

INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's Catholic Comprehensive School

Guildford

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125276

Headteacher: Mr C Richardson

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Chamberlain

Dates of inspection: 15th - 19th March 2004

Inspection number: 264041

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1037
School address:	Horseshoe Lane East Merrow Guildford Surrey
Postcode:	GU1 2TN
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mervyn Burby
Date of previous inspection:	11 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Peter's Catholic Comprehensive is an average sized school that has grown significantly in the last few years. It serves the Catholic Deanery of Guildford. Students come from a mixture of housing ranging from highly advantageous to severely disadvantageous. The school has technology college status. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There is a larger than average proportion of students whose first language is not English but most of this group is fluent at English. The proportion of students who have special educational needs, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average as is the proportion of those with statements. The number of students, who left the school last year at times other than expected, was similar to the number who joined it. Students' attainment on entry is above average overall, although the school draws on the full spectrum of ability.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English, drama
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31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design and technology
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with many very good features. It is very well led and achieves well above average standards. The school's technology college status is now evident in the improved examination results and is an emerging strength. The quality of education provided by the school is good and it offers good value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is a very effective leader and is very well supported by the senior leadership team. The clear direction they pursue inspires others.
- Teaching and learning are good; lesson planning and presentation are strengths. Consequently students' achievement is good.
- Results at GCSE and in statutory tests are well above average.
- Students are cared for well and receive very good support and advice.
- The arrangements for the teaching of citizenship lack cohesion.
- There are shortcomings in business studies.
- A small number of students exhibit unsatisfactory behaviour.

Improvements

Since the previous inspection, the school has gained technology college status and a School's Achievement Award. It has improved its accommodation. Examination results are rising due to the good standard of teaching that has been maintained. Students are now achieving well.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

After a dip attributable to staffing problems, standards have recovered. Results at GCSE and in statutory tests are well above average, students having entered the school with above average attainment, overall. Students' achievement is good in all years including the sixