

INSPECTION REPORT

FERNDOWN UPPER SCHOOL

Ferndown

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113854

Headteacher: Mr Alex Wills

Lead inspector: Mr Brian Rowe

Dates of inspection: 8 – 12 December 2003

Inspection number: 259359

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 – 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,209
School address:	Cherry Grove Ferndown Dorset
Postcode:	BH22 9EY
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr K. Wilkes
Date of previous inspection:	05 November 2001

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ferndown Upper School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 13 to 19 years, situated in Ferndown, Dorset. The school is near the borders of other local education authorities that have grammar schools and every year several students in the catchment area transfer to these schools. Students' overall attainment on entry at Year 9 is below average, but there are many students who are capable of achieving the very highest examination results. The school has been successful in gaining the Artsmark Award 2003 and is working towards acquiring Investors in People status. Currently, the school is under-subscribed. Students come from a large catchment area that includes a wide range of social backgrounds. Many of the students staying on into the sixth form are the first generation experiencing further or higher education. Overall, unemployment in the area is below average. There are currently 1,209 students on roll, of whom 335 attend the sixth form, making it an above average sized secondary school. The proportion of boys (636) is larger than girls (573), but varies between years. About 2 per cent of students come from minority ethnic groups, a much lower proportion than average. All but a few are fluent in the English language. There are no refugees and three students come from a traveler background. About 7 per cent of the students receive free school meals and this proportion is lower than the national average. About 162 students have been identified as having special educational needs, 16 of whom have a Statement. These proportions are average when compared with other secondary schools. School development has been hampered by long-term staff absence and difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers in a few subjects. The current headteacher took up the post in January 2003, less than three terms ago.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1695	Brian Rowe	Lead inspector	
9542	Brian Jones	Lay inspector	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Mathematics English as an additional language
32777	Jim McVeigh	Team inspector	Science
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
2018	Vicky Ward	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31525	Sue O'Sullivan	Team inspector	History
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education
15277	Chris Vidler	Team inspector	Business education Leisure and tourism
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art
32581	Jo Fageant	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Post-16 mathematics
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Post-16 science
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	Psychology

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PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ferndown Upper is an effective and improving school that provides a good quality of education for its students. Although the school has a deficit budget it still provides satisfactory value for money. Much of the recent improvement is because of the very good leadership and vision of the new headteacher. Owing to the overall good teaching and learning, most students achieve well, but a small group of older students do not take their work seriously enough. The quality of leadership throughout the school is good. The quality of management overall is satisfactory but varies greatly between subjects and aspects of the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The vision, energy and determination of the recently appointed headteacher to improve the quality of education for every student.
- An inconsistent approach by teachers in applying agreed school policies and systems, especially with regard to students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- The high quality of provision in art, religious education, English and physical education.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and most students are achieving well. However, in too many lessons the work is not well matched to students' needs and teachers' expectations are not high enough to challenge all students to achieve their very best work.
- Review and monitoring systems have been established, but are not always applied with sufficient rigour by staff with a line-management responsibility.
- The high level of care and welfare provided for students.
- The positive way in which the school is seeking and valuing students' views.
- Very good and improving links with the community that increase opportunities for learning.
- The school does not meet all its statutory requirements.

Improvements since the last inspection have been good. The last inspection judged students' achievement as unsatisfactory, but this feature has improved considerably and achievement is now good. The school is in a much stronger position to make substantial further improvements as the leadership and management have significantly improved. Many of the issues identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, with the exception of the provision for collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all school			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	B	C	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	D	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 at the end of Year 9*

Students enter school with levels of attainment that are below average. During the last five years overall performance in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 has been close to the national average. Standards have improved, but at a slower rate than that nationally. Achievement in Year 9 is good and overall standards of attainment in 2003 are close to the national average. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE results have improved at a rate below the national trend, but overall standards in 2003 are close to the national average. Recent results show that when compared with similar schools, students are making good progress overall and achieve well. Standards in literacy and numeracy are average. Students' competency in information and communication technology is average in Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The pass rate at A level has been extremely high over the last few years, but overall results are below the national average.

Current students are achieving well. Throughout school, students with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is not their first language achieve well.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Students have positive attitudes to school. They behave well in Year 9 and the sixth form. There are a significant number of students, mostly boys, in Years 10 and 11 who lack commitment to their learning and do not behave well. Overall, relationships between students and staff and between students themselves are supportive and positive.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching, learning and assessing of students' work is good in each of these aspects. Teaching and learning are improving because of management strategies and good quality training provided for staff. Teaching and learning are strongest in the sixth form. There are examples of very good teaching in most departments; teaching and learning are especially strong in religious education and art.

Several aspects of the overall educational provision are strengths within the school. These include: the breadth of the curriculum; the level of care given to students, the support and guidance given to students; taking account of students' views; the links with the community and other schools and institutions.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality and effectiveness of leadership throughout the school are good. The quality of management at senior and middle levels is satisfactory overall but varies significantly between different departments. In particular, the systems for review and monitoring are not rigorously applied by all staff with management responsibility. The overall governance of the school is good, but governors do not ensure the school meets all its statutory requirements. Important strengths are the leadership, commitment, energy and vision of the headteacher.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views, and welcome the improvements achieved since the arrival of the new headteacher. They say their children like the school, that teaching is good and the staff expect hard work. They are concerned about the information they get about their children's progress and that some students do not behave well. Students are positive about the school. They enjoy it and feel that the school values their opinions and responds to them. The inspectors agree with the views of the parents and the students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure a greater consistency in applying the agreed school policies, especially with regard to Year 10 and 11 students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning;
- increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluating the performance of teachers, the effectiveness of departments and the quality of students' learning;
- improve elements of teaching so the work set is always well matched to students' needs and teachers' expectations are high enough to challenge all students to achieve their very best;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship;
- teach citizenship in Year 9 and religious education in the sixth form.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and it is cost-effective. The school is successful in encouraging Year 11 students of all abilities to continue with their education and they are allowed to follow courses despite having gained only relatively moderate GCSE examination results. The A level pass rate in the sixth form has been extremely high over the last few years, but overall results are below the national average. The quality of teaching and learning are good ensuring most students achieve well. The newly appointed headteacher and head of sixth form are providing good leadership to tackle the weaknesses identified in the previous report. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory and the school is in a good position to make further improvements.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Consistently good quality teaching and learning ensure students make good progress and achieve well in the examination courses.
- There is a very good provision in physics, geography, psychology, travel and tourism and art.
- Teachers have established positive relationships with students. This promotes the students' personal development, their attitudes to work and maturity as positive citizens.
- Leadership and management are improving, but monitoring the effectiveness of provision is not consistent or rigorous enough.
- Assessment information is not consistently used to evaluate students' progress and improve their performance.

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
<u>English / modern languages</u> English	Provision is good . Standards of work are average, but achievement is good when account is taken of the students' prior attainment. They have positive attitudes to their work and achieve well because of the good teaching, leadership and management.
French	Provision is good . Standards of work seen are in line with national expectations and students achieve well. Students respond well to the good teaching. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory . Results are close to national averages. Good teaching leads to good levels of achievement. Leadership and management are satisfactory but there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
<u>Sciences</u> Biology	Provision is satisfactory . Examination results and standards of work are in line with national averages showing good achievement. The newly appointed head of department is providing satisfactory leadership and management and has begun to put systems into place to further raise attainment.
Chemistry	Provision is satisfactory . Staffing difficulties have been overcome so that teaching is now good, leading to satisfactory levels of attainment. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory due to staff absence.
Physics	Provision is very good . Very good teaching and learning results in good achievement and high examination results. Leadership and management are very good and monitoring of the performance of the department is rigorous.
<u>Humanities</u> Geography	Provision is very good . Students attain highly and achieve very well because very good teaching challenges and motivates them. Very good leadership and management ensure high expectations and rigorous assessment.
Psychology	Provision is very good . Students achieve very well as a result of dynamic and creative teaching. The department is very well led and students find the subject challenging and popular.
<u>Information and communication technology</u>	Provision is good . Good teaching leads to the high standards of work. Students achieve well as teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good and there is high quality planning and organisation.

<u>Business</u> Business studies	Provision is unsatisfactory . Examination results are below national standards. Lessons lack sufficient challenge and students underachieve. Although capable, the head of department has been given too many responsibilities and leadership and management are not ensuring a satisfactory provision.
<u>Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel</u> Travel and tourism Physical education	Provision is very good . Examination results are well above national expectations and enthusiastic teaching helps students achieve very well. They develop excellent skills as independent and mature learners. Provision is good . Past examination results are in line with national averages, which represents good achievement by students. Teaching and learning are good with effective integration of theory and practical work. Leadership and management are very good with high expectations for students' success.
<u>Visual and performing arts</u> Art	Provision is excellent . Standards are well above the national average and students show high levels of attainment. Excellent leadership and specialist teaching leads to very good learning and motivation of the students.
<i>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 college. 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'.</i>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The provision of support, advice and guidance to the sixth form is good and students benefit from the school's strengths in providing opportunities to help them mature. There are very good arrangements to provide for the care and welfare of students and the school has established very effective procedures to ensure it seeks and values students' views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is good. The newly appointed headteacher has acted quickly to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report and has ensured that roles and responsibilities of key staff are more sharply defined. While the management of some individual subjects is very good, more comprehensive systems are needed to ensure that the achievement of all students is raised.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students respond very positively to life at the school. They enjoy a wide range of activities and respond well to challenging and good teaching. Good opportunities are given for students to work independently and they show great willingness to accept a range of additional responsibilities, including running an active student union and organising foreign visits.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students enter school with levels of attainment that are **below average**. During the last five years performance in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 has been **close to average**. Standards have improved, but at a slower rate than the national trend. Achievement in Year 9 is **good** and the overall standards in lessons are **close to average**. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE results have improved at a rate below the national trend, but overall standards in 2003 were close to the national average. Recent results show that when compared with similar schools, students are making **good** progress overall and achieve **well**. Standards in literacy and numeracy are **average**. Students' competency in information and communication technology is **average** in Year 9 and **good** in Years 10 and 11. The A level pass rate in the sixth form has been extremely high over the last few years, but overall results are below the national average. Current students are achieving **well**. Throughout the school, students with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is not their first language achieve **well**.

Year 9

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, students enter the school with below average literacy and numeracy skills and make good progress in the majority of the subjects that they follow.
- The quality of teaching has a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Standards are high in art and religious education and achievement is very good.
- Standards are below average in French and several students under-achieve.

Commentary

1. The table below indicates that in 2003 students reached overall standards that are close to average. The school's trend of improvement over the last three years has been below the national trend. Standards in the 2003 tests declined from the previous year, a reflection on the ability of the year group and predicted by the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.2 (34.5)	(33.3)
Mathematics	36.2 (35.7)	(34.7)
Science	33.6 (33.6)	(33.3)

There were 283 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Students join the school in Year 9 and this makes accurate assessment of their attainment on entry more difficult than for most schools. Indications from test results in Year 6 at middle schools suggest that a large proportion of the intake is below average when they join the school in Year 9. A significant number of students attend local selective schools and there are far fewer higher attaining students in Ferndown School compared with most all-ability comprehensive schools. The school is now more aware of the need to establish sharper data about students' attainment to improve target setting and raise attainment further. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards are average overall and achievement is good. The very high quality of teaching in art and religious education enables students to achieve very well and attain high standards. Students with special educational needs achieve well and make similar progress to other students.

Years 10 and 11

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2003 GCSE results are close to the national average.
- Students' progress in their GCSE courses is much better than in similar schools.
- The proportion of students passing GCSE is higher than their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 would suggest.
- A significant proportion of Year 10 and 11 students, mostly boys, under-achieve.
- High achieving pupils are entered for GCSE in Year 10.

Commentary

3. The table below indicates that over the last two years students reached standards that were close to the national average. However, students' achievement was much better than would have been expected based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 9.

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

	School results	National results 2003
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45.0 (56.4)	52.6
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92.0 (90.5)	88.6
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96.0 (98.0)	94.6
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33.7 (36.2)	34.7

There were 331 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress overall and the level of achievement in GCSE courses is above similar schools. This is because of good teaching, the positive attitudes of many students and more recent improvements to teaching and learning. The school's trend for improvement over the past four years, however, is below the national trend. In 2002 the school met its targets for GCSE passes, but set unrealistic targets for A*-C grades in 2003 which it did not meet. This was because boys in particular underachieved. The system for target setting is not yet sharp enough and pays insufficient attention to students' prior attainment.
5. The quality of students' work shows achievement by Year 11 is good overall. It is very good in religious education and above average in English, art, design and technology, history, geography, information and communication technology and physical education. Continued support in lessons from teaching assistants allows students with special educational needs and English as an additional language to follow examination courses and achieve well. Some students last year successfully continued onto further education.

Sixth form

Standards in post-16 examinations have been **below** the national average during the last four years but students have achieved **satisfactorily** overall. The examination pass rate is very high.

Commentary

6. In 2002 and 2003 virtually every student passed their examinations, many gaining the higher grades. Female students achieve results similar to the national average and significantly outperform the male students. Results, particularly within those subjects where the entry numbers are small, fluctuate significantly from year to year. Students are allowed to follow A level courses having gained only relatively moderate GCSE examination results. Owing to good teaching most students achieve well. In the subjects inspected, achievement is very good in physics, travel and tourism, art, geography and psychology.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision leads to **good** attitudes and relationships. Behaviour is **satisfactory** overall. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of students like the school and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- A significant minority, mostly boys, lack commitment to learning and sometimes disrupt lessons.
- Sixth form students work eagerly and are good role models.

Commentary

Attendance

7. Students' attendance in Years 9 to 11 is satisfactory in general and in line with the national average. There are a few students in each year group, however, with significant attendance problems.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/2003

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.7	School data:	1.6
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

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

Exclusions

8. Last year there were 117 fixed period exclusions, a high total. They worked as a deterrent. Few students gave cause for a second exclusion. There were eight permanent exclusions. The school provides good guidance for disaffected students. They work in small groups to devise their own ways to manage anger and make the right choices. Most achieve substantial success in their personal development. There is a strong anti-bullying policy. Students say the school sorts bullying out quickly when necessary.

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	1191	117	8
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0

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

9. Students have good attitudes to their learning. This is an improvement since the time of the previous report when attitudes were satisfactory. The previous inspection judged that spiritual, social, cultural and overall provision lacked co-ordination and was unsatisfactory. The school now has a co-ordinator. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. This shows clearly in the high quality religious education lessons. The school has addressed the previous weakness in multi-cultural education. Students experience poetry, art and music from many cultures. Visiting students from South Africa made a deep impression with their traditional songs. Another factor is students' respect for the new headteacher. A student said that in the past 'People thought they could get away with things'. Behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved. The new school uniform is having a positive effect and helping to raise students' self-esteem. The students who have special educational needs or English as an additional language speak highly of the provision within the school and the support they receive.
10. Parents and students say the behaviour of a few students disrupts some lessons and inspection findings confirm this. Because the school is committed to inclusion, it accepts students with behaviour difficulties from other schools and does its best to keep them included in school life. Inevitably, this affects the general level of classroom behaviour. To deal with the disruption, the school has a clear policy for managing behaviour in lessons, which includes a progression of sanctions. Because some teachers do not apply the policy consistently, behaviour overall suffers.

Sixth form

Sixth form students show **very good** interest in their life at school. They willingly accept responsibility and are eager to be good role models. Their attendance is **good**.

Commentary

11. The sixth form has a very good ethos. Students respond **very well** to the responsibility the school gives them. They are proud of their student council and delighted with their new 'College Block'. They are keenly interested in their learning and the extra-curricular activities. They are good role models for the younger students. Their attendance averages over 93 per cent in the present year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**, but the quality of the different aspects of this provision varies. Several of the aspects are strengths within the school. There are no significant weaknesses and the school is determined to improve the education it provides.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The quality of assessing students' work in Years 9 to 11 is **good** and is **satisfactory** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching promotes positive attitudes and personal development in students.
- Teaching motivates students and encourages them to achieve well.
- There is insufficient attention in some subjects to matching work to meet the needs of students with different abilities, especially ensuring the least able are adequately supported.
- The expectations of some teachers are not high enough to challenge all students to behave well and to achieve their very best work.
- There is insufficient rigour in the monitoring of teaching and learning by some staff to promote good practice and ensure sufficient challenge exists in all classes.
- Teaching and learning in religious education are very good and often outstanding.

Commentary

12. At the last inspection teaching and learning were judged as good and assessment as unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably and is helping to raise students' achievement. During the last few terms important strategic decisions have been made to improve the quality of education. Improving teaching and learning has been a major focus for staff development and school improvement. Recent more effective management has ensured that improvement to teaching and learning has been accomplished in several subjects and examination courses. Students are positive about school and the teaching they receive. They are mostly well behaved and have positive attitudes to their work; good teaching is making a positive contribution to their personal development. During the last two years the school has suffered from several long-term staff absences that have seriously affected the quality of teaching. This situation is now mostly resolved.
13. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching and learning from a wide range of evidence that includes observing lessons, an analysis of past test and examination results, a scrutiny of students' work, talking to students about their work and analysing school data and documentation. During the inspection 161 lessons were observed. A summary of the teaching is shown in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 165 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (5%)	44 (27%)	68 (41%)	39 (23%)	5 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

14. The above table indicates a high proportion of good teaching and a relatively low proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching. During the inspection the most effective teaching was observed in the sixth form. Throughout the school, teaching and learning are frequently good or very good, but there are still examples of unsatisfactory practice. Students in Years 10 and 11 are less positive about learning than in other year groups as a result of: a) lack of breadth to the curriculum; b) under-developed assessment arrangements; and c) a legacy of teaching that lacked rigorous monitoring and review proceedings. The majority of unsatisfactory teaching throughout school is due to:
- inadequate planning by teachers to match work more closely to the students' ability;
 - low expectations by teachers of what less able students can achieve, so that too many do not make sufficient progress;
 - insufficient support for developing students' literacy skills;
 - lessons that lacked pace and rigour and where learning was too slow;
 - unsatisfactory management of students' behaviour.
15. In a few subjects there is insufficient internal review leading to strategies for improvement, but in many this is an improving feature. There are many examples of good teaching to be found in most departments.
16. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching and learn successfully. Teachers mostly make good use of teaching assistants. In English, mathematics and science teaching assistants are part of the permanent staffing and this helps planning and close working with the teachers. Teachers match tasks well to students' abilities in a few subjects so students with learning difficulties work independently. However, in many lessons teachers set the same work for all students. Consequently, students underachieve because they struggle to understand the work that is not accessible to them. Teaching in the Effective Learning Centre with individual students is good and they learn well. Helpful booklets produced by teachers guide students in ways to study.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching and students' learning in Years 12 and 13 is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In a high proportion of lessons teaching and learning are good or very good.
- In several subjects teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning to identify strengths and weaknesses is still under-developed.
- Teaching and learning are very good in art, physics, travel and tourism, geography and psychology.

Commentary

17. During the inspection, of the 52 lessons observed, teaching was good in nearly half and very good in just over one-third of them. A scrutiny of students' work and talking with students confirmed this good level of teaching and learning. Teaching has improved considerably recently because of the intervention of the new headteacher and sixth form management team and the support given to students on a more regular basis. There is now more rigour and higher expectation of students' attendance, punctuality and effort. The improvement in the quality of sixth form accommodation is motivating the students.
18. The school has recognised many of the past weaknesses and begun to address these in many departments. The improved teaching, more relevant examination courses and better attendance by students are now having a direct impact on raising achievement and standards of work. Students are appreciative of this drive to raise standards.

Assessment

The quality of assessing students' work is **good** in Years 9 to 11 and **satisfactory** in the sixth form.

Commentary

19. There have been significant improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of students' work since the time of the previous inspection. The recently appointed assessment manager has undertaken a review of policy and practice, which has resulted in a more rigorous approach to overseeing students' progress. Teachers now have information on students' attainment levels on entry to the school and so are in a better position to evaluate their achievement over time. The information provided to parents about their children's progress is improving because of the recent changes. Assessment reports are sent home twice a year and parents are then invited to attend a review meeting to discuss how well their sons and daughters are progressing. Targets for improvement in each subject are also discussed at this meeting.
20. In most subjects students' work is assessed thoroughly and key pieces of work are levelled or graded according to National Curriculum or GCSE assessment criteria. The result is that students understand how well they are doing. In their marking of written work and in their oral feedback in lessons, teachers guide students on what they need to do to raise standards. This setting of individual targets for improvement is a recent development which is working well in Years 9, 10 and 11 but which has yet to be established as common practice in all sixth form subjects. Students are given opportunities to assess their own and each other's work, but as yet the practice is not consistently applied across all subjects.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum for all students is **good**.

The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is **good**.

The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of all students in Years 9 – 11 are **satisfactory** and in the sixth form they are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and relevant and supports good achievement in the majority of subjects for most students. It meets requirements except for citizenship in Year 9.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- The opportunities to enrich the curriculum, within subjects and through out-of-school activities, are good.
- The recent review of the curriculum, and recommendations for a 14-19 curriculum from 2004, are improving curriculum planning.
- Overall, accommodation is satisfactory although much is in need of updating and refurbishment. Accommodation for art, food technology and physical education is very good.
- The lack of specialist accommodation for drama restricts what can be taught in lessons.

Commentary

21. The curriculum for students in Year 9 meets their needs well except in provision for citizenship. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good range of courses offered to GCSE and good opportunities for the more able to take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. This enables them to undertake more advanced work in Year 11 and contributes to good achievement. The provision for learning in information and communication technology has been improved and all students now have access to specialist facilities. The ratio of computers to students is average. However, there are significant issues regarding a lack of access in many subjects. Some departments have insufficient or no computers. This limits the work that can be undertaken.
22. The curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good. Students are well integrated into their classes and take part in lessons, with the support of specialist and class teachers and teaching assistants.
23. The school provides a wide range of out-of-school activities and clubs, particularly for sport. Students value these and a substantial number take part. Visits to place of interest, field-work and foreign exchanges all contribute well to learning.
24. The recent review of its curriculum from 14-19 has been thorough. It has been based on consultation with students, parents, teachers and governors. The recommendations reflect improved planning, with a good focus on balancing academic and vocational courses and on building in possibilities for progress in the sixth form or in employment.
25. Accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The areas for art, food technology and physical education are very good. Accommodation is poor for drama and students have limited access to specialist equipment. Many buildings are showing their age and are in need of redecoration and refurbishment. The school has started a maintenance programme to address this. The facilities manager regularly checks the buildings and deficiencies are dealt with quickly. The school has full disability access.
26. Resources for the curriculum are satisfactory, except in music where there is a lack of computer equipment. Lack of funding restricts the range and variety of English texts for use in lessons. Library resources are currently adequate and are being reviewed. Improvement to the curriculum since the previous inspection has been good.

Sixth form

The overall quality of the curriculum to meet the needs of students in Years 12 and 13 is **good**. The opportunity in the sixth form for enrichment, including out-of-school activities is **good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the sixth form curriculum are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value the range of examination courses and variety of extra-curricular activities.
- Innovative courses add value to students' learning.
- The provision for art education in Year 14 is excellent.
- Provision for basic skills is unsatisfactory.
- There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.

Commentary

27. The wide range of courses to A and AS level allows students a good choice of academic subjects. There is an increasing range of courses leading to vocational qualifications. Students value the opportunity to pursue their interests through study at an advanced level. They also enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities provided. The curriculum provides good routes to further study and employment.
28. AS level courses in English and critical studies are an innovation that is adding value to students' learning in other subjects. Provision for the development of key skills is currently unsatisfactory. The provision for the foundation course in art and design in Year 14 is excellent. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements to provide religious education to all students in the sixth form. The new sixth form block provides a range of teaching and social rooms, but currently there are limited study facilities. Accommodation restrictions for the main school also apply to the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares **very well** for its students. It gives them **good** personal guidance and prepares them **very well** for life after they leave school. It keeps **well** in touch with their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school cares very well for students' health, safety and well-being.
- It gives students good guidance and support in their personal development.
- The school consults students well and acts on what they say.
- There are good procedures to help students settle in when they join the school.

Commentary

29. Ferndown Upper provides very good care for students' health, safety and well-being. It updates its health and safety policy regularly. It has carried out substantial recent improvements to the 30-year-old buildings. The site manager and his staff correct most minor issues daily. The local education authority has supported the school well in improving the safety of the site. However, the low level of exterior lighting around the school remains a concern. A senior manager is the designated person with responsibility for child protection. She makes sure all staff are well aware of the requirements. The medical room is comfortable and well organised.
30. The previous report judged that pastoral support was good. The school has sustained this good quality of support. Pastoral staff provide students with good support. They stay with their year groups from the start of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 and know their students very well. The school has good arrangements to encourage students with behaviour difficulties to come back successfully to learning. For example, it has arranged a motor mechanics course for students most at risk of exclusion. The learning support and student guidance teams work effectively to support students with special educational needs.

31. The school values students' views. The school council is articulate and influential. Recently it contributed to the behaviour, anti-bullying and race relations policies. It has helped to modify the school uniform and achieved a reduction in prices in the canteen.
32. There are good opportunities for students joining from the middle schools to get to know Ferndown Upper, its staff and its students. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting said the two induction days at the start of the year helped the children settle in happily.

Sixth form

The quality of advice, support and guidance is **good**. The involvement of students, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**. The school gives its sixth form students **good** opportunities to develop maturely and responsibly.

Commentary

33. The quality of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is good. It has improved significantly under the school's new leadership. Students feel well supported. One of the strengths is the way students' views have been listened to and acted upon. Recent developments have enhanced sixth formers' sense of maturity. They have their own student union. Their new college block opened very recently. The arts foundation course for students in Year 14 brings in students from other schools and backgrounds. These factors combine to encourage sixth form students to work independently, enthusiastically and reliably.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents, **very good** links with the community and **good** links with other schools, all of which have a positive effect on students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with the community increase students' opportunities for learning.
- The school has good links with other schools and colleges.
- Some parents feel they do not get good information about their children's progress.

Commentary

34. Ferndown Upper School identifies very closely with its local community. Students value the wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and the arts. They make full use of good facilities at the adjacent leisure centre and local clubs. For example, they succeed at high levels in soccer, rugby, basketball and golf. Students sing carols for senior citizens and a concert in the centre of Ferndown raised substantial funds for the Red Cross. Local businesses look on Ferndown as 'their' school and sponsor new initiatives. They have a high regard for Ferndown students on work experience. They award prizes for art and essay writing competitions. These activities enhance students' self-confidence and they help students understand their responsibilities as members of the community. The school has established a multi-agency inclusion group, which is successfully supporting a number of students who find it difficult to succeed in school.
35. The school has good links with other local schools. The 'Ferndown Pyramid' arrangement enables upper and middle schools' staff to consult closely together. Headteachers, subject co-ordinators, pastoral and special educational needs staff all have regular meetings. The pyramid has appointed a inclusion support worker to help families throughout their life at the schools. There are plenty of informal links. Students from Ferndown Upper visit the middle schools and answer their students' questions. Year 8 students take part in an art course at the upper school during the summer holidays. First and middle school students are taking the children's roles in the upper school's production of *Oliver*.

36. Parents think well of the school and links are satisfactory overall. Every question on the questionnaire produced more positive than negative replies. Some parents are concerned about disruptive behaviour in lessons by a few students. This report shows that the school works hard to improve the behaviour of the disaffected students. Some parents are not satisfied with the information they receive about their children's progress. The school sent out its own questionnaire in February 2003. In response to parents' requests, it now arranges meetings with subject teachers. The first meeting took place during the inspection week and it was well attended. The school recognises it needs to improve the annual reports. In summer 2002 they used a mathematical grading to inform parents about their child's progress. Some reports used different grading methods for different subjects. This did not give a clear picture of the students' progress. The school publishes a newsletter each half term and gives parents useful information about upcoming events and features students' writing and interviews. It is available on paper and on the school's website to promote easier communication to parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership throughout the school is **good**.

The headteacher provides **very good** leadership.

Other key staff with responsibility provide **good** leadership.

The overall effectiveness of management is **satisfactory** throughout the school.

The overall quality of governance is **good**.

The school has some significant barriers to learning and raising achievement, but has developed **satisfactory** strategies to overcome many of them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clear vision and determination of the headteacher have successfully motivated others.
- The quality of leadership of subjects and other aspects of school life is too variable and some is not effective.
- Review and monitoring systems have been established, but are not always applied with sufficient rigour by staff with a line management responsibility.
- Performance management is increasingly effective and linked well to staff development.
- The governing body is organised well and has a clear vision of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, not all statutory requirements are fully in place.
- Financial management is satisfactory, but there is still a substantial budget deficit.

Commentary

Leadership

37. The headteacher is a very good leader. At the time of the inspection he had been in post for just under one year and in this relatively short time he has taken positive steps to move the school forward. The strategies already evolving stem from the judicious extension of responsibilities within the senior management team and there is now a cohesion within this group that is bringing about considerable change and improvement in the way the school is organised and managed. Members of the senior management team have complementary strengths and give positive support to the headteacher.
38. The headteacher works tirelessly on behalf of the school promoting its name and ensuring it is properly recognised for the achievements of its students. He is visible around the school and makes himself accessible to students, parents and staff alike. He is harnessing the considerable potential of staff and students and much progress is being made.
39. The school now has a well-structured management system with a framework of regular meetings. Consultation is now well developed and through membership of working parties, pastoral groups and departmental meeting all staff have the opportunity to have their views listened to.

40. Many departments are well-led with a clear focus of raising students' attainment and their aspirations. Particularly successful departments are English, geography, art, religious education and physical education. The senior management team has recognised that some heads of department need help and through the clear line management structure that is now in place this support is being given.
41. Inevitably, the leadership has not yet been able to bring about all the improvements that are needed. The senior staff recognise that more needs to be done to devise a curriculum that matches the needs of all the students, to institute a whole school behaviour management policy to address the instances of unacceptable behaviour that sometimes occurs. There is also recognition in school that there is an inconsistent approach to the implementation and monitoring of the school policies which are being put in place.

Management

42. Senior and middle managers use performance data effectively to monitor standards and students' achievement. The procedures for monitoring the work of subject departments have improved since the time of the last inspection; however, they are not always applied with sufficient rigour by staff with a line management responsibility. Subject development plans are now more closely linked to the school's improvement plan. There is still considerable variability between departments in the quality of their self-evaluation. The evaluation of teaching has improved, but is not yet rigorous enough through the school.
43. Performance management is in place, with thorough records of all reviews. The policies for monitoring performance are clearly linked to the new line-management systems for all staff. It is too soon to judge the impact of these systems. In-service training for all staff is good and is now closely linked to the school's improvement plan and is accurately costed. There is a comprehensive programme of induction and training for newly qualified teachers, but this does not extend to all staff new to the school. Considerable effort has been made to recruit and retain staff of high quality. This has not been possible in all subjects and this remains a barrier to raising achievement.

Financial information

44. Financial management overall is satisfactory. Proper procedures are followed and the governors monitor budget spending regularly. However, the budget deficit has risen to £225,000 with a projected year-end deficit of £250,000. The governors and headteacher have agreed a deficit reduction plan with the local education authority but progress in implementing it has been slow. To date, rigorous action has not been taken to prevent further growth in the deficit. The governors and headteacher have worked hard to apply the principles of best value to decision-making. This is working well in the review of the curriculum currently underway. The headteacher is aware of the need to embed these principles further throughout the school.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,889,362	Balance from previous year	- 174,513
Total expenditure	4,061,125	Balance carried forward to the next	- 171,763
Expenditure per student	3182.70		

Value for money

45. Taking into account:
- how much is spent per student in Years 9 to 11 and the sixth form;
 - the good achievement of students throughout the school;
 - the satisfactory behaviour and attitudes of students in all years;
 - the overall effective teaching and learning;
 - the breadth of the curriculum and good range of extra-curriculum opportunities;

The school provides satisfactory value for money and the sixth form is cost effective.

Governance

46. The overall quality of governance is good. The school is fortunate in having a capable and committed governing body that is well led. Many governors have specialist knowledge and use it to the benefit of the school. Many have close involvement with the school through their committees and subject departments. They are strongly committed and their work is well informed, providing a strategic and policy framework for the operation of the school. There is now an open and honest partnership between governors and the headteacher, firmly rooted in a commitment to providing high quality education for all students. They do not satisfactorily meet all the required statutory requirements as outlined in other sections of this report.

Aids and barriers to raising achievement

47. There are several significant barriers to learning in school that make it difficult to raise standards. These include:
- the many students who have low self-esteem and aspirations;
 - the considerable difficulties in appointing and retaining specialist staff;
 - long-term staff absence;
 - the school has a deficit budget that restricts curriculum initiatives and acquiring additional resources;
 - the higher than average proportion of students starting school with levels of literacy and numeracy that are below average.
48. Several successful initiatives have been put in place in order to overcome these barriers. The school has several 'effective learning' initiatives to raise students' self image and their perception of what education can offer them. Students spoke very enthusiastically about courses, such as 'Breakthrough to Excellence' and 'Raising Attainment', which they claimed had inspired them to work harder and achieve more. Improving students' learning is being achieved in several ways, such as broadening the curriculum to offer all students a more relevant range of courses, the use of mentors and developing a pride in their appearance through wearing the new school uniform.
49. Staff absence has been high, but there is evidence of recent improvement as staff morale improves due to the positive leadership of the new headteacher. Successful support and development programmes for staff are helping to address this problem as well. All staff have opportunities for their own professional development and an assistant headteacher organises a successful and very well organised in-service training programme.
50. The most significant barrier that the school has not successfully addressed is to eradicate the deficit budget. Insufficient attention is given to developing literacy and numeracy skills in lessons throughout all subjects.

Sixth form

Key staff with responsibilities in the sixth form provide **good** leadership. The effectiveness of the management of the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the sixth form is good and improving.
- The head of sixth form has created a positive work ethic.
- The monitoring and evaluation of assessment arrangements and the quality of teaching to raise students' standards are under-developed, but improving.

Commentary

51. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The newly appointed headteacher has acted quickly to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report and has ensured that roles and responsibilities of key staff are more sharply defined. There is a positive work ethos in most classes. There is now a clear focus on reshaping sixth form provision to meet the needs of students more effectively and with greater cost effectiveness. Links with the governors are satisfactory, but still under-developed. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory and improvements are still continuing. While the management of individual subjects such as geography, art and English is very good, comprehensive and systematic systems to analyse and evaluate examination results, retention ratios and the sharing of good practice to raise students' standards are under-developed.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Workplace learning

The overall quality of the provision for workplace learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching includes high levels of individual support for each student.
- A flexible course, well matched to the needs of the students.
- Good leadership and management with thorough and regular evaluation of the course ensure on-going improvements.
- Good individual progress reviews effectively inform students of how well they are doing.
- There is no nationally recognised accreditation for the course at present.

Commentary

52. The students' achievement in the course is satisfactory. There is a clear focus on improving presentation and literacy skills and students try hard to produce work of good quality. Students are given regular feedback and this motivates and informs them of what they need to do to improve. Teachers have a good understanding of the course and this enables all students to develop their knowledge and skills about business and production systems.
53. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers work hard to raise students' self-esteem and achieve well. Lessons are planned and managed so students of different ability are able to make progress. Students are engaged purposefully and make good progress in lessons. The teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. Students are keen to share their knowledge and understanding with each other and are encouraged to talk about their work. Teachers and teaching assistants provide high levels of individual support and guidance for each student. This support is valued by students who otherwise may have dropped out of full time education.
54. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum for work related learning is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new developments, to respond to the needs of students and the skills and experience of individual teachers. At present the school provides its own certification for the course and not a nationally recognised certification. This is an aspect to be developed in the future.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The overall quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' levels of achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 are good.
- Students achieve well because of the good teaching.
- The very good leadership of the subject has created a climate for learning in which all students make good progress.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating are not sufficiently developed by all staff.
- There are few opportunities for teachers to share good practice by observing each other.

Commentary

55. Students progress well and their levels of achievement are good because of the quality of the teaching and the very effective leadership provided by the head of department.
56. In recent years students have been attaining above average standards in the GCSE English language and English literature examinations and the results represent good achievement when set against their below average attainment on entry to the school. The girls have been attaining particularly well compared with their national counterparts. Achievement was also good in 2003 when there was a dip in performance. The high standards have been maintained in the work seen during the inspection and the most competent students and those with special educational needs are working at well above expected levels. This is because of the way in which teachers have adapted work to meet their learning needs and altered the setting arrangements to group them according to their levels of competency. The standards reached in recent national tests at the end of Year 9 have been more variable because of changes in students' attainment on entry to the school. In 2002, for example, standards were above average and achievement was very good. In 2003 standards were average, but this still represented good achievement for those students. The standard of work now seen in Year 9 is above average and the high levels of achievement are being maintained.
57. The good achievement of students is because of effective teaching and strong leadership. The overall standard of teaching is good, but there were also very good and excellent lessons seen in which students learnt a great deal because of the pace and challenge of the work and the intellectual demands made of them. Teachers work well as a team under the strong leadership of the head of department and there is a sense of direction and purpose pervading all they do. Those teachers new to the department are well supported and are already making a significant contribution to how well students learn. There are excellent practices in questioning techniques and in forming positive attitudes to learning, but there are insufficient opportunities arranged for teachers to observe each other at work and disseminate these more widely.
58. The head of department is rigorous in his analysis of the subject's performance and is a key figure in setting high professional standards for staff and students to follow. His leadership is very good and as a result there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. The management of the subject is good but the procedures for monitoring and reviewing the work of the department have not been sufficiently developed to involve all staff with management responsibilities. There is the capacity for the department to build on what has already been achieved because of the commitment of all teachers to improving further the quality of their work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Students' skills in English language and literacy match national average standards. Most students successfully adapt their writing to the needs of the subjects they study and they achieve well because of their confidence and fluency in applying this skill. Reading standards are also at expected levels and students have a broad basic vocabulary and an understanding of specialist terms from across the curriculum. They have the speaking skills needed to engage in discussion about their work and most listen well in class and show respect for the views of others.
60. The school has done much to promote the teaching of literacy skills across all subjects. There has been an audit of teachers' experience of such work and training provided to improve their skills. The literacy policy is in place and the co-ordinator has provided guidance on areas for development. He has done much to keep his colleagues abreast of good practice but sees the need for a more concerted and consistent teaching approach from all teachers. The inspectors agree with this view.
61. There is much good practice in the promotion of literacy which could be disseminated to all departments. This is so in religious education where there is a strong focus on developing writing in different styles and where students are encouraged to speak clearly and to listen. There is good use of specialist terminology in every science lesson and opportunities are provided for students to reflect on and discuss their work. There is an inconsistency of approach to teaching literacy, however, because there are subjects where no provision is made in the schemes of work and where students are not confident in the use of specialist vocabulary.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was on French, German and Spanish.

French, German and Spanish

The overall quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment at GCSE is variable with much underachievement by some students particularly from middle and lower sets in French from Year 9.
- Achievement in Spanish and German is good and students make rapid progress in Year 9.
- Teaching in the foreign language is skilled and contributes to students' confidence in listening and understanding.
- Analysing data and systems for monitoring is not fully developed.
- Leadership is well focused on weaknesses in learning and contributes to a strong and committed collegiate approach to implementing improvements.

Commentary

62. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectations, but achievement in French over the year is generally satisfactory since students enter the school with below average standards. Students make rapid progress in learning a second foreign language. At GCSE the trend of results at grades A*-C in French is below average. Some students capable of gaining passes at grades C-E underachieve although the percentage of students who enter for the examination is higher than in most schools. The percentage of students who gain a pass grade is in line with the national pass rate. In GCSE Spanish and German results are more in line with national averages although there was underperformance particularly by boys in 2003. In the last two years students have performed better in other subjects. Girls and particularly boys have under-performed at times over the last two years.
63. The standards of work seen across the school during the inspection are generally in line with national expectations. Higher attaining students make satisfactory progress overall.

From Year 9 their understanding of the structure of language is developing well and their listening, reading and writing skills are sometimes good. Standards in speaking are variable; students respond easily to the teacher and each other where short or structured responses are needed. However, they lack confidence and initiative in sustaining conversations or in speaking at length when unprompted. Under-performance persists among some students in lower sets, most noticeably in Year 11. Factors influencing this unsatisfactory progress are pockets of student disaffection, incidences of low-level misbehaviour that disrupt lessons and incidences of inadequate aspects of teaching. The good and increasingly flexible curriculum choice at Year 10 is beginning to add motivation; students like the opportunity to pursue German or Spanish in Key Stage 4.

64. Teaching is satisfactory overall with many good aspects, but interviews with students about their work indicated that unsatisfactory teaching affects a few classes. Students appreciate teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. Explicit learning objectives stated at the beginning of lessons and time to evaluate at the end help students understand their progress. Students value the information given about their potential attainment, the identification of a target level and the frequent feedback on their progress. The marking policy is good and students find the precise advice on how to improve helpful. Students are motivated by the lively and attractively mounted displays of posters and work and by good information about the usefulness of foreign language skills for the world of work.
65. Teachers use English terminology effectively to build students' understanding about the foreign language. Teachers use colourful overhead transparencies, props, mimes and 'cue cards' effectively to foster speaking skills and provide clear written guidance to support higher level speaking, but do not provide sufficient support for complex speaking skills in lessons. Homework is set regularly and writing tasks support consolidation of learning. However, although they know different strategies to memorise language, most students admit to not doing learning homework. Teaching assistants provide excellent support in helping students with special educational needs to sustain concentration and participate in activities. Some sensitive placements into sets enable students to achieve well. For example, a student with English as an additional language flourished in a higher set. The under-achievement of a minority of students in lower sets is affected by irregular setting of homework with irregular and unhelpful marking. During the inspection a few students worked out of their normal set following misbehaviour and several students voiced concern about poor behaviour in class.
66. The head of department offers good leadership. He has a clear understanding of developments in modern language teaching and is highly committed to improving learning. His evaluation of the department is clear and development priorities are well chosen. The department works well and purposefully together in implementing improvement strategies. Management is satisfactory. Some initiatives such as analysing data and systems for monitoring and evaluation are not yet fully effective and there has been limited impact in addressing students' disaffection.
67. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory. Teaching writing is more effective and has led to higher standards. Progress in raising boys' attainment is mixed but their response is positive to writing activities, clear lesson objectives, end of lesson evaluation, individual target grades, self-evaluation and specific advice on how to improve. Students' lack of confidence in speaking remains a weakness. There is still work to do in tackling under-performance at average and lower levels of attainment.

MATHEMATICS

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for some students to enter GCSE at the end of Year 10, start Advanced work in Year 11, or follow vocational courses is good.
- The assessment procedures are not well used to inform students of what they need to do to improve.
- Students do not understand their personal targets.
- The relationships between teachers and students are good.

Commentary

68. Students enter the school with levels of attainment below the national average. At the end of Year 9 results in mathematics are broadly in line with national expectations, which represents good achievement. Over the course of the last four years standards at the end of Year 11 have been broadly in line with national averages, but dipped below in 2003. The school has analysed the reason for this decline and have identified and resolved the problem. From the quality of students' work seen during the inspection achievement in mathematics is good in Years 9 to 11.
69. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Assessment procedures have been established, but these have not yet been sufficiently developed in order for them to inform students about what they need to do to improve. The policy of not annotating exercise books with grades of any kind denies the students access to information about their own achievement which should be readily available to them every lesson.
70. The department uses a range of data to set 'challenge grades' as targets for the students. However, the students do not understand these 'challenge grades' and are unable to explain their personal mathematics targets and whether or not they are on track to achieve them. The system of target setting in mathematics, introduced since the last inspection, is not working well.
71. There is a pleasant atmosphere within most mathematics classes, the result of the good teacher-student relationships which exist within the department. The teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and generally confident in their abilities to deal effectively with occasional acts of minor disobedience or disruption. This means that most teachers take such distractions in their stride, are relaxed and comfortable in front of the class and concentrate fully on the processes of teaching and learning.
72. Some of the more able students are encouraged to take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10 and then study for an advanced course in mathematics in Year 11. This provision is good. A similar arrangement is in place at the other end of the spectrum. Students for whom the work related curriculum is relevant are encouraged to take the examination early so that if they do enrol on the alternate course they have already achieved a pass in GCSE mathematics.
73. Although progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, the provision for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. The head of department does not facilitate sufficient access for students to utilise the computer resources already purchased. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. The subject leader has a team of mutually supportive teachers who are developing a focus on raising standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. The standards of numeracy throughout the school are average. The school has established a sound policy for numeracy across the curriculum with a member of staff being

responsible for overseeing its implementation. The students speak confidently and positively about their mathematical experiences in the school and how they are equipped to use their skills in other subjects. Staff have received training on how to support numeracy within their subject areas and link teachers have been assigned from the mathematics department. There are some good examples of mathematics across the curriculum, most notably in design and technology, history, science and geography. For instance, in the latter area students in Year 10 used their graphical skills to construct a flood hydrograph which is used to measure the time lapse between rainfall in the highlands and flooding in the lowlands.

SCIENCE

The overall quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some very good teachers in the department to act as role models to others.
- Regular marking encourages students to work hard.
- A wide variation in the quality of teaching, including some that is unsatisfactory.
- There is an inconsistency amongst staff in the application of departmental policies.
- Frequent and effective use of practical work improves students' experimental skills.

Commentary

75. Students start Year 9 with below average attainment. In the 2002 national curriculum tests results were in line with national averages and in 2003 they were similar. The standard of work seen was also broadly in line with national averages. This represents good achievement. The results for Year 11 students for the past two years have been broadly in line with national averages, as was the standard of work seen. Overall, in Years 10 and 11 students achieve satisfactorily. There is not a significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Several teachers provide good role models, consistently producing good or very good lessons. However, some teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers commonly refer to keywords in their lessons to improve students' literacy levels. The most effective lessons have a clear structure with a range of engaging activities that have pace and offer challenge to students. The activities selected in these lessons are well matched to the different learning styles. In less effective lessons students are not engaged because the task is not motivating and goes on for too long or the students are passive for most of the time. Some lessons lack sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. There is a good range of experiments so that students' practical skills develop well. Support for writing, which helps students plan investigations effectively, is in evidence, but is not used by all teachers. Teaching assistants give effective support to students with special educational needs.
77. For most students, homework is set regularly and their work is marked. Teachers include encouraging comments that will help students to improve and some often set targets to raise the attainment of their students. Due to staffing difficulties some students' work has not been regularly marked.
78. The leadership and management of the faculty are satisfactory. The head of faculty is a good teacher and could act as a role model to other staff. Coping with staffing difficulties has reduced the pace of development in some areas. The best schemes of work, which reflect the National Key Stage 3 Science Strategy, are comprehensive and provide good support for teachers in their planning. However, some are too brief. There is a lack of consistency in the application of some policies, such as marking, so that the best practice is not used across the whole faculty. The school produces a range of performance data, but its analysis is not used sufficiently well in science to help teachers plan their work nor to set challenging targets for students. There is a wide choice of courses on offer, but they do

not cater well for the gifted and talented students. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The overall quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in class work and in answering routine questions and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured with a range of activities that effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of ICT through other subjects.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management.
- Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 do not accurately reflect individual students' attainment.

Commentary

79. The 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that the attainment of students was well above the standard expected nationally. There were no GCSE examinations taken in 2002 and 2003.
80. The attainment of students in the current Year 9 is in line with national expectations. In lessons students demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They can use desk-top publishing to a high level of competence. Students have access to the Internet and confidently use it to download images and data. Most pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well by the end of Year 9. The difference in attainment indicated by the 2003 tests results and the current Year 9 students is due to inaccurate previous teacher assessments.
81. In Years 10 and 11, students' attainment in the practical elements of ICT is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. In the GCSE classes students are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desk-top publishing, data bases and spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. Students are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. Basics skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the courses being offered. Students develop and apply their skills further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects.
82. In lessons the quality of teaching and learning is good. The competent teaching contributes to students' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenges. The management of classes is satisfactory. Clear targets are set for students of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates students and maintains their interest. Relationships are good and the skilled support given to students in their work quickly builds their confidence. A particular strength is the way that teachers use questioning to reinforce key points ensuring that students have a good understanding. Students respond well and teachers acknowledge their answers with praise and encouragement. The good teaching is well supported by a very good technician.
83. There is good leadership and management provided by the head of department. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities.

84. There are now good assessment systems in place. However, the tracking and assessment of students' attainment and progress are not used effectively in Year 9 to inform teachers' planning. The good development plan lists targets to raise attainment, priorities to secure high quality teaching and learning and providing an ICT curriculum across the school.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

85. The role of the co-ordinator is developing, but the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. This is because there is very little tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of ICT across the curriculum and a specific policy for ICT across the curriculum is not being implemented.
86. Standards of work seen in a number of subjects is satisfactory and there is evidence of good quality work produced in design and technology and English. There are still few opportunities for students to apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers in most other subjects.
87. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network, but the skills of individual teachers have not been used effectively to teach the curriculum. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Students' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Technical support in school is very good. The computer rooms provide good opportunities for students to use computers outside of lessons when they can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on geography, history and religious education.

Geography

The overall quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good.
- Students achieve well because they have good attitudes and application to their work.
- Underachievement of a few students occurs when expectations are not high enough and work does not match individual needs.
- Students are not sufficiently encouraged to develop their own learning and acquire independent research skills.
- Leadership is very good and there is good management and organisation.

Commentary

88. Students start with below average standards because many have weaknesses in written work and gaps in their subject knowledge. By the end of Year 9 students reach average standards and achieve well because their writing improves, their knowledge widens and they understand better how to explain differences between places and locate them accurately. Performance in the 2003 GCSE was above average for grades A*-G, but below average for grades A*-C as several students under-performed in assessed coursework. Girls' performed well below average, boys were in line, but students achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Current standards of work are average and students can use a range of subject skills to investigate local geographical patterns. Students with additional learning needs achieve well in relation to their potential.
89. Teachers' lesson planning is very good. Students learn effectively because they know what teachers expect of them. Brisk pace keeps them busy, but with sufficient time to do their

work. Teachers assess well the extent of students' learning by sharp questions and tests. Helpful marking encourages their progress and points ways to improve further. However, assessment information is not always well used to match work to what students with additional learning needs can do or stretch fully those with talent. Nevertheless, teachers include all students very well by relevant questions and support, using teaching assistants effectively. In some lessons, teachers do not apply high enough expectations so boys under-achieve because the pace is slow and they do not engage fully. Teachers have confident command of the subject, but occasionally use it to provide too much direction and this prevents students from developing their own independent responses.

90. The head of department has a vision of high achievement and leads a cohesive team of teachers. Use of monitoring and assessment information is underdeveloped as a tool for improvement. The department has maintained standards at the level of the last inspection, but information and communication technology remains underused in teaching and learning. There have been good improvements since the last inspection.

History

The overall quality of provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of the current work are in line with national averages.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The leadership and management of the team leader are good.
- The school has made good improvement in history since the previous inspection.

Commentary

91. The standards attained in GCSE in 2003 showed a significant fall to below the national average. The school considers that these results reflected the ability of the 2003 cohort. The standards observed during the inspection show that students are attaining average standards, in line with expectations at the ages of 14 and 16. In GCSE, predicted grades anticipate above-average standards in 2004. The quality of their work supports this view.
92. In Year 9 most students are making satisfactory progress. The achievement of some students in this year has been affected by staffing difficulties. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good and students make good progress. They enjoy learning history and are developing their skills of analysis, evaluation and debate well. They respond well to challenging and exciting teaching and their effort and concentration are good.
93. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Year 9 the disruption caused by staff absence has resulted in slower learning and progress, although teaching is at least satisfactory, and in one class it is very good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good overall and sometimes very good, and students respond well to the lively and stimulating way in which history is brought to life. Teachers use their good knowledge of history to plan very well structured lessons. They provide a good balance of new learning and consolidation of what has gone before. This is an important factor in the good progress students make. Teachers are particularly skilful in stimulating class discussion about the evidence presented and about its reliability. Students are learning well how to link cause and effect and to understand the broader issues that led to both world wars and conditions in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. They are developing well their skills of historical enquiry and about how to present valid arguments.
94. The subject leader provides good leadership and management. She works closely with a strong team of able and committed teachers who share good practice, resources and planning. Monitoring of teaching and of the curriculum is in place and action is taken by

staff to improve students' performance. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as teaching and curriculum planning have improved.

Religious education

The overall quality of provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership results in a shared enthusiasm for and commitment to continuing improvement in the department.
- Excellent and very good teaching means all students achieve very well.
- Religious education makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development.
- There is limited access to information and communication technology.

Commentary

95. GCSE results for 2003 were outstanding with 90 per cent of candidates achieving A*-C grades and 76 per cent gaining A*/A. Students did much better in religious education than in other subjects. Throughout each year, both boys and girls achieve very well. By the end of Year 9, and in Year 11 non-examination groups, standards of attainment are above those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Students understand well how religious beliefs and other ideologies affect people's moral decision making. They use technical terminology accurately and give sound reasons for their opinions.
96. By the end of Year 11 students working towards a GCSE examination know exactly what the course requires of them. They are familiar with the theories of great philosophical and religious thinkers, can apply them to a range of ethical dilemmas and use them to help clarify and express their own ideas.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good overall and excellent in the majority of lessons. Teachers know their subject very well and have an excellent grasp of how students learn. They use a wide variety of activities and resources in order to engage the interest of both boys and girls and build up their understanding step by step. Teachers know their students well and are able to support their learning needs. Lessons move at a brisk pace. Students respond positively to the challenge of lessons and hold their teachers in very high regard. As a consequence, their behaviour is excellent and students of all abilities work hard and achieve very well.
98. The leadership of religious education is excellent and management is very good. Both are founded on an enthusiasm for the subject and a commitment to its continuing improvement. Planning is detailed and marking is thorough, helping students understand how to improve their work. Because of the course it offers and the excellent relationships teachers have established, the department makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral and social development.
99. Since the last inspection adequate provision has been made for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The course in Years 9 to 11 has been broadened to include Islam and Buddhism and now makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. The department has limited access to computer facilities to extend learning even further.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The overall quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, especially teachers' subject knowledge, high expectations and effective pupil management.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management which ensures students achieve well.
- There are few opportunities for vocational education in the current curriculum.

Commentary

100. By the end of Year 9, students' overall attainment is close to the national average. In 2002, GCSE examinations results were above the national average, but there was a dip in the 2003 results. The decline in results was due to a lack of specialist staffing during the previous year. This situation has now been resolved.
101. Standards in Year 9 are in line with the national average. Students achieve well because in lessons teachers provide opportunities for them to reach higher levels than expected. Students produce articles of good quality, express their ideas very well and communicate their designs clearly. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
102. Students' attainment in Year 11 is average. They make good progress in lessons and their achievement is good overall. Students generally produce high quality practical work, detailed and well presented project folders for textiles and graphic products. Where students use information and communication technology, the quality of course work improves. In graphic design lessons, students make good use of computers, particularly computer-aided design and manufacture, but this area is under-developed. Students are challenged to focus on requirements of the GCSE examination and as a result, they understand what they need to do to reach the higher grades.
103. Teaching and learning are good. In lessons the teachers' enthusiasm, high expectations and good subject knowledge engage and motivate the students. The higher attaining students are sufficiently challenged to achieve high standards. Staff work hard to develop positive relationships with classes. Teachers ensure that key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. The technician makes an effective contribution to the work of the department and supports teachers in lessons very well. There is good use of numeracy in calculations when measuring length, weight and time.
104. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers generally provide encouraging and motivating comments. In Year 11 the quality marking provides a commentary that shows students how to improve their work. The process in place for assessment of students' attainment is good. Assessment results are used effectively in planning and teaching to raise standards. The department makes good use of value added information to analyse pupil progress. There is a good level of self-evaluation and self-assessment by pupils, together with teacher moderation.
105. The head of department provides good leadership and manages design and technology very well. Although there have been improvements in test and examination results he is aware of the changes needed to improve results further. Currently, assessments in Year 9 are not rigorous enough. There is currently insufficient provision for vocational work through the 14 – 19 curriculum, but there are plans to address this issue.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were the main focus of the inspection, but the work in drama and media studies were also sampled.

