively and thoroughly, and students are made clearly aware of how their work might be improved. This helps students understand what they need to do to reach higher standards in examinations and to achieve well. However, there is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students and no whole-school assessment policy. There is too much inconsistency in the actual use of assessment to inform planning throughout the school and even within individual subjects. This has resulted in students being confused when they try to compare how well they are doing in their different subjects. However, the school is aware of this deficiency and is in the process of providing a new system. The reports to parents do not help to clarify the situation because attainment grades are not used consistently by subjects. The assessment of citizenship in Years 9 to 11 is unsatisfactory because teachers are not assessing the standards that students attain.
27. There are very good assessment procedures for students with special educational needs. The data is carefully recorded and is well used to set targets and plan work to help students improve.

Sixth form

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and as a result, students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good in English, geography and psychology and consequently, students achieve very well.
- Teaching is satisfactory in graphics whereas it is at least good in all other subjects inspected in detail.
- There is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students.

Commentary

28. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching is very good in English, geography and psychology. It is good in all other subjects with the exception of graphics where it is satisfactory.
29. Teachers know their subject very well. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the course requirements and students are aware of what they need to do to achieve a specific grade. When teaching is good, students are encouraged to participate in discussions. They respond well to questions and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways. Teachers plan well and lessons are well structured. They proceed with a brisk pace and allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage.
30. Whilst satisfactory, less effective teaching was seen in graphics where there is little sense of urgency being instilled in the students. Lessons start in a relaxed manner and carry on at a satisfactory pace, but rarely are students really stretched in terms of the effort they are putting into lessons because teachers are not pushing them to get the work done.
31. The quality of teachers' feedback on written work is satisfactory and provides sound guidance to students on how to improve. Students value the oral feedback and discussion that follow the written assessment of their work.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a good match of teachers to its needs, good accommodation and sufficient resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a very strong commitment to students being treated equally.
- Standards are reduced in practical subjects by the lack of time available.
- There are many opportunities for students, in all years, to attend extra clubs and activities.
- There are not enough vocational or work-related courses on offer.
- Tutor times are of little value, with many being a waste of time.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

Main school

32. The school is intent on providing a broad curriculum in which all students receive their statutory entitlement, and is entirely successful in its efforts. Students are taught a range of subjects, such as drama and a second foreign language, over and above the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9, and can choose from a wide range of different subjects in Years 10 and 11. However, the amount of time that students spend in lessons is far below the national average and this leads to problems in some subjects. In design and technology and physical education, for example, there is not enough time to develop the practical aspects of students' skills so, despite good teaching, the students' achievement is only satisfactory. Opportunities for spiritual development are reduced in Years 10 and 11 because of a lack of curriculum time.
33. Whilst the curriculum is matched well to the needs of more academic students, there are those who would benefit from following more vocational or work-related courses and there are not enough of these on offer. The school provides several activities for those students who are particularly gifted or talented; for example, in music, some high achievers choose to follow

GCSE in one year and achieve well. However, activities are not co-ordinated, so nobody has a clear idea of what the impact of these activities are in terms of the students' achievement.

34. The school provides a good range of extra activities outside of lessons. In particular, there is very good support for sport and for music. A great emphasis is placed on extra lessons to support examination classes, which are particularly important in subjects that do not have enough time during the normal week of lessons. One unusual, and highly effective strategy, is the way that the school does not allow study leave for students who have not made enough progress on their coursework.
35. The provision for students with special educational needs is good overall. It is good in the learning support department and in Years 7 to 9, but satisfactory for students in Years 10 to 11. This is because the work does not always suit students' needs in lessons for older students. In the learning support department, there is a wide range of support outside lesson times to help students improve reading, spelling and number work. In lesson time, the small literacy groups in Years 8 and 9 focus clearly on helping students to read, write and spell better. In Years 10 and 11, the Youth Awards and study skills courses are well matched to students' needs and are a very good preparation for life after school. Individual education plans provide very good support for students' learning. Teaching assistants and specialist learning support teachers are expert at helping students learn better in class and boosting their confidence. They work very well as a team, giving generously of their time outside lessons to enable students to use the department's resources.
36. The school provides specific lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE); these are planned and taught well and are highly regarded by students. A strength of the school's provision is in the very good guidance that students receive on careers. However, students view tutor times and assemblies as of little value; they are correct in their views on tutor time, where very little happens. Assemblies do not provide an act of worship.
37. There is a good match of teachers to meet the curricular needs of subjects so that students benefit from being taught by appropriate specialist teachers. There is a similar good match of support staff so that students with special educational needs are supported well.
38. The library was judged to be ineffective at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time a new librarian has been appointed and a very positive transformation has taken place. The library is now very well organised and managed. It is used well by subjects and very good use is made of the resources by students.
39. Accommodation was judged to be unsatisfactory, and having a detrimental impact on students' achievement, in the previous inspection report. The school has worked hard to address the deficiencies and the quality of accommodation is now good. A new sixth form block was opened in January 2004 meaning not only much improved provision for post-16 students, but also more room for development of better provision in the main school. A very full and prioritised programme of renovation, innovation and vigorous fund-raising has been a feature of buildings development planning, especially since the appointment of a business manager.

Sixth form

The school provides a range of courses, at different levels, that are suitable for the students staying on to the sixth form. The curriculum meets the requirement to teach religious education, but there are not enough vocational courses to allow a clear progression for some students to move seamlessly from Year 11 into the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of its students and sixth form students. They receive good support and guidance, and provision for their welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to seek and act on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students and sixth form students receive good personal guidance from members of staff who know them well as individuals.
- Peer mentoring is a strength of the school's arrangements for the care and support of younger students.
- The programme of PSHE gives students good guidance and is valued by them.
- There are very good arrangements for careers guidance.
- Sixth form students receive good personal support and guidance regarding courses at universities and colleges.
- The role of tutors in academic and personal monitoring is underdeveloped.
- Registration periods are not used effectively for support and guidance to students.

Commentary

Main school

40. Students receive good pastoral care from their first days in school to the time that they leave. They are given effective support and guidance when they most need it, such as their transfer between key stages of their education. The school makes good arrangements for the induction of students into Year 7, who settle quickly into school routines as a result. Older students get good guidance on their choice of GCSE subjects and on the courses that are open to them after Year 11. They get the benefit of the school's very good provision for careers guidance. Every student in Year 11 gets a one-to-one interview with an adviser from the careers service or with a member of staff.
41. Students have good access to well-informed sources of guidance on personal problems. The system of pastoral teams, who as far as possible stay with the same student groups from Year 7 to Year 11, provides for good continuity of care. It also enables members of staff and students to develop mutual trust and understanding. In discussions with inspectors, students mentioned form tutors and heads of year as people who could help them with worries and problems. The school provides a good choice of sources of advice, so that all students have someone to whom they can turn for support. They can, if they wish, consult the school counsellor or specially trained older students, known as peer mentors. Younger students in particular see the mentors as an appropriate and effective source of guidance on bullying.
42. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development. Its programme of PSHE covers topics such as sex and drugs education and citizenship effectively, and gives students sufficient knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their lifestyles. Students of all ages value PSHE lessons, saying that they find them both interesting and helpful. In contrast, morning registrations and tutorials make little contribution to students' personal development. These sessions are not used effectively for support and guidance or for interaction between tutors and students. In the lower school there are some good formal systems for assessing and monitoring personal development. These procedures have not yet been introduced to other year groups, where monitoring of students' personal development is less formal and more dependent on teachers' good knowledge of students as individuals.

43. Provision of guidance to students on their academic progress is satisfactory overall. However, there is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students and no whole-school assessment policy. The role of tutors in academic monitoring is underdeveloped, as the school acknowledges. As a result, students' understanding of their own learning is uneven; students are not always aware of what they need to do to improve.

Sixth form

44. The quality of pastoral care in the sixth form is good and makes a positive contribution to students' welfare and academic achievements. Students receive effective support during the transition from the main school to the sixth form. In general they are well prepared and have realistic expectations about the amount and standard of work that will be expected of them. During their time in the sixth form, they continue to get satisfactory guidance on their academic progress through regular reviews and reports. However, as is the case in the main school, there is no centralised system for co-ordinating assessment of students. The role of tutors in academic monitoring is underdeveloped. Pastoral support is organised well and delivered through a system of form tutors. The inspection's survey of students' views highlighted the large minority of sixth formers who feel that there is no adult in the school who knows them well. However, this was not supported by discussions with students. The survey also shows Year 13 have a more favourable opinion of the quality of support and guidance than Year 12. Older students with more experience of the sixth form say that members of staff are approachable, and are very supportive over applications to universities. They also say that everyone receives good information and advice on careers and university courses. The inspection team has therefore concluded that the school helps sixth form students to make well-informed choices about their future.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Its links with the community and with other schools are good and enhance students' welfare and progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents give good support to their children's learning.
- There is a very good partnership between the school and parents of students with special educational needs.
- The school has improved its partnership with parents by increasing opportunities for them to take part in consultations and decision making.
- Links with local primary schools are good and assist the transfer of pupils to secondary education.
- The school's good links with the community enrich the curriculum and extend students' opportunities for learning.
- The annual reports on the progress of sixth form students are good.
- In the main school, annual reports on progress, although adequate overall, do not rigorously analyse students' strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

Main school

45. Parents have high aspirations for their children, and this has a positive influence on students' attitudes to learning. They want to do well at school because their parents want them to learn and achieve well. Parents are keen to be involved in, and to encourage, their children's

learning. Nearly all parents attend consultation evenings in order to discuss their children's work with teachers. Parents give good support and make a valuable contribution to extra-curricular activities. For example, a significant number of parents are prepared to pay for students to have instrumental music tuition, while others actively support their children's participation in drama productions and sports events. Overall, parents' involvement with learning makes a valuable contribution to students' achievement.

46. The previous inspection report was critical of the quality of the partnership between the school and parents, saying that it was 'weak' and a matter of concern to both parties. The school has addressed the issue by introducing a number of measures that are designed to improve links with parents. The headteacher sends out 'Updates' in addition to the standard newsletter and holds drop-in surgeries each term. Parents have been invited to take part in working parties on major policy initiatives, such as revisions to the school's anti-bullying policy and the introduction of the peer mentoring scheme. The majority of parents are now satisfied with procedures for seeking out and acting on their views, although a large minority still have reservations on this point. In the view of the inspection team, there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection and the school's arrangement are now satisfactory.
47. The links between the learning support department and parents are very good. Parents support the annual reviews for their sons and daughters, and express confidence in the work of the department.
48. Information for parents is generally satisfactory and has some positive features. The school brochure contains many useful facts about the curriculum, the home/school partnership, links with the community and policies on behaviour, attendance and homework. Students' planners act as a good day-to-day source of information on what students are learning. However, a substantial minority of parents feel inadequately informed about students' progress. Inspectors accept that they have some valid grounds for their concerns. The annual written reports on progress, although satisfactory, have weaknesses. They do not contain rigorous analyses of students' strengths and weaknesses in the subjects of the curriculum. Therefore their potential for raising standards and helping parents to support help their children's learning is underdeveloped. The school is in the process of reviewing reports.
49. The school has an effective partnership with other schools and colleges. Members of staff work closely with local primary schools over the transfer of Year 6 pupils to secondary education. The partnership is enhanced by a number of good curricular links, for example, as in the case of physical education where the school sports co-ordinator has specific responsibility for promoting inter-school co-operation. There are excellent links over support for students who do not speak English. A member of staff spends much of her time in the primary schools working with these children, helping them to acquire the knowledge and skills that they need in order to access the curriculum.
50. There is a good partnership with the community that enriches the curriculum and enhances the school's provision for support, guidance and personal development. The school also benefits from effective links with local businesses, who provide sponsorship and take students on work experience placements in Year 11. The physical education department has well-developed contacts with local sports clubs, resulting in shared facilities and wider opportunities for students' learning.

Sixth form

51. Information on the progress of sixth form students is good. The quality of the written annual reports is good. Subject reports are much more informative in the sixth form than in the main

school. They give both parents and students a good picture of standards of attainment. They also provide the latter with useful guidance on where and how they can improve. The inclusion of students' self-assessment in the form of their records of achievement is a positive feature of the reports. Students in Year 12 are provided with the opportunity to take part in work experience.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

The quality of leadership and the effectiveness of management are good. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, together with the leadership team, has ensured that standards remain high and students achieve well.
- In ICT, very effective leadership is moving the department forward rapidly.
- The appointment of a business manager has had a very positive impact on the work of the school.
- There is a strong work ethic among staff and students.
- The leadership and management of leisure and tourism are unsatisfactory.
- Governors are not ensuring that all students have access to a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

52. The leadership of the headteacher since the previous inspection has been good. The headteacher's fundamental principles, which underpin the work of the school, are that all students are treated equally and that all will receive their statutory entitlement. The headteacher provides a strong sense of direction. There is a real ethic of work among staff and students; students come to school to learn. Within the school, staff share a common purpose of ensuring students achieve well.
53. The headteacher has been successful because he has the support of a good senior leadership team. In recent months, changes have been made to strengthen the team and, together, their skills and expertise complement one another. This team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Changes to the leadership team are enabling the introduction of systems that will have a greater focus on individual students and their performance. There is still some way to go in providing a whole-school approach to the academic tracking of students but the process has started.
54. The 1998 inspection report was critical of the leadership team. Since that time, the school has worked hard to introduce many new systems; the school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The appointment of a business manager has had a significant impact. Financial systems are now very good and the school is now providing good value for money. There is a much more coherent approach to school improvement planning and staff are more aware of how the school operates.
55. The school is organised efficiently. An example of this was seen during the inspection. Because of inclement weather, the school had to open late one morning; staff and students managed the situation very well and the school was fully operational by 10 a.m.
56. There are many examples of effective team work among staff. For example, in ICT, very effective leadership, supported by a strong technical team, has enabled the department to

move from a position of concern to one of the strongest departments in the school. However, the leadership and management of leisure and tourism are unsatisfactory. The co-ordination between college and school is not effective, particularly in the monitoring of the progress that students make on the course.

57. Leadership of learning support is very good. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall. Individual education plans are up to date and there is a clear direction for the work of the department.
58. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors work with the school in producing the school improvement plan. They keep a watchful eye on the budget and challenge school leaders appropriately. The governors are aware fully of the school's standing in the local community and that good achievement and high standards must be maintained. However, governors are not ensuring that all students have access to a daily act of collective worship.

Sixth form

The quality of leadership and management is good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Good support is provided for students by the head of sixth form.
- The role of tutors in academic and personal monitoring is underdeveloped.
- Governors are not ensuring that all students have access to a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

59. The sixth form is well led and managed. Examination results at A-level have risen from below average to well above average since the previous inspection report. The head of sixth form provides good support for students and leads a sound team of tutors. Many extra-curricular activities are arranged and students benefit greatly from these. The monitoring of students' performance is satisfactory; however, there is not enough emphasis on academic tutoring; students do not always know how well they are doing in their different subjects. Governors have a good grasp of issues relating to the sixth form. Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties in providing a daily act of collective worship.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4154715
Total expenditure	4149243
Expenditure per student	2938

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-19247
Balance carried forward to the next	-13775

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students' skills in speaking and listening are of a high standard.
- Lower attaining students have limited skills in presenting their ideas clearly and convincingly.

Commentary

Examination results

60. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average. In 2003, GCSE results in English and English literature were well above average.

Standards and achievement

61. Students' skills in speaking and listening are well above the national average and are a strength throughout Years 7 to 11. By the end of Year 9, students are confident, use a full vocabulary, can speak at length when it is appropriate to do so and are ready to challenge each other's ideas when they have good reason. Standards in reading are also high. Students understand what they read and have a good recall of literature they have studied. Most students are able to present their ideas clearly and effectively in writing and understand how to adapt their language for a range of different audiences.
62. In Years 10 and 11 students improve their skills at a rate that means their standards remain well above average. Most of the features found in the three earlier years are also found in Years 10 and 11. The majority of students are articulate, speak in turn, listen alertly and can debate issues in a considered and respectful manner. Standards in reading remain good, with many students being willing to offer a balanced opinion on the quality of what they have read. Many students produce well-structured, detailed essays, often of considerable length and on a diversity of topics. Higher attainers produce work of very high quality. Students are willing to carefully redraft their work so as to improve it. However, lower attaining students have limited skills in presenting their ideas clearly and convincingly, particularly when responding to literature.

Teaching and learning

63. When teaching is most effective, relevant, interesting resources are selected; they are introduced into the lesson at a stage which ensures that they add to the challenge of the work; the lesson includes plenty of variety and students understand what they are expected to achieve. When teachers' planning is of high quality and a series of tasks of increasing difficulty is set, and which also requires students to undertake their own research, their enthusiasm is aroused, they concentrate hard and learning is rapid. When the teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and can use this to probe students, particularly about what they have read, they think more deeply and develop their powers of discrimination and their capacity to debate. Much of the marking is of high quality and enables students to know what to do if they are to improve their standards. The majority of students behave very well in class, co-operate fully with their teachers and each other, and want to succeed.
64. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, teachers do not exercise effective discipline, students behave inappropriately and the learning of the whole class is disrupted. When the work lacks variety, or the lesson tends to be dominated by the teacher talking, students tend to lose interest and so learning is slow. In the less effective lessons, students are *told* to complete tasks: in the best lessons they are *shown how* to do so.

Leadership and management

65. The head of department has been effective in improving the achievement of higher attaining students. He has built a strong team approach. Progress since the previous inspection has been good; standards have improved and teaching is better.

Literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of literacy are above the national expectation. Most students are articulate and confident speakers and there are ample opportunities for them to further develop these skills in most subjects. Students learn and use subject-specific vocabulary. Most students read with good understanding and are able to find information using appropriate reference materials. Most higher attainers have a particularly wide taste in their personal reading. Most students can express themselves clearly and accurately in writing.
67. Though students are provided with a sound range of opportunities to use their skills in literacy across the curriculum, there is not enough systematic monitoring in all subjects to further raise standards.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average.
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection.	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and GCSE results have risen since the previous inspection, especially in German.
- Students behave well in lessons and show good attitudes to work.
- The curriculum allows for students to study two languages.
- A small minority of teaching lacks challenge and strategies to control behaviour.

Commentary

Examination results

68. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. Results in French have improved steadily since the previous inspection. Results in German have improved considerably but from a lower base.

Standards and achievement

69. Standards have risen since the time of the previous report. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Students with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students.
70. By the end of Year 9, students understand classroom instructions and respond to questions in the language being taught. They carry out conversations and make good attempts at correct pronunciation. Students read authentic passages and answer questions on them. In their written work, most students write short paragraphs from memory with accurate spelling and grammar.
71. By the end of Year 11, students carry out longer conversations with a number of exchanges and can vary their vocabulary to fit different situations. They write longer passages and use a range of tenses. Higher attaining students write at length and with a good vocabulary.

Teaching and learning

72. Teachers plan their lessons well and manage a range of resources efficiently. However, teachers do not always take account of the range of attainment found in most classes and this is one reason for achievement being satisfactory rather than good. In the vast majority of lessons the use of the language being taught is good. Teachers control their classes well and no time is lost because of poor behaviour. There are good assessment procedures in place but the use of assessment through marking is underdeveloped. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons lack challenge, and teachers speak too much English in the lessons and lack strong strategies to control behaviour. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' literacy development and a good contribution to learning with computers. Students generally behave well in lessons and show good attitudes to work.

Leadership and management

73. The curriculum is good and all students are able to study two languages, although few choose to study both for GCSE. The head of department has shown good leadership in moving the department forward since the previous inspection. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
- Assessment of students' learning and understanding is good and is used to inform planning and targets.
- The use of ICT in the teaching and learning of mathematics is minimal and does not fully assist the raising of achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

74. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and were an improvement on those of 2002. The GCSE results in 2003 were also well above average and were higher than those in 2002.

Standards and achievement

75. By the end of Year 9, student's numerical skills are above average. Higher attaining students can competently use graphical calculators to draw function graphs. The lower attainers can construct and measure angles accurately and describe them with the correct vocabulary. In Year 11, higher attaining students use correlation co-efficient analysis in their GCSE statistics coursework. The lower attainers can use scatter graphs to represent data in their coursework. In Year 10, higher attaining students work out mutually exclusive probability events. The middle attainers evaluate complex sequences of numbers using algebraic equations to find the sequence rule.

Teaching and learning

76. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. In the better lessons, usually in Years 7 to 9, lessons are well structured and students respond well to this and make gains in their learning. However, more challenge could be built into all lessons for individual higher attaining students to achieve their potential. Only in the better lessons do teachers share, where appropriate, their planning and lesson objectives with the students. Where this happens, students understand the relevance of their learning and the achievements to be made. In one Year 8 class on linear formulae, students' skills of independent and collaborative learning were clear. After working through tasks individually, the students could clearly demonstrate their understanding to their partners and to the rest of the class. In this lesson, the teacher also insisted students relay to him their understanding. This allowed the teacher to see who was achieving and who needed support. This student self-evaluation of learning is not a common feature of lessons in Years 10 and 11. In one low attaining Year 10 class, literacy skills were challenged as the teacher insisted on students, when being dismissed from the

room, explaining a key word used in the lesson. Homework is provided; however, the recording and completion of the work are inconsistent. Diagnostic comments are evident in teachers' marking, though incorrect mathematical spellings are not always corrected.

Leadership and management

77. Good management results in an efficient cohesive department, with clearly delegated roles. Good planning and development take place to drive the department forward. Assessment of students' learning and understanding is good and is used to inform planning and targets. Monitoring of teaching takes place with written feedback and targets set for teachers. However, schemes of work do not fully support teaching or challenge students sufficiently. They make little mention of the use of ICT, apparent by its absence in lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. Standards of numeracy are above the national expectation. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill in all subjects is satisfactory. The mathematics department has delivered a training session to other subjects on the teaching and learning of mathematics. However, due to the lack of a numeracy co-ordinator, students' experiences in primary school of the strategy are not extended nor is there further development or support for other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all levels of attainment do better in science than might be expected from their test results when they entered the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge; they manage students well so that there is a good atmosphere for learning.
- The department's system of using booklets for each topic in Years 10 and 11 has several weaknesses and, for many students, limits their learning.

Commentary

Examination results

79. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average, continuing the marked upward trend in these results. Boys do better than girls in these tests. Results in the 2003 GCSE science examinations were well above the national average and boys gained more A*-C grades than girls. GCSE results improved between 2002 and 2003.

Standards and achievement

80. All students, including the lowest attainers have, at least, a satisfactory basic knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. Students' skills in investigation work generally match their skills in other aspects of science. In higher sets, students regularly achieve

standards that are well above average. For example, some students in Year 9 describe the tests for oxygen, hydrogen and carbon dioxide and understand the reactivity series and displacement reactions. In Year 11, higher attainers starting a new topic on 'Space' have very secure knowledge of the solar system and the motion of the planets and know the factors affecting the force of gravity between objects.

81. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, students do better in tests and examinations than might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school. Hence their achievement in science is good. Lower attainers do particularly well. Teachers expect a lot of these students, both in terms of the effort they should make and the standards they can reach. These students also benefit from a carefully chosen course in Years 10 and 11 and the skilled support of both teachers and support assistants, particularly with the organisation of their written work.

Teaching and learning

82. All teachers have good, secure subject knowledge. They manage students carefully so that a good atmosphere for learning is generally maintained and students develop positive attitudes towards the subject. There are examples of very good teaching. For example, in a lesson for lower attainers in Year 10, students responded enthusiastically to a carefully structured investigation using the pH scale and testing a range of solutions. In addition to improving their practical skills and their understanding of pH, they 'self-checked' their answers, thus improving their skills as independent learners. In a lesson on sound, Year 8 students concentrated very well while experiencing a breathtaking range of demonstrations and activities covering all the basic principles of the topic. The teacher confirmed students' understanding by constantly questioning and reinforcing what they needed to remember.

83. However, there are variations in the quality of teaching. Teachers have their own particular strengths and techniques which do not appear in other lessons. For example, in one lesson, students used their very good discussion skills most effectively to develop their understanding of transport systems within organisms. In another, there was strong emphasis on students learning through actions when, for example, they pretended to be enzymes and starch molecules in the digestive system. Marking also varies across the teaching groups: some marking gives clear indications to students about how their work could be improved whereas, in other books, there are very few helpful comments.

84. An important strength of the department lies in the preparation of students for tests and examinations. Teachers provide well-planned revision activities, plenty of practice with examination questions and revision classes after school for those at risk of not achieving as well as they should.

85. The department has a system of booklets, containing both information and questions, covering all the topics in Years 10 and 11. Although the booklets provide some security, particularly for lower attainers, they have several disadvantages. The booklets tend to limit the activities that some teachers use, they restrict the demand for more extended writing by higher attainers and many students find it difficult to organise the booklets, together with any additional written work, to form a coherent record for revision.

Leadership and management

86. The head of department has only been in post for four terms and has taken over the management of a large and complex team of teachers and technicians. She has appropriate ideas about how she wants to move the department forward and the team is very supportive. However, the process of updating the schemes of work, in order to provide secure guidance for teachers, is not as far advanced as it might be.

87. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. GCSE examination results have remained well above average and teaching is now good. The department now makes more use of ICT than it did at that time.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of good teaching.
- Very good leadership has resulted in very good progress being made since the previous inspection.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not as exciting or engaging as in Years 7 to 9 so students do not achieve as well.
- The school has good up-to-date ICT facilities that promote effective use of ICT across the school.

Commentary

Examination results

88. In 2003, all students in Year 11 took the GCSE short course in ICT and results were above average.

Standards and achievement

89. By the end of Year 9, students' knowledge and practical skills are above average because they are provided with an exciting and well-structured course that enables them to achieve well from their wide range of experience upon entering the school.
90. Students are familiar with the use of the Internet, word processing and databases but their understanding of the theory associated with the subject is not as well developed as their practical skills. National resources are being used alongside home-grown highly imaginative materials, for example, the use of the hyperlink facility within presentation software to create simple adventure games. Higher attainers produce really advanced work using complex software and imaginative designs in their presentations. Lower attainers are more dependent on teachers for guidance and struggle to cope with formulae and using databases. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are above average. Their ability to use spreadsheets and databases is better than normally found. They produce good quality examination coursework and use Internet search engines with ease.

Teaching and learning

91. Teaching is characterised by very good knowledge of the subject; which is used well to ask searching questions and stretch the students within lessons. Teachers plan their lessons very well. They have high expectations of what students can achieve and also of how students should behave. Good use is made of digital projectors to demonstrate each aspect of the

lesson in manageable chunks. In Years 7 to 9, students learn well because teaching is exciting and incorporates a range of really interesting topics that ensure students are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Learning support assistants provide very good support to students with special educational needs. They not only support the students in their charge, but they also help other students with technical problems throughout the lesson. Through the use of a specially produced mouse/ joystick and keyboard a student with physical disabilities was able to achieve very well. Students enjoy ICT lessons much more than at the time of the last inspection because of the up-to-date computers and imaginative and engaging projects they are presented with as they enter the school.

92. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know the requirements of the examination syllabus well. They work hard to cram in enough information in a short space of time to ensure all students are able to take the examination at the end of the course. The restriction on lesson time and the necessary focus on examination preparation result in a range of teaching styles that does not engage all students as fully as in Years 7 to 9. Lessons, whilst satisfactory, do not contain the same variety of interesting tasks and are not structured as tightly as those for the younger students; consequently students do not achieve as well.

Leadership and management

93. The lack of ICT in Years 10 and 11 and the failure to assess standards at the end of Year 9 were key issues noted in the previous report. Very clear vision and strong leadership have tackled all the issues and enabled the department to make very good progress, to a position of considerable strength.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is satisfactory. The ratio of students to computers is in line with the national average; this allows specialist ICT lessons to take place as well as enabling students to practise their skills in other subjects. In many subjects the Internet is used well for research and appropriate information is selected and presented using word-processing and publishing software. There is effective use of ICT in design and technology where computers are used in design work and in manufacturing work. Nearly all subjects use the ICT rooms well and students value the lunchtime clubs.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Students have good positive attitudes to the subject and teacher/student relationships are good; both enhance learning.

- Schemes of work need to be updated in order to help staff.
- The department development plan does not have sufficient criteria to evaluate effectively the progress the department is making.

Commentary

Examination results

95. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above average. Boys and girls do better in geography than they do in most of their other subjects.

Standards and Achievement

96. By the end of Year 9, students have an above average knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics and have a sound foundation of geographical skills. Students know a wide range of terms such as those associated with mapping, tropical rain forest, and erosion of the landscape. Many students use ICT well to present work in assignments and in research topics. By the end of Year 11, students achieve very well, based on their standards on entry to the course. They build very successfully on knowledge and skills learned in Years 7 to 9. Standards of classroom work are well reinforced by good fieldwork. Standards in GCSE coursework are well above average with higher attaining students showing high quality research skills and analysis.

Teaching and learning

97. Teachers are knowledgeable and successfully apply this in their teaching. They have high expectations and students know what is expected of both their behaviour and work. Students respond well to the support and encouragement that teachers give them and the quality of work is consequently good. Planning is good and teachers ensure that the aims of lessons are usually made very clear and checked at the conclusion. Resources are well used, providing a stimulus for learning; for example, Year 11 students successfully evaluated a quality video clip of an Italian flash flood. Work is regularly marked and encouragement given. It is evaluated and so students know what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers usually manage classes very well and, as a result, lessons proceed smoothly and much is achieved. A good range of teaching methods is used. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 class, as the concepts associated with high and low weather systems were very successfully reinforced by a simple experiment showing displacement of water and bubbles. As a result, students clearly grasped the associated concepts. Students' books reflect very positive attitudes as they produce high quality work and assignments. Computers are well used by students in presenting work. Overall, students have very good attitudes to the subject and they are well motivated to do well.

Leadership and management

98. The subject is well led and managed. Students and staff feel well supported. The department development plan does not have sufficient criteria to measure the progress of the department. Schemes of work need to be updated in order to help staff. Geography had a good report at the previous inspection. Since then there has been good improvement, particularly in raising standards and improvement in GCSE results.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of students choosing to continue with history to the age of 16, and beyond, is much higher than the national average.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because teachers make lessons interesting and encourage them to work hard whilst nurturing students' enjoyment of history.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11, though satisfactory, does not make demands of students as urgently and effectively as teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' monitoring of students' progress in Years 10 to 11 is not sufficiently rooted in close analysis of their attainment on entry to GCSE courses.
- Strategies are of recent origin and have not yet impacted fully on the quality of teaching and learning.
-

Commentary

Examination results

99. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and students' achievement was satisfactory. Boys did less well than they did in most other subjects.

Standards and achievement

100. In Year 7 to 9, students develop very good skills in using sources of evidence to interpret events and a well above average number of them write fluent answers. In lessons that set out to develop students' observational, analytical and speaking skills, as well as stimulate their interest, students of all attainment levels achieve very well. In one excellent lesson, for example, all students not only interpreted topographical information from an aerial photograph of a medieval site, but were also convincing about it whilst speaking to camera in the filming of a class 'documentary'. Students' good achievement is also evident in very good writing of the kind seen when writing reports about 19th century working conditions as 'factory inspectors'.
101. By the end of Year 11, students' achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of students who opt to continue with history beyond 14 is far higher than the national average and they achieve GCSE results that are above average. Higher attaining students write well and explain their views clearly when evaluating such issues as, for example, how far Americans benefited from the economic boom of the 1920s. Lower attaining students do not write in such convincing detail.

Teaching and learning

102. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and they employ a good range of learning strategies. Teaching is lively and students relish the challenge that is presented in lessons such as one in Year 9 when very effective preparation resulted in role-play about the 18th century slave trade that graphically highlighted the tensions in the tasks of black overseers. Resulting from good teaching, students learn well.
103. By the end of Year 11 students develop well their skills in organising and presenting coursework because they receive well-informed help from teachers. Satisfactory teaching lacks the same effective pace and challenge that is so evident lower down the school. This demonstrates itself when, in lessons with otherwise good features, the less rigorous expectations of their work rate result in the attention of a minority of students flagging temporarily and they too readily lapse into chatter that is off the point. Teachers assess standards of work accurately and provide satisfactory written feedback to students. Ongoing monitoring of students' progress, however, is not sufficiently rooted in close analysis of their attainment on entry to the course to identify accurately how far teaching is taking students forward.

Leadership and management

104. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The enthusiastic head of history has a clear vision that is reflected in development plans that are clearly focused on further raising students' achievement. Some strategies, however, are of recent origin and have not yet impacted fully on the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is supporting innovation and careful planning.
- All students in Years 10 and 11 have good opportunities to achieve accreditation for their work.
- The use of drama stimulates students' interest, and provides good opportunities to develop understanding.
- Good preparation for examinations is enabling students to achieve well despite insufficient curriculum time.
- Insufficient curriculum time is resulting in not enough reflection and analysis in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for spiritual development are reduced in Years 10 and 11 because of a lack of curriculum time.

Commentary

Examination results

105. Results in the full-course GCSE in 2003 were well above average and there is an upward trend. The first cohort of students will be taking the short-course GCSE in the summer 2004.

Standards and achievement

106. Where students are involved actively in thinking about the topics they study, achievement is good. A group in Year 9 demonstrated sensitivity and understanding of the need to defend individuals in order to protect society as a whole, when studying the events of the holocaust. Their written work reflects a good understanding of the life and experiences of a holocaust survivor. Higher attaining students write fluently and clearly, explaining their feelings with supporting detailed evidence. Students have good opportunities to explore aspects of religion and the use of drama is enabling them to develop their understanding of the concepts they study. Where tasks are mundane and do not require analysis or thought, the level of achievement and standards fall.
107. Standards in Year 11 are above average. All students follow the short-course GCSE. Students have a good grasp of the Christian teachings that influence the churches' view of moral dilemmas such as euthanasia. Higher attaining students identify the biblical quotations that gave rise to the Christian teachings, and recognise that even within the church there are opposing valid views. They are able to apply the teaching and compare it with secular opinion. They have very limited time to do more than note this information however, and lower attaining students in particular are affected by the lack of reinforcement or the time to investigate and develop their own beliefs and values in the light of what they learn. As a result, although they are achieving well in the time allowed, achievement overall is only satisfactory.
108. Standards in the full GCSE course are above average and achievement is good. Students are prepared well for the examination and have a good understanding of the Christian church supported by first hand interviews of the local Christian community. They are well motivated and this supports their concentration and analysis of what they learn. Responses to examination questions are good and they have a secure understanding of the standards required. Some high attaining students following the short-course GCSE have chosen to supplement the work with additional modules undertaken in their own time with teacher support, in order to take the full and short GCSE examinations. Their attitudes, and the good support they are receiving, are enabling them to achieve well.

Teaching and learning

109. Teaching is well planned so as to involve students and to support their concentration. Good knowledge and understanding enable teachers to provide clear and colourful detail that supports students' understanding. In the best lessons a quick starting activity energises students and gets them involved quickly. Teachers use drama well, for example to enable students to understand the impact of events in the life of Christ. In Years 7 to 9, there are good opportunities for students to reflect on what they learn and to consider the abstract concepts of religion, such as the alternative view of life demonstrated through Buddhist beliefs. In Years 10 and 11, there is insufficient time or continuity of lessons to provide for students' own reflection on their beliefs and values. Students are encouraged to prioritise and evaluate facts in order to ensure that they are thinking about the information they receive. As a result, they consider a variety of views. Learning is less successful where teachers dominate discussion and deliver information in order to cover the syllabus, rather than enabling students to investigate for themselves. Where tasks are undemanding, higher attaining students underachieve and fail to

become intellectually involved. Students generally complete the task, but do not consider the implications of the activity.

Leadership and management

110. Leadership and management are very good. Clear vision and high expectations are enabling the co-ordinator to drive the department forward. A course has been developed, despite the short time, to allow all students to achieve accreditation for the work they do. Systems of monitoring and assessment are being reviewed in order to be more effective and schemes of work have been developed. A clear development plan correctly identifies areas for further development, including further support for gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs. The very good planning is enabling the department to cope with the inadequate time allocation which is impacting on the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, so many aspects of students' work are well above average.
- Insufficient time is allocated to the subject, so students are not as far ahead with their practical work as they should be.
- The subject has improved since the previous inspection, as a result of good leadership and management.

Commentary

Examination results

111. GCSE results in 2003 were above average, but students did not do as well in design and technology as they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

112. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11; students' achievement is satisfactory. There are several strengths in students' standards that are common to all years. In particular, students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject; they can explain processes in detail using technical terms correctly. Much of the work in the GCSE folders is of a well above average standard, particularly the research elements and the analysis of information that students use to develop their designs. These latter aspects often involve good use of ICT. However, students are not as far on with their practical work as would usually be expected, particularly in Year 11. This relative weakness in practical skills is also apparent in Years 7 to 9, although those aspects that can be dealt with quickly, such as modelling in card, are of just as high a standard as the

theoretical and design aspects of their work. Girls tend to better than boys in all years because they have better attitudes to their work; they take more care and work harder.

Teaching and learning

113. There are several aspects of teaching that are consistently good in the department. Lessons are well planned to make the most of the time available; practical activities are always set up well in advance so students can get on with their work straight away. These brisk starts set the tone for the whole lesson where teachers push the work along at a good pace. Much of the work is particularly demanding and teachers refuse to accept work of a lower standard than they know students are capable of. Nevertheless, in their keenness to pack as much as possible into a lesson, teachers do not make enough use of questioning to test students' knowledge or to extend their understanding through more detailed explanations. In terms of written work, on the other hand, the department does particularly well. Great emphasis is placed on students' standards of writing in Years 7 to 9; they get many opportunities to write at length or more concise answers as well as specific tasks aimed at improving the presentation of their writing. Homework is used well in Years 7 to 9 to make best use of the time available, while in Years 10 and 11 the marking is particularly good at pointing out what students need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

114. The reason for students' achievement only being satisfactory, despite the good teaching, lies with the curriculum. The amount of time allocated to the subject is significantly lower than usually seen in all years, but is particularly low in Years 8 to 11. The lack of time is further exacerbated by the way that the subject is taught in single lessons of 55 minutes; once time has been allowed for getting equipment out and packing it away most lessons are only 45 minutes long at best. Teachers try to make up for the lack of time by putting on many lessons after school and during lunch hours. While this approach works for many, there will always be some students who do not, or cannot, attend. Furthermore, the time allocation makes it difficult for students to excel in their practical work, which is necessary to gain the very highest grades in examinations. The head of department is fully aware of these issues and has been trying to change the curriculum allocation for some time; but such measures are outside his control. Other aspects of the subject's management are good, particularly the ways that examination data is analysed and the quality of teaching is checked. The contribution that the department makes to students' cultural development is also very good. Despite the problems associated with time allocation, standards have risen since the previous inspection, as has the quality of teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of art experiences offered to students.
- The quality of leadership is good.
- More guidance is needed to extend independent learning.
- Students do not make enough use of ICT in the development of their work.
- There is inadequate time given to the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

115. In 2003 results in GCSE were below average. However, they follow a rising trend.

Standards and achievement

116. Students have average skills on entry to the school. By the end of Year 9 they have average skills in drawing and painting and good skills in printing and pottery. Designs based on studies of Eastern cultures are particularly good with regard to pattern and composition. Point perspective is taught formally and students achieve well. However, it is not explored or used to any significant extent afterwards. In work on life drawing and portraits, students do not get the proportions and features correct and would benefit from more formal teaching especially on foreshortening and proportions. Boys achieve better than girls in some topics, especially in the topic 'Lost City' chosen specifically to appeal to boys in Year 9.
117. By Year 11, students research and develop their topics to an average standard but they do not do enough homework. There is not enough step-by-step written guidance to support their independent development of coursework. Most of the work done from direct observation is above average standard as is work based on studies of natural forms. All students show a clear awareness of what constitutes good composition. Imaginative work is not fully developed. There is some very impressive work in clay modelling, sculpture and printing by individuals in both Years 10 and 11. There is insufficient use of ICT in the development of students' work. This work is hindered by the lack of ICT facilities within the classrooms.

Teaching and learning

118. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and expertise, that benefit their students. They maintain a good learning environment in all lessons. In some lessons there are not enough visual demonstrations and illustrations of what students are expected to achieve. Students show a good interest in the subject and concentrate well in lessons. However, achievement is hindered by a lack of time for the subject. All aspects of the National Curriculum are covered but they get a light touch. There is not enough time to consolidate or perfect some of the skills learned. This is particularly true in Years 10 and 11, where students have insufficient time to practise techniques. All students get individual support and guidance in all lessons. This ensures that all students make equal progress.
119. There is new leadership and management since the previous inspection. There is a clear vision for raising standards. Policies and schemes of work have been completely re-written. These are concise and clear and provide good support for teaching and learning. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying these aspects in works of art across a range of cultures.
120. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The good features are maintained.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and enables students to achieve well.
- Computer-aided music-making boosts achievement in every year.
- Very good extra-curricular activity is a strong support to standards.
- Aspects of assessment and reporting need improvement.

Commentary

Examination results

121. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and have been so for the last two years.

Standards and achievement

122. In Years 7 to 9 most students retain well their growing knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music. Most use notation confidently. Many create very expressive improvised pieces in groups. Students show that they expect to learn, responding well to the range of practical activities, which include some use of computers and singing. Achievement is therefore good, including by those students with special educational needs. Students work well together in sharing keyboards but few use their thumbs, limiting progress. GCSE students show the benefit of good individual instrumental learning which supports every aspect of the course. They use ICT well in composition and to record performances. Some high achievers choose to follow the course in one year, all ten of these attaining A*-C grades in 2003. Boys and girls in Year 11 are positive about their learning; several are planning to pursue music at A-level.

Teaching and learning

123. In all years, relationships are good because of an effective balance between humour and high expectations of behaviour. Teachers use time well to ensure all students understand a task before starting and to help them reflect on their learning and achievement at the end. Teachers expect differing rates of progress in mixed ability classes, so that lower attainers are not daunted but praised when they try their best. Teachers are usually very enthusiastic and well prepared and provide good role models as musicians and caring adults. Teachers know the abilities of students well and try to ensure they know how to improve. There is not enough emphasis on National Curriculum levels and students do not always know at what level they are. Teachers do not always stress appropriate fingering on keyboards from an early stage; this would help to speed progress. The lack of regular written work does not provide students with a record of learning from all activities to raise standards.