Drama

The overall quality of provision in drama is **good**, because of the quality of the teaching and the effective way in which the subject is led.

Commentary

106. Drama is taught as a separate subject to all students in Year 9 and as an optional and popular GCSE examination course in Years 10 and 11. The work seen during the inspection indicates students are attaining average standards by the end of Year 9 and achievement is therefore good. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is close to national expectations because of the consistently good teaching. The level of achievement of these older students is also good. They are confident, work effectively in small groups and display very positive attitudes to the subject. They communicate well when speaking and understand how to use facial expression and posture to convey mood and feelings. They are able to work in role and can explore a range of moral and social issues through improvisation. The result is that the subject makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development. They also reflect on the values and beliefs of others to understand what motivates them and this contributes to their spiritual development as well as enabling them to develop their role-play.
107. Students progress well because of the quality of the teaching, which is of a good standard overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan well. They have high expectations and use a range of teaching strategies to motivate and challenge students. As a result they give of their best and progress well as they move through the school. There is a range of extra-curricular activities, including theatre visits, workshops and school productions, which broaden and enrich students' understanding and enjoyment of the subject. Accommodation is inadequate and limited to the hall stage and one other room. This restricts students' learning opportunities on the frequent occasions when the hall is used for school examinations.

Media Studies

Three lessons were observed and an analysis of students' folders and coursework undertaken.

The overall quality of provision in media studies is **good**,

Commentary

108. Standards attained in 2003 by Year 11 students in 2003 were below national averages. However, results in the previous year were above national figures. Inspection evidence indicates that the current students' work is above average and their achievement is good. This is because of the demanding nature of their work and effective teaching. Students demonstrate good understanding of technical terminology in their written work. Lesson planning and assessment are thorough and students receive detailed feedback on their work. Students have positive attitudes to the subject as seen in the high standard of presentation of their coursework. The media studies course is well led and managed. Examination results and trends are analysed carefully and action taken to gain improvements. Resources are limited and an increase in popularity of the subject has put considerable pressure on computer equipment.

Art

Overall the quality of provision in art is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good leadership of the department and an excellent team spirit.
- Specialist teaching is consistently good and creates high standards.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work.
- The progress made by higher attaining students is very good.
- After-school classes and a good range of visits to galleries broaden learning.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

Commentary

109. Standards are above average and students achieve well as a result of consistently good specialist teaching and an environment in which they enjoy and experience a wide range of art. Displays of high quality work celebrate success and significantly enhance the department and whole school environment.
110. Art skills are below average when students join the school in Year 9. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate standards below average standards in 2003. Current Year 9 students are achieving well and standards are average with the use of colour and painting skills a significant strength. Improvements to assessment and marking systems and regular comments in sketchbooks by teachers ensure students are aware of how to improve and develop good attitudes to learning. The strong focus on individual advice and support helps all students, including those with special educational needs, to progress well.
111. In Years 10 and 11 the proportion of students who opt for art is above that found nationally and achievement is good. Standards in GCSE examinations have been sustained above average over many years. Gifted and talented girls in particular achieved very well in 2002 attaining a much higher proportion of top grades than nationally. Boys also achieved well above the national average for the higher grades. In the most recent GCSE examinations, however, a small minority of disaffected boys underachieved. Gifted and talented students in the current Year 10 are achieving well. Teachers plan thoroughly, but sometimes direct work rather than challenging students to take their own decisions, which limits the range of work accomplished. A very good selection of after school classes and homework clubs and visits to galleries support good achievement and broaden cultural appreciation. There is a lack of access to computers in the department and this inhibits the development of students' design skills.
112. Very good leadership and management support an excellent team approach that benefits all students. High expectations and vision by the head of department and the recent bid for specialist visual arts school status have sharpened self-evaluation and provide clear targets for future development. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' GCSE results are consistently above national averages.
- Teaching is good and students in Years 10 and 11 are expected to do their best.
- There is inadequate computer equipment and percussive resources for use in music lessons.
- Long term planning and monitoring of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

113. Achievement by students at the end of Year 11 is good and satisfactory for those in Year 9. Since the previous inspection GCSE examination results have improved. All students attained A*-C grade in 2003. This is well above the national average and is due to the sustained high quality teaching and knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. Year 11 students' compositions are varied in style and reflect personal interests in differing musical styles, such as minimalism and the chromatic style of Bartok's piano pieces. Year 11 students talk enthusiastically about their work; many have considerable strengths in performance. Less competent students are taught how to develop and improvise musical fragments over a structured chord bass. This means that they also achieve well in relation to their prior attainment when starting in Year 9.
114. When students arrive in Year 9 their attainment is variable and generally below expectations. By the end of Year 9, standards for all students, including those with special educational needs, are average. Teaching for these students is satisfactory, but there is not always sufficient challenge to ensure that best use is made of time. This leads to complacency amongst some students and some under-achievement in lessons. However, where challenge is high and planning is thorough, new skills are developed and learning is consolidated through detailed questioning and practical tasks. There is still insufficient focus to provide more creative and academic challenge for the more competent performers. Students relate and support each other well and the ensemble work in lessons for students in Years 10 and 11 mean that they learn to evaluate and analyse each-others performances and as a result improve their own. The department is lacking sufficient and workable computers and students' work is too often interrupted by equipment failure.
115. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. During the inspection the head of music was on leave of absence. The co-operation and teamwork of the current staff means that day-to-day management has been satisfactory with assessment procedures being further developed to make students aware of their progress in relation to national expectations. Ensembles and concerts have taken place regularly. However, long term strategic planning, review and line management monitoring arrangements are unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and the performance of many is well above average.
- The quality of teaching is good, with knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers setting high expectations in terms of participation and behaviour.
- Staff give very generously of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and team sports.
- The standard of accommodation for the subject is very good.

Commentary

116. This is a successful and well-managed department that promotes good levels of achievement and makes a positive contribution towards raising students' level of physical fitness and confidence. There was a significant increase in the number of students entered for the GCSE in physical education in July 2003, with the number of students gaining the higher A*-C grade pass being in line with that attained nationally. Students' attainment in the examination compares very favourably to their attainment in their other subjects.
117. The majority of students in Year 9 are attaining at or above the level expected nationally and achieve well in a wide variety of sporting activities. They are able to apply the

techniques, skills and competition rules to many aspects of physical education. Basic skills are well developed and provide a sound platform for future development. The standard of swimming is good. Good use is made of the excellent on-site swimming pool and by the end of Year 9 most students can demonstrate a high level of competence in a range of swimming strokes. Good progress is maintained throughout Years 10 and 11 and by the time they are 16 years old most students, particularly those in the examination groups, are demonstrating skills in a wide range of activities which are at a higher standard than that seen nationally. Students with special education needs are well integrated, are given much support by both teachers and other students and reach levels of attainment that are commendable for them.

118. School teams take part in many inter-school competitions and gain much success. Many students have represented the district and Dorset county teams and some have gained international honours.
119. The standard of teaching is good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. All lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory and the vast majority to be good or very good. Lessons are well organised and are conducted at a brisk demanding pace achieving an appropriate balance of activities and offering students a range of appropriate challenges. Students respond very positively to the enthusiastic approach of their teachers. They behave well and are prepared to work hard. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.
120. This is a well-led and well-managed department. The very good accommodation is well used and it has a positive effect on the students' enjoyment of the subject and their attainment levels. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to their students.
121. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The overall standard of teaching has improved, more students are now taking the GCSE in the subject and the curriculum offer has been extended to allow students to take a GCSE in dance.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The focus of the inspection was on VGCSE leisure and tourism.

Leisure and tourism

The overall quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This GCSE course does not meet the learning needs of the students taking this option.
- The teachers responsible for this course work hard to meet the varied needs of students.
- The challenging behaviour of a number of students is dealt with firmness and great patience.
- Support for students with special educational needs is inadequate.
- Resources to support the learning of students are inadequate.

Commentary

122. This is a newly introduced course that is intended to meet the needs of a significant number of students who do not wish to study modern foreign languages. It replaces a previous GNVQ provision for which examination results were broadly in line with national expectations. Students taking this option in Years 10 and 11 have a complex combination of learning difficulties. These include behavioural problems, dyslexia, under-developed literacy and numeracy skills and attention deficient syndrome. In Year 10, 17 of the 22 students have been identified as having significant special educational needs, but too little additional support is provided to assist their learning in class. The quality of their work

indicates low levels of attainment with little progress being made. There is no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.

123. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students are given a range of activities and are fully occupied. Students are encouraged to do their best and in those classes observed teachers offered a very high level of support for all students. A minority of students who respond well to patient and sympathetic teaching show good levels of achievement, but most of the teachers' energies are devoted to ensuring students are occupied with tasks that are not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Because the content of the course is not well matched to the needs of students, teaching and learning are often unsatisfactory.
124. The head of department is an enthusiastic and determined leader and has worked hard to overcome the barriers to students' learning. However, the management of the overall provision is unsatisfactory because the school is not providing sufficient support in the classes containing a very high proportion of students with special education needs. The provision of learning resources such as access to computers and video equipment is inadequate. The school has recognised the weaknesses in provision and has supported this course, with more changes planned in next year's curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The focus of the inspection was on personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Personal, social and health education and Citizenship

Overall, the quality of provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **unsatisfactory**, but it is **good** in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no timetabled personal, social and health education for students in Year 9.
- The requirements for citizenship are not fully met for students in Year 9.
- Active citizenship is well promoted through the school and year group councils and community activities.
- All units in the personal, social and health education programme are very well planned and resourced.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistent in all contexts in which personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught.

Commentary

125. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is unsatisfactory in Year 9 because it does not fully meet statutory requirements. Although citizenship is included in teaching programmes of a number of subjects in Year 9, teachers rarely make students aware of this so they are unable to review, as the school requires them to do, how well they have achieved.
126. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship in Years 10 and 11 are good. The programme offered makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Standards are good overall and particularly good in the religious education modules. Students achieve well and consistently so in lessons taught by enthusiastic specialist teachers.
127. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall but ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent. The best lessons are characterised by high expectations of behaviour and student motivation. Through a variety of well chosen resources and activities students are challenged to think about important personal and social issues. Students learn less in sessions that make insufficient use of good questions and thinking skills.