Leadership and management

124. Leadership is good as are most aspects of management. The leader has good vision for improvements in provision and standards. The leader has been pro-active in changing examination boards and adding to the school's provision of A-level music technology and courses for talented students. Good teamwork is fostered from all contributing staff. Much voluntary time and effort enables a wide range of extra-curricular activities to take place to a high standard. Visits and opportunities for performance enhance the curriculum, with competitions and annual awards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. None of the important limitations seen then remain. GCSE standards have been maintained and provision for examination music expanded.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of good teaching.
- A strong extra-curricular sports programme offers very good opportunities for all students to achieve high standards in school and beyond.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are insufficiently rigorous.
- Aspects of curriculum organisation hinder students' achievement in the non-examination course in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Examination results

125. The 2003 GCSE examination results were above average, but students did not do as well in physical education as they did in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

126. By the end of Year 9, standards in games and gymnastics are average, representing good achievement in relation to students' previous attainment. Students of all abilities achieve well in swimming and gymnastics; students evaluate performance and help to improve each other's work, effectively. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, achieving as well as other students.

127. By Year 11, standards are still only average in the non-examination course, and students achieve satisfactorily. This can be accounted for by the reduction in time from Years 7 to 9, and aspects of curriculum organisation that have a negative impact on students' achievement in learning new activities, such as badminton. Standards in the practical aspects of GCSE are above average, as seen in basketball, but students are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Students achieve well in the new Junior Sports Leader Award course. Very high standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport, reflected in the

school's successes in county, and sometimes national, competitions in girls' and boys' football and tennis.

Teaching and learning

128. Teaching has many strengths, not least the very good organisation and management of students, particularly successful when bad weather disrupted the curriculum during the inspection. High standards of participation, dress and behaviour are the norm. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well-planned teaching motivates students, and demands a brisk pace. Students have good, often very good, attitudes to the subject, reflected in their support for extra-curricular activities, and the effort they put into their work. The best learning occurs when students are challenged intellectually as well as physically, and there are high expectations for them to improve their performance, as seen in swimming. Although good, too much teaching lacks this strong focus on improvement. Giving students a share of responsibility for their learning is used to very good effect in sports leadership and health-related fitness courses. There is insufficient planning for the development of students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Leadership and management

129. Good leadership has focused on raising standards, and GCSE results have improved annually. Assessment data is used, effectively, to predict grades and set individual targets. There is an ongoing focus on assessment, but over-generous teacher assessments in 2003 suggest teachers are insecure in their interpretation of the attainment criteria. Innovative curriculum development is a strength, and the very good extra-curricular programme complements this, providing many opportunities for the gifted and talented. The non-examination curriculum in Years 10 and 11 requires review with the aim of raising students' achievement. The school has some way to go towards achieving the aim of the national strategy for 75 per cent of students to have two hours a week of quality physical education by 2006.

130. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Overall, standards have been maintained, and teaching is improving.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 11
Standards	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students underachieve because the quality of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the course is not well co-ordinated and the teachers are not supported.
- Students' learning is enhanced through links with the community.

Commentary

Examination results

131. 2002 was the first year of the course and there are no results to report.

Standards and achievement

132. Students know a range of terms about leisure and tourism such as what is meant by the 'private sector' and how marketing is used to promote the industry. They know about the different sectors of the industry and about customer expectations for the services provided. Many students, however, lack depth in their knowledge and understanding of topics and they do not develop written and oral responses in enough detail. Standards of lower attaining students are reduced because work is untidy and unfinished. ICT is not used well for research or to present work.

Teaching and learning

133. Teachers set clear lesson aims and plan work to provide variety of activity, but do not always set appropriate tasks that challenge and engage students. Teachers work to promote good relationships with students. They regularly give guidance and support, but the quality of written work is not monitored closely so that the standards reached are not high enough. The poor attitudes to learning of a minority of students are not always well managed and lead to students underachieving.

Leadership and management

134. The subject is not well led or managed. The co-ordination between college and school is not effective, particularly in the monitoring of the progress that students make on the course. Teachers are not well supported so that issues such as punctuality and behaviour are not being picked up. Insufficient guidance is given to promoting effective learning and more support through in-service training is needed. There was no report at the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Average	Average
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Major projects such as the visit to the Halls of Justice provide excellent opportunities for personal development.
- Drama is used well to promote understanding of issues.
- The 'One World Assembly' provides a good opportunity to appreciate another culture in Britain and enable students to share the culture of their peers.
- There is insufficient evaluation of students' work to identify progress in the long and short-term.
- Monitoring and development of teaching are insufficient to ensure consistency in quality.

- The school council is not used to develop students' understanding of the electoral system.
- Cross-curricular opportunities have not been sufficiently developed to enable them to form part of the citizenship programme.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

135. By the end of Year 9, students are developing collaborative skills and have experience of organising a group activity, such as the 'One World Assembly', where they have a good opportunity to celebrate another culture found in England. They identify global issues and display an understanding of the need to conserve the planet, suggesting simple practical measures. Year 8 and 9 students have a sound understanding of court procedures, as a result of their visit to the Halls of Justice last year and this is reinforced through their re-enactment of a historic trial in Year 8. There is limited time for citizenship however, and the links with PSHE are resulting in an emphasis on the skills of citizenship, for example, discussion and collaboration, rather than knowledge of government and the responsibilities of citizenship. Where these are taught, there is insufficient depth and reinforcement to enable students to build up a secure understanding of the way their society is organised.
136. The year councils provide opportunities for students to take a role in the government of their school; however, it has not yet been formally organised and is not used to provide all students with experience of the electoral system.
137. Standards in Year 11 are average. These students did not receive lessons in citizenship in their earlier years and their knowledge and understanding of government and finance are at an early stage. Where stimulating and challenging material is presented, such as in the lessons reviewing the experiences of the civil war in Kosovo, they recognise the importance of the role of the peacemaker and the destructive nature of war on society. There is very little evidence of their own work or that they recognise the course and evaluate their own progress towards good citizenship. There are very good opportunities for students to demonstrate their concern and responsibility for others, such as through the peer mentoring scheme and the links with DART, an organisation to raise awareness of the needs of the disabled. These examples of active citizenship are not yet identified or recorded in a portfolio so that students can recognise their contribution to citizens.

Teaching and learning

138. Teachers use lively activities to interest and involve students; group and paired work enables them to learn from each other. Specialist input provides accurate information about a range of topics that are chosen to be of interest and relevant to the students. The use of drama in Year 8 enables all students to become actively involved in the detail of court proceedings. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and this enables students to concentrate on the lesson objectives. Some citizenship lessons are taught by form tutors. Although they are non-specialists, they are well supported by advice and good materials. Some teachers, however, do not always apply the same forethought to their lessons. Where this happens, lessons are delivered rather than taught and the impact of the work is reduced, and development opportunities are missed. Students in Years 7 and 8 have good log-books that enable them to record and evaluate the work they do. In other year groups, there is no assessment or monitoring of progress, and no incentive for individual students to challenge themselves to improve. There is no assessment of the cross-curricular delivery of citizenship where it has been identified, in order to identify students' progress.

Leadership and management

139. The leadership of the subject is good; management is satisfactory. A school co-ordinator has been appointed who has a clear vision for the subject. Since her appointment the subject has become part of the PSHE programme. In Years 7 and 8, this has been well organised, and effectively enables students to evaluate the work they do. The large number of teachers delivering the subject is resulting in problems of monitoring standards and delivery, and insufficient training is resulting in a lack of consistency. Cross-curricular delivery is less effective due to the lack of systematic co-ordination of information and assessment. Heads of department do not yet take responsibility for the evaluation of the citizenship work they deliver.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

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
Mathematics	25	100	93.3	56	52.2	92.8	84.7
Biology	29	100	91.6	55.2	36.3	90.3	74.1
Physics	12	100	92.8	86.7	42.8	41.7	78.6
Chemistry	29	100	94.0	55.2	45.9	90.3	81.1
Design and technology	13	100	95.3	46.2	35.5	81.5	76.5
Information technology	13	100	89.1	15.4	22.4	73.8	64.1
Business studies	15	100	96.4	46.7	32.8	85.3	76.5
Sports/ Physical education studies	9	100	95.4	22.2	29.5	75.6	73.2
Geography	12	100	97.1	75	40.5	96.7	80.9
History	26	100	97.1	50	41	90.8	81.2
Other social studies	18	100	94.3	83.3	38.9	108.9	77.7
General studies	85	96.5	90.1	21.2	29.1	69.4	69.3
English literature	23	100	98.5	73.9	43.7	102.6	84.3
German	5	100	96.3	40	44.3	84	82.1
Communication studies	8	100	98.3	62.5	36.8	100	81.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for the inspection was English literature.

English

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge helps students learn very rapidly.
- Marking is thorough, indicating what students need to do to gain higher grades.
- Students' very good attitudes lead to lively and productive group work.
- Students do not always support written arguments with enough references to the text.

Commentary

Examination results

140. In 2002, results at A-level were well above the national average. Results were similar in 2003.

Standards and achievement

141. Students are articulate and highly motivated. They collaborate very well in group work and show enthusiasm in class discussion. In writing, they sustain long pieces with accuracy, though sometimes expression is vague and arguments are not always supported by enough references to the text. Most students show very good understanding of what they read. They compare in detail two texts on a similar theme – such as women's place in a male-dominated workplace, referring to Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Lodge's *Nice Work*.

Teaching and learning

142. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use well when questioning students to assess their understanding. Group work is integrated into many lessons and is very effective because relationships are very good, as are students' attitudes to their work. Occasionally, teachers take too long to involve students actively in discussion, and this slows learning. Teaching is carefully planned to focus closely on examination requirements and this partly explains why students do so well at A-level. Another strong feature is the thorough marking which indicates to students what they need to do to achieve higher grades.

Leadership and management

143. The eight teachers involved in A-level teaching meet regularly to discuss students' learning. They moderate students' coursework thoroughly, and work very closely to help students do their best. They are united in their commitment to raising the high standards already achieved. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and teaching is better.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

144. Standards of literacy are above average. Most students are articulate and contribute well to classroom discussion when they are required to do so. Students have a good range of skills in reading and writing which enables them to produce full, well-reasoned work.

MATHEMATICS

The focus for the inspection was mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Commentary

The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of methods, pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. It also offers further mathematics, where a proportion of students also study discrete mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- There was a significant improvement in results in 2003.
- Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources so that the quality of teaching could be improved further.

Examination results

145. In 2002, the results at A-level were above average. Students did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. In the 2003 examinations, there was a significant improvement in results.

Standards and achievement

146. Overall achievement is good given the students' attainment on entry to the course. The quality of students' written and oral work is better than that usually seen at this stage in the course. The school has identified weaknesses, for example in the need for all students to have a good basic understanding of the mathematics in Year 12. It has developed strategies to improve that understanding and the achievement of lower attaining students is now good and their attainment is improving. The department has also developed other strategies for raising attainment, particularly in the mechanics coursework in Year 13; the standard of coursework has improved significantly. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when introduced to a new topic. For example, in Year 12, they explore the properties of sequences and develop their understanding of how to derive the formula definition for arithmetic and geometric sequences. In the mechanics coursework,

students use good understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion appropriately. They have a very good grasp of forces including friction and use this knowledge to solve problems. Force diagrams are very clear and methods well presented. They present rigorous arguments including proofs, making few calculations or conceptual errors.

Teaching and learning

147. Teachers have a very good knowledge of mathematics. They give good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. Teachers structure lessons well and provide high levels of challenge. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, there are occasions when there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons. The better lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned well to allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. For example, when introducing new integration techniques, the teacher plans the lesson so that students have a secure understanding of integration by parts before progressing further. Homework is set regularly. It is used effectively to consolidate and extend the new work that is introduced in the lesson. However, there needs to be more opportunities for students to develop their study skills by encouraging them to read about topics in preparation for lessons.

Leadership and management

148. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is good. There is a clear commitment by the whole team to improving standards by raising achievement for all students. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject, ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. Although there is a comprehensive programme of study that follows the published syllabuses, the schemes of work lack guidance on appropriate teaching methods and use of resources that would enhance the teaching further. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

149. Standards of mathematics across the curriculum are above average. There is extensive use of graphs in post-16 sciences where students use calculators competently and can transpose formulae with ease. In science, occasional guidance is needed with unfamiliar calculations, but this is remedied effectively and standards of mathematics are generally very good. In ICT, students use their mathematical skills with confidence. In history, good use is made of statistical skills when students evaluate the success or otherwise of Stalin's five-year plan.

SCIENCE

The focus for the inspection was chemistry. However, biology was also sampled. Results in biology in 2002 were well above average. In the biology lesson sampled, teaching and learning were very good.

CHEMISTRY

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good

Teaching and learning	Good	Good
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Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students generally gain better A-level results in chemistry than might be expected from their GCSE results when they started the course.
- Chemistry is one of the most popular AS-level subjects in the school and a high proportion of students choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and well organised so that students enjoy the subject, feel secure and, particularly in Year 13, work hard.
- Some students in Year 12 are not yet working as conscientiously as they should but teachers have met the problem before and have proved that they can overcome this temporary weakness.

Commentary

Examination results

150. Results in the 2002 A-level examinations were above the national average. Results improved significantly in 2003. Over the last five years, results have always been either above or well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

151. Students enter the AS-level chemistry course with GCSE grades that are above average for students starting such a course. They generally gain AS and A-level results that are better than might be expected from their GCSE grades. Hence their achievement is good.
152. In the current Year 12, standards are above average overall and in Year 13 they are well above average. There is a significant improvement in standards as students move through Year 12 and Year 13. Students in Year 12 have produced good, concise research projects on the properties of colloids. It is clear, as they move on to their next such project on new allotropes of carbon, that their skills in extracting and using information have improved. They give a clear account of what they will do differently when tackling this new challenge.
153. In both year groups, students have particularly good practical skills. Students in Year 13 display excellent skills, both in titration experiments and in experiments to identify which functional groups are present in two organic compounds.
154. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 have well-organised files containing notes of good quality. Students are generally successful in answering test and examination questions; calculations are well presented and usually correct.

Teaching and learning

155. The three teachers of chemistry have different teaching styles and students appreciate the variety of approach, as well as the quality, of the teaching they receive. Teachers encourage independence and emphasise the importance of students learning for themselves. Students' files show that teachers also provide plenty of preparation and practice for examinations.
156. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, notably in the very high standards expected in students' experimental work. They are vigilant in ensuring that such

standards are met and students respond by working with great care and precision. Teaching is carefully planned and is underpinned by some very good resources, including textbooks that are written for this particular course and very good 'fact sheets' that students use alongside their own notes. However, the stock of relevant books in the school library is very small and not sufficient to encourage students to read beyond the course material.

157. The subject is successful in attracting large numbers of students into the AS-level course and a high proportion of these students choose to continue with the subject in Year 13. In the current Year 12, students' attitudes are very positive in class and they concentrate very well. However, these positive attitudes do not always extend beyond the classroom and some students had not completed a homework task they were asked to do. The department is well aware of the current 'dip' in achievement caused by this lack of effort and is taking active steps, including involving parents, to ensure that it does not continue. It is clear from recent results that these skilled and determined teachers are successful in overcoming any reluctance to work on the part of students and ensuring eventual good achievement for all. Students' attitudes are very good in Year 13 and they enjoy the subject. They work hard and are achieving well.
158. Students make good use of ICT in gaining information, either from the useful CD-ROM that the department provides, or from the Internet to support their project work. However, there is little use of the modelling programs or data-logging experiments that would increase the variety of activity for students.

Leadership and management

159. The three teachers, and the technician, work well together as a team, with the more experienced teachers providing good support and resources for their less experienced colleague. The teacher in charge of the subject provides skilled leadership, taking prompt and appropriate action where there are any indications that students might not be achieving as well as they should. However, there is not yet a programme of lesson observations which would enable the skills of the three teachers to be shared more effectively and to have maximum influence on all students.
160. At the time of the previous inspection, A-level results were above average. In 2003, they were well above the 2002 national average. Teaching has improved and is now good. Hence there has been good progress since the time of the previous inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus for the inspection was graphics.

Provision in graphics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the syllabus.
- Teachers do not instil a sufficient sense of urgency in students.

Commentary

Examination results

161. Examination results were above average in 2002, but were significantly lower in 2003; students did as well in graphics as they did in their other subjects

Standards and achievement

162. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average now and students are doing as well as expected given their GCSE results. Much of the drawn graphics work is of an above average standard, demonstrating a good degree of artistic flair. Other aspects, such as students' ability to analyse problems and draw up design specifications, are average, although the quality of these different aspects varies considerably between individual students.