128. The leadership of personal, social and health education and citizenship is excellent. Staff have a clear understanding of the purpose and value of the subjects and have designed a varied course. They make effective use of evaluation from colleagues and students to support improvement. Excellent teaching plans are provided for non-specialist teachers and a variety of outside agencies make good contributions to the health education programme.
129. The management of personal, social and health education and citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is good. Standards in most modules are monitored and work is marked to help students understand what they have done well and identify ways in which it could be improved. However, the introduction of citizenship has been slow and requirements have not been fully met.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 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 AS level courses 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
ART	37	97.2		56.7		3.72	
ART HISTORY	1	100		0		1	
BIOLOGY	26	65.3		15.3		1.73	
BUSINESS STUDIES	19	63.1		52.6		1.26	
CHEMISTRY	22	72.7		22.7		2	
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	23	47.8		0		0.8	
ECONOMICS	10	60		10		1.8	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	12	100		50		3.5	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE/LITERATURE	43	97.6		44.1		3.32	
ENGLISH LITERATURE	15	93.3		26.6		2.8	
FRENCH	12	91.6		58.3		3.3	
GENERAL STUDIES	6	100		0		2.1	
GEOGRAPHY	20	95		20		1.75	
GERMAN	4	100		25		3.5	
HISTORY	39	84.6		46.1		3	
MATHEMATICS	62	79		12.9		1.79	
MEDIA STUDIES	40	92.5		55		3.37	
MUSIC	7	100		42.8		3.42	
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	12	100		41.6		2.91	
PHYSICS	18	72.2		33.3		2.11	
PSYCHOLOGY	58	89.6		27.5		2.41	
SOCIOLOGY	24	87.5		37.5		2.87	
SPANISH	2	50		50		2.5	

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
ART	20	100		65		7.7	
BIOLOGY	9	100	92.1	11.1	41.2	4.4	
ECONOMICS	6	100	96.2	16.6	49.4	4.6	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	9	100	98.1	44.4	43.2	6	
FRENCH	7	85.7	96.9	57.1	54.5	5.7	
GEOGRAPHY	14	100	97.5	57.1	46.2	7.1	
MATHS	13	100	90.5	46.1	56.1	6.3	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on a range of English courses. English literature, English language and a combined English language and literature course are offered at AS level for one year and A level for those students wishing to study for a second year.

English

The overall quality of provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are attaining above average standards in A level English literature.
- Students are not making sufficient use of the works of critics to help form their own views on what they read.
- Students' levels of achievement in A level English language are good.

Commentary

130. The curriculum provision for students wishing to pursue their English studies in the sixth form is good. A relatively small number of mainly female students study English literature for one or two years and they attain above average standards and achieve well. This is also the case for those students now reading the subject in Years 12 and 13. Many more students, both male and female, choose to study the combined English language and literature course over two years and their standards in examinations and in the work seen during the inspection are average. When account is taken of their attainment at the start of the course this represents good achievement. This is also the case for the attainment and achievement of past and current students on the English language course.
131. Students achieve well because of the skilful teaching. Very good working relationships have been established and students appreciate the level of support and guidance they receive. Teachers combine a command of their subject with a knowledge of the teaching strategies needed to motivate students. They succeed in this. Learning is particularly effective, for example, when students are given the opportunity to reflect and analyse by working in pairs or small groups. A range of questioning techniques are used to develop students' understanding of both language and literature texts. Students' learning is restricted as they do not read enough critical works, especially in their literature studies, to help them form their own views on writers' merits.
132. The courses in the sixth form are well managed and sound systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' progress. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There have been developments in the curriculum since the last inspection. This has broadened provision to meet the wider range of learning needs of the increased number of students studying English. Standards and levels of achievement have been maintained over time.

French

The focus of the inspection was on French. There is one group of four students taking AS level. Two lessons were seen and students' work analysed.

The overall quality of provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to their prior standards at GCSE.
- Students achieve better in listening and writing than in speaking.
- Teaching is good and students respond well.

Commentary

133. The standards of work seen on the inspection are in line with national expectations. Students are making good progress in building on their achievement at GCSE. The use of French as the medium of teaching gives students good opportunities to listen to good models of spoken French. Their pronunciation and intonation are good. However, their oral work is less confident than their writing, which is fluent within the context of the course topics. Their knowledge of grammar is sound and is generally applied accurately. Reading skills are good in relation to topic texts. There are few other reading materials, such as magazines and newspapers, to provide a wider range of styles and interests and this limits their comprehension of less familiar language. Students have access to the Internet and to language programs on school computers, which they use for specific tasks.
134. Teaching is good and students' attitudes to their work are positive. Assessment of students' work helps them to improve. Leadership and management are effective. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relationships between teachers and students are very good, which leads to mature attitudes to study among students.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and their confident teaching results in good learning opportunities.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are under-developed.
- There is insufficient analysis of examination results, including value-added and results of different groups of students, to help the planning of teaching.
- Marking is too variable and the departmental policy is not properly applied.
- The department offers a wide range of courses that successfully meet students' aspirations.

Commentary

135. Over the last few years examination results have been close to national averages. Some students chose to study extra AS level courses in Year 13, from the very large range offered by the department, rather than move on to A level courses. The number of students studying for AS qualifications is increasing. Generally, girls' results have been better than boys'.
136. The overall standards of work seen during the inspection are average and this represents good achievement when compared with the students' GCSE results. The standards seen in the further mathematics groups are high. Some of the work on the AS courses this term has been the consolidation of GCSE mathematics and this has led to good reinforcement of basic mathematical skills. Progression through mathematical topics is good, with new modules building on work previously covered.
137. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the mathematics and the requirements of the various courses are very good. Teachers help students in a very caring manner and relationships with students are very good indeed. Consequently, students are very keen to apply themselves well in lessons and their concentration throughout is very good. The quality of lesson plans varies and the learning objectives are not always explained to students at the beginning of lessons. The marking of students' work is variable among teachers and often lacks comments and feedback that would assist students in their learning. The use of information and communication technology is under-developed. Students know their abilities in the courses and have good knowledge of their target grades.

138. Leadership and management of mathematics in the sixth form are satisfactory. Formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the department take place only rarely. There is insufficient analysis of examination results to enable teachers to plan more carefully for the demands of various different groups of students. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and students now have target grades in each of their courses. There is strong support from the second in the department and other teachers.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on biology, chemistry and physics.

Biology

The overall quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, students achieve well at A level.
- Schemes of work are under-developed.
- Departmental plans for improvement lack sufficient rigour.
- Students' work is marked regularly.
- There is insufficient use made of computers to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

139. Results in 2002 at A level were below average, but improved in 2003. The standards seen during the inspection were broadly in line with national averages. This represents good achievement as students begin the course with lower than average standards.
140. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and often include experimental work that helps students to develop good practical skills. In the most effective lessons there is a brisk pace and a range of activities to engage students and provide them with sufficient challenge. Less effective lessons include trivial tasks that go on for too long and offer too little challenge. Teachers have developed a good rapport with students who collaborate well with one another. Lessons often provide opportunities for students to discuss their work; this is most effective when it is structured and time limited.
141. Teachers mark work regularly and include comments that show students how to improve. However, students do not receive guidance on how to organise and store their work, which impairs their development as independent learners. The department has begun to use a number of effective methods to improve students' achievement. For example, students are tested and set targets every half term. Schemes of work are being developed, but do not yet ensure that there is a consistent approach to planning lessons or that topics are sequenced appropriately.
142. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The biology team includes very experienced teachers with a good command of their subject who work well together. The recently appointed head of department has an enthusiastic approach and is a good role model for teachers and students. She is aware of some of the weaknesses in the department, but the action plans are not rigorous enough to bring about rapid improvement. The monitoring process has just begun and few lessons have been observed. The targets set for improving the performance of the department are imprecise and have no timescale.
143. Accommodation and resources are adequate although not much use is made of information and communication technology. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; standards of coursework and achievement have improved, but the use of computers is still under-developed.

Chemistry

Staffing difficulties have seriously undermined the performance of the department this year and provision has been unsatisfactory. However, current provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current teachers have excellent command of their subject.
- There have not been enough A level chemistry teachers to teach the course.
- Leadership and management of the department, over the last year, have been unsatisfactory.
- Students have a good attitude and are now achieving well.

Commentary

144. Students start the course with below average attainment. Results in 2002 were below average but improved in 2003. Standards of work seen were broadly in line with national averages, which represents good achievement for most students.
145. Teaching and learning are now good. Students' education was disrupted by the lack of chemistry teachers at the start of the year. To a large extent students had to work independently and their progress was not adequately monitored. During this time students were given insufficient support and experienced no practical work. The situation has now improved greatly and students are reaching the levels of attainment expected. Teaching is characterised by effective planning, with a range of stimulating activities that involve all students. Lessons offer a good level of challenge and skilful questioning is used to extend students' understanding. Tutorial work with Year 13 students, who suffered most from the lack of specialist teachers, is intense and enables students to make very good progress.
146. Students have a good attitude to their studies and work constructively with one another. Year 13 students, in particular, work hard independently producing clear topic notes. Work is now marked regularly with corrections and helpful comments.
147. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory as there are no detailed schemes of work, nor has there been any analysis of performance to help improve attainment. Underachieving students have not been identified and supported. However, the school has recently compensated well for the absence of sufficient chemistry teachers and appropriate plans are in place to improve the situation further.
148. Accommodation and resources are adequate. Students have a suitable general chemistry textbook but do not receive course specific guidance to make the most effective use of it. There are no enrichment activities beyond the classroom, but teachers are willing to help students outside lessons.

Physics

The overall quality of provision in physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership and management of the department ensure that the progress of the students is closely monitored and supported.
- The enthusiastic and well-qualified specialist teachers have a shared commitment to the success of the students.
- The very good teaching and learning due to thoroughly planned lessons.
- The current popularity of the subject, shown by the number of students taking the subject.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology, including data logging devices, in lessons.

Commentary

149. The 2002 A level results were above the national average, with two students gaining entrance to Cambridge. Although the 2003 results were less impressive, they were from a weaker school cohort. However, all students gained success and results showed a positive value-added score compared with previous GCSE data. AS results are broadly in line with the national average and again show positive student achievement.
150. Teaching is very good overall. This is due to the experience, very good subject knowledge of the teachers and detailed teaching plans. In lessons, students are constantly stimulated and extended by this high quality teaching, which aims to create an interest in the subject and the development of advanced skills. This results in most students having a good understanding of the topics and making very good progress in their learning. A feature of the teaching is the emphasis given to the development of communication and analytical skills; an area criticised in the last report. This results in students willingly participating in class discussions and showing confidence in their ability to express ideas and to evaluate data. Work is marked well, with constructive comments to help students improve further.
151. The department closely monitors the work of the students, who are also encouraged to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. Very good levels of support and guidance are provided for students needing help. The good relationships between students and staff contribute to the success of the teaching and to the overall progress made by students linked with a thoroughly planned course. Overall, students show good levels of achievement.
152. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of physics and his colleague share the same goals and form an effective team. They are both committed to improving the standards obtained by the students. All aspects of the work of the department are thoroughly evaluated and action taken to resolve any problems identified. The teachers are well supported by the department's laboratory technician.
153. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made on the issues identified as requiring action. Good use is now made of available assessment data and the standards of teaching have improved, resulting in improvements in examinations. The recent acquisition of interactive white boards, when installed, will improve the exposure of the students to the use of ICT in lessons, although currently the use of data loggers for recording results is under-developed. Physics remains the most popular science subject in the sixth form, with a particularly high number present in the current Year 12 group. Retention is typically 100 per cent in both Years 12 and 13. However, as with many schools, the number of female students studying the subject is relatively low.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Information and communication technology

The overall quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well.
- Lessons are well structured with a range of activities which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students work well together and share ideas and information freely.
- The department is well led and managed.

Commentary

154. The 2003 examination results were close to national averages. Since the prior attainment of students who take this course is generally below average at GCSE, the results represent

good achievement. The attainment in Years 12 and 13 for current students is sufficiently high and higher attaining students are likely to gain the highest grades.

155. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and in conversations confirms that standards are overall average and achievement is good. Students generally do well on those parts of the course where they use computer software. They confidently create complex data systems using linked spreadsheets with macros and data entry screens and are designing and starting to create relational databases. Although satisfactory, students do less well on the parts of the course that are concerned with understanding how computer systems operate. Students are able to talk in some depth about the real uses of ICT systems which they have investigated.
156. All students show an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When they are working individually on computers in lessons, they are good at helping each other and worthwhile discussions are common. Students complete some of their work on computers in their own time. No students reported any difficulty in gaining access to the resources they need. In the sessions observed, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning.
157. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The teachers have a very good command of the subject, including some first hand experiences of uses of ICT in organisations other than the school. Teachers use their enthusiasm for the subject to motivate the students. When students are working individually, teachers generally make good use of their time, discussing work with students and there are opportunities to challenge students by asking demanding questions and showing them further possibilities. Teachers continually have high expectations of the students.
158. The subject is well led and managed. A well organised system of recording individual results for each unit of work and comparing current standards with previous attainment ensures successful monitoring of individual students' progress and identifying any underachievement. The consistency in the quality of teaching has led to improvement in standards. A good level of feedback is given to individual students about progress and attainment and comments about how they might improve their work. There is good student self-assessment.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology.

Geography

The overall quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching is very good as teachers use their subject knowledge very well.
- Students have excellent attitudes so that their learning is very effective.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Opportunities for independent learning do not feature enough in Year 12 lessons.

Commentary

159. A level GCE standards in 2002 were above the national average. Girls gained a high proportion of A/B grades. Results in 2003 show increased pass rates, especially for boys, and indicate that above average standards are being maintained. Standards have been consistently above average in recent years. The number of students who stay for the full A level course over two years is high.

160. Current standards of work are above average and students achieve very well. Students use geographical skills very well to widen their knowledge and understanding. They also apply their mathematical skills very well when they analyse statistical data to measure the effects of physical processes. A particular strength is the quality of informed discussion in lessons, especially in Year 13. Students' essay writing is lucid and they present well-structured arguments convincingly.
161. Teachers effectively use their very good command of the subject. They confidently challenge students to think deeply and critically. For example, students in a Year 13 lesson identified rapidly the characteristics of tourism and argued for those features they valued. Students appreciate teachers' detailed planning that makes for thought-provoking intellectual discussion and they respond very positively. Teachers mark work using examination criteria and give students target grades to attain. This strongly motivates students to improve as they understand what areas require further effort to raise their marks. Students in Year 12 have adjusted well to the demands of AS level work, although they do not yet engage in discussion spontaneously. Teachers under-promote individual and small group activities and presentations to the whole class in Year 12 lessons. The extent of fieldwork activities and talks at universities on A level topics gives students much relevant material to enrich their studies and illustrate and inform their answers.
162. The head of department provides a very clear lead to the sixth form team. She provides a very good example of commitment and organisation. All teachers plan thoroughly and show dedication to raising students' achievement to the highest levels. The team uses assessment well to improve teaching and learning. Since the last inspection teaching, learning, standards and achievement have all improved as a consequence of consistent effort and very good leadership.

Psychology

The overall quality of provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good and sometimes excellent teaching.
- Students are given a very good grounding in research methodology.
- The department is very well led in sustaining the rigour and popularity of the subject.
- Students find the subject stimulating and related to their own lives and interests. Many intend to continue the study of psychology at college or university.
- There are a few missed opportunities to extend students' ideas in whole-class discussion.

Commentary

163. This is a department where students thrive on very good and sometimes excellent teaching. In the most recent examinations they reached above average standards and do better in psychology than in the other subjects they study. This represents very good achievement in relation to the standards they brought to their courses. An abiding feature of the students' work is their knowledge of research methods. This ensures that they approach theories in psychology with critical caution and write well.
164. A striking aspect of much teaching is the high quality of questioning. Teachers are persistent in their demands for reasons for answers, with the result that students come to respect their own reasoning. Teachers work closely with students in letting them know how well they are achieving and how to do better. This shows itself in many instances of very good group work when students share and challenge one another's ideas. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to involve all students in whole class discussion with the consequence that a few lower their level of involvement.
165. Students find their work stimulating and see the relevance of what they learn for their own lives and interests. Many intend continuing the study of psychology at college or university.

With few exceptions, the students who join their courses complete them. At the heart of the success of psychology are the very good leadership and management of the department. The head of department has built well on the strengths noted in the previous inspection and has addressed the weaknesses in teaching effectively. The teachers work well together in the development of innovative approaches to learning.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

166. The focus of the inspection was on art. Work in music was sampled, two lessons were observed together with an analysis of students' files and compositions. Standards in music attained in 2003 by students at AS level were below average. All have continued to A2 level and standards seen during the inspection are average. This reflects good achievement due to the very good and knowledgeable teaching. Students' performing skills are strong and their obvious enjoyment of making music was seen in their ability to sing four-part chorales musically.

Art

The overall quality of provision in art is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average.
- There is excellent leadership of the department.
- A wide range of courses is offered including a successful foundation course in Year 14.
- Students develop very good levels of independence.
- Teachers provide excellent support and guidance for learning through regular assessment and evaluation.
- The extensive range of after-school classes and educational visits makes a significant contribution to students' achievement.

Commentary

167. Standards in art were well above the national average in 2002 and have shown an overall improvement for the last three years. Results for A level and AS in 2003 indicate high standards have again been sustained. Female students in particular achieve very well in relation to their attainment at GCSE. Art is popular with more females than males studying the subject and has very good take up in comparison to other courses in the sixth form. The introduction of photography has further broadened the choice for students.

168. The excellent leadership and quality of teaching across the department are of a high standard and support very good learning. Work seen confirms current students are achieving very well. There is very good assessment and monitoring that involves and challenges students and promotes good independent learning through the use of journals and other sources. There is a mature culture of independence and students enrich their knowledge and appreciation of art through after-school classes such as figure drawing and an extensive range of educational visits. The development of sketchbooks alongside drawing and painting skills are a strong feature of all students work. Very good examples of artwork developed from sketches made during some of the visits to galleries locally and abroad are evident in many students' portfolios. The successful art foundation course in Year 14 provides a career pathway to higher education with around 14 students following the course and working to a high standard. As in the main school the lack of computer resources inhibits the development of skills in this area though students make good use of them for research. Large-scale paintings by past students are a feature of displays around

the school and the department makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and provision in the sixth form.

169. This advanced vocational course has been part of the sixth form curriculum for three years and the results from the first cohort of students taking the subject in 2002 were well above the national average. A high proportion gained the higher grades. These high standards are being continued with the current students.
170. The current standards of work are impressive and students who started the course with relatively modest levels of attainment at GCSE are showing very good progress and achievement. Many of those in Year 13 are likely to progress to university and most importantly have been equipped with skills of independent learning that will be very valuable both academically and in future employment.
171. The management of courses are very good and teachers are constantly looking for new ways of enhancing the learning of students and providing an even greater vocational dimension to the subject. They are constrained by poor access to computers and the low status that is given vocational subjects by some students. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on the work in physical education and travel and tourism.

Physical education

The overall quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good. The A level is well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- Students achieve well and gain satisfactory examination results.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this motivates students.
- Students rely too heavily on their teachers and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
- There are insufficient accredited course for students of all abilities.

Commentary

172. During the last few years there has been an increase in the number of students opting to take A level physical education. In the July 2003 examination the number gaining pass grades in both the A2 and AS examinations was similar to the national average, although the number gaining the higher A-B grade passes was below average. The post-16 course has inspired a number of students to university to study sports science.
173. Inspection evidence indicates that the students currently in Year 13, who will be taking the A2 examinations, are achieving well and are attaining standards that are in line with average standards, with a few completing work at the highest level. Students in Year 12 who are preparing for the AS examination are also working well and completing work that is at least in line with the national average. Students engage in productive debates on a range of subject related topics and then to arrive at informed and perceptive conclusions. Their physical programmes show a good range of skills in a variety of activities. Most students can analyse practical performance confidently and then use their evaluation to refine their own work. They show real rapport with their teachers and relationships are very good. Students use the Internet to broaden their knowledge and to research individual topics. However, many students rely too heavily on their teachers who work hard for them. Some students do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

174. The teaching of the A level courses is good. Teachers are aware of the ways in which students learn and work hard to provide tasks and resources that meet their needs. A particularly impressive feature is the importance teachers place on a continuity of approach from Year 11 to Year 12. They are aware that the change to sixth form study can be difficult for some students and therefore attempt to ease their students into resources and further reading.
175. All students in the sixth form have the opportunity to take part in a large variety of recreational activities, including soccer, badminton, squash and swimming, of which many are taking advantage. However, there are insufficient accredited courses for students of all abilities. The department is planning to widen the range of courses offered, to include a nationally recognised award for young people who wish to gain skills in organising sporting activities. The inspectors agree with this decision.

Travel and Tourism

The overall quality of provision in travel and tourism is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is excellent in meeting the needs of students who have elected to study this vocational subject.
- Examination results have been well above national expectations.
- Support for students to develop the skills of independent learning is very good.
- Teacher subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject motivates students to work hard.
- Vocational links are well integrated into all aspects of students' learning.
- Access to computers during lessons is not sufficiently available.

Commentary

176. This advanced vocational course has been part of the sixth form curriculum for three years and the results from the first cohort of students taking the subject in 2002 were well above national expectations. These high standards are being continued.
177. The standards of work seen during inspection are impressive and students who start the course with relatively modest levels of attainment at GCSE show very good levels of achievement. Most of those in Year 13 are likely to progress to university and most importantly have been equipped with skills of independent learning that will be very valuable both academically and in employment.
178. Teaching and learning are both very good. Teachers have considerable experience of travel and tourism and are able to enliven lessons with current examples of commercial practice. They also encourage students to consider the ethical and environmental impacts of tourism and make very good use of a growing network of local businesses to ensure that the vocational aspects of the courses are up to date. For three years students have organised educational visits to both Paris and Barcelona. Students take full responsibility for all organisational and administrative aspects of these undertakings and thus provide an example of practice which should be widely disseminated.
179. The leadership and management of these courses are very good and teachers are constantly looking for new ways of enhancing the learning of students and providing an even greater vocational dimension to the subject. They are constrained by poor access to computers and the lower status that is given vocational subjects by some students.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

Business studies

The overall quality of provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Retention rates are poor and only a minority of those students taking business in 2002 are still taking the subject.
- Although there is some improvement, examination results are below national standards.
- Staff work very hard to support students' learning, but expectations are not high enough and lessons lack intellectual challenge.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to learn about business in the local community.
- The department has extensive resources to support different approaches to learning.

Commentary

180. Examination results and the quality of work seen during the inspection indicate that students are underachieving. In 2002 results from both A level and AS level courses were below the national average. The students were not adequately prepared for their AS level examinations and this was reflected in the low pass rate. Of the 27 students starting the business course in September 2002 only seven are likely to complete the full advanced level course. Results in 2003 show some improvement, but very few students achieve high grades.

181. Overall, teaching and learning are not satisfactory. Individual lessons lack challenge and little attempt is made to develop the necessary skills required for students to achieve high grades. In the lessons observed students made satisfactory progress and showed some skills in describing various business concepts, but they were not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best work. The department has built up an extensive collection of teaching resources and has adequate accommodation for teaching. There was little evidence of outside visits or other activities which can make business an exciting and popular subject. Staffing problems have resulted in disruption to students' timetables and learning and placed additional pressure on some members of staff. The head of department has worked hard to deal with these problems, but has not received adequate support from senior managers.

182. The head of department is a good manager and has identified a range of issues that need to be tackled to make improvements. However, he has little time to devote to these important tasks because of other management responsibilities in school. For these reasons the leadership and management of this department is unsatisfactory. Insufficient improvement has been made since the last inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

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

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