Teaching and learning

163. Teachers have a good knowledge of the syllabus and use this knowledge well when providing students with individual support; they are able to ensure that students are covering all the appropriate aspects of the syllabus in their work. However, there is little sense of urgency being instilled in the students. Lessons start in a relaxed manner and carry on at a satisfactory pace, but rarely are students really stretched in terms of the effort they are putting into lessons because teachers are not pushing them to get the work done.

Leadership and management

164. The same good use is made of data in the sixth form as in other years. However, in the sixth form it is much more difficult to assess patterns of achievement as the numbers involved are so small. Communication between the two teachers teaching the course is not good enough; teachers repeat some of the work of their colleague in lessons. There were no comments specific to graphics in the previous report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was ICT.

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
- Very good leadership has resulted in above average standards.
- The subject is growing in popularity and has quickly established itself within the school.
- Some lessons do not involve students in their own learning enough.

Commentary

Examination results

165. Results in the 2002 A-level examinations were above average. Results improved significantly in 2003. Males and females achieved equally well.

Standards and achievement

166. By the end of Year 12, students have a satisfactory grasp of how generic software can be used to support their studies. They know and understand the difference between different types of media storage and are competent at using a wide range of applications. By the end of Year 13, students' practical skills are above average and they achieve well. They confidently use a range of software applications to solve problems, and draft and re-draft essays. They build upon existing spreadsheet skills, by beginning to use more advanced ones, in work that is preparing them to meet specific examination requirements. Students' achievement is exemplified by their work on real problems, such as the design of a website or a spreadsheet with input forms for calculating and managing expenses.

Teaching and learning

167. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject which they pass on well to students. All students achieve well because teachers match the work effectively to the needs of every student. Good relationships lead to a positive atmosphere for learning. Good software and hardware, including modern equipment for teaching, aid effective learning because of more efficient and effective ways of presenting information. Students respond well to opportunities to discuss or answer questions, sometimes asking searching ones of their own. However, these opportunities are not common to all lessons; on occasions lessons are too teacher led and prevent students from taking responsibility for their own independent learning. Teacher assessment is rigorous, with accurate feedback on progress that informs the student of the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

168. Leadership has clarity of vision and has succeeded in attracting and retaining an increasing number of students to the courses. A good feature of the management is that it employs a small number of sixth form students to supervise the popular lunchtime ICT clubs. The staff team work very well together and are supported very effectively through constant radio contact with the technician. The courses were not running at the time of the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

169. Many subjects build the use of ICT into their work, so students get lots of opportunities to use computers in a wide range of situations. Students apply and use computers confidently to support their learning. Throughout the inspection, many students were observed using the ICT facilities both in and outside normal school hours especially for research in other subjects. Subject teachers are becoming confident users of ICT and as a result students use computers far more than at the time of the last inspection. Plans are in place to increase provision and meet increased demand for open access computer use.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was geography, history and psychology.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students receive good support and it ensures that achievement is very good.
- Residential field work makes a significant contribution to learning in Year 12.
- More guidance needs to be given to teachers in subject documentation.

Commentary

Examination results

170. Results in the 2002 A-level examination were well above average and improved further in 2003. The results have been maintained at this level in recent years. Male students attained very high standards.

Standards and achievement

171. By the end of Year 13, students have a wide range of knowledge about the physical and human environment. Understanding about global issues is supported through case studies and these are well researched through ICT and good quality publications. Studies of the hydrology of river basins, for example, are complemented by in-depth research and application to the Mississippi valley, USA. Students achieve well in developing geographical skills and, the opportunity they have for residential study in the Lake District enables them to apply these skills in a practical context. The standard of some students' work, however, is lower than expected because they do not make enough use of maps and diagrams to support written assignments. Students' literacy skills are well above average. Assignments are well structured and most students make good use of geographical terms to develop answers.

Teaching and learning

172. Teachers have very good knowledge of topics and this makes a significant contribution to the very good achievement that students make. Lessons are well prepared and supported through a range of resources that assist learning well, particularly in developing research and discussion skills. In a Year 13 class on industrial growth of China, for example, students discussed their understanding of the impact of the building of dams on the Yangtze River gained from their earlier learning, but were less confident in recalling factual knowledge to support opinion. Students' assignments are carefully assessed and written comment is made on quality and how to improve. As a result, students' essay writing skills improve.

Leadership and management

173. The subject is well led and managed and teachers are appropriately deployed to teach the components of the AS and A-level courses. Clear systems are in place to track and review progress so that students are kept well informed about how well they are doing. The development plan, however, gives insufficient attention to sixth form development, and schemes of work do not give enough guidance on what students are to learn. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the raising of standards.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching produces challenging lessons that move at pace and lead to good student achievement.
- Students work well independently and relish the frequent opportunities to bounce their ideas off their teacher and each other in class discussions.
- Students' GCSE examination performance data is analysed well, and appropriately challenging targets are set for students' A-level achievements.

Commentary

Examination results

174. Results in the 2002 examinations were well above average for both AS and A-level and students' achievement was good. Results were of similar quality in 2003.

Standards and achievement

175. A significantly higher number of students than is common choose history in Year 12, and they quickly adjust to the greater demands of AS-level work. The great majority produce writing that critically analyses source evidence, evaluates different views and reaches well-supported conclusions. This good standard of work is evident when students, for example, examine the advantages and disadvantages of the collectivisation of farming to the development of the

USSR as a major power under Stalin, and reach convincing conclusions. The historical skills developed result in students performing well in the AS-level examination.

176. Almost all students continue the subject to A-level standard and, at the end of Year 13, most students demonstrate well above average investigative skills, and they become confident independent learners who express themselves well in writing. At its best such work is exemplified by an essay that impressively evaluates differing interpretations, by leading historians, of Nazi foreign and economic policies between 1932 and 1941. Students attain well above average A-level results and are very well prepared for the university courses, often in history, that most of them go on to study.

Teaching and learning

177. Students benefit from very knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching. Teachers plan their lessons very well, often including in them a range of individual and inter-active tasks that challenge and stimulate their students. As a result students both learn, and achieve, well. For example, in a Year 13 class, the lesson was planned so well that students made very good advances in their understanding of the functions of different institutions of government during Elizabeth I's reign. Consequently, they formed clear opinions about the extent to which Elizabeth was either lucky to inherit useful institutions or very able in shaping them to her ends. Not only did they justify their opinions with supporting evidence but also they were ready to modify their opinions in the light of convincing arguments from fellow students. Teachers' assessment of written assignments is accurate and the marking is detailed and thorough. The monitoring of student achievement and progress is thorough and effectively informs students about how to improve. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and they enjoy the lessons.

Leadership and management

178. The subject is managed well and clear vision and direction are provided. A well-structured handbook that contains thorough schemes of work and guidance for staff is in place. An annual evaluation of students' performance in examinations is carried out and this feeds directly into teaching and learning plans. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved since the previous inspection and this represents good progress.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are in the top five per cent of all schools nationally.
- Independent thought and reflection are promoted very well by teaching which helps students to apply theory to their own experience.
- Students achieve very well because they are stimulated by teaching which builds knowledge systematically.

Commentary

179. Psychology is managed by the school, but taught by staff at an adjacent college of further education. The lessons inspected were provided exclusively for school students.

Examination results

180. Results are very high in comparison with the national picture for the subject, both for those reaching higher grades (A-B) and overall. The most recent results maintained this level. They have improved greatly since the last inspection.

Standards and achievement

181. In work seen, standards match examination results. In Year 12, students acquire very good knowledge of major subject concepts, and develop investigative skills well. They know how to think independently by applying theory to their own experience and understanding. For example, one group made an astute examination of studies of memory and went on to link them to practical questions of how to improve eyewitness testimony in court. Relevant topics chosen for study, such as child development, stimulate students' curiosity, and underpin very rapid achievement in the first year. By Year 13, achievement continues to be very good because teachers ensure students build systematically on the previous foundations of their knowledge by deepening their understanding of research issues. In consequence, students develop the critical maturity to treat challenging questions such as mental illness in an informed and judicious way, illustrating their ideas in well-structured written assignments.

Teaching and learning

182. Teachers use very good materials to provide a basis for students' understanding, investigation skills and background reading. They instil in students a very good knowledge of examination criteria and help them use this to structure their understanding and recall. Teachers deploy high-order specialist knowledge to prompt, encourage and clarify expectations to students as they work in class. This leads to a growing sense of ambition and confidence which underpins very good learning. Students are taught well to structure and organise their written assignments. Marking is conscientious and students benefit from helpful comments founded on their teachers' very good subject knowledge.

Leadership and management

183. The subject is led very well and managed very well from within the school, with a good vision for its development. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. New courses have been introduced successfully; standards are high because of very good teaching.

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

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

poor (6); very poor (7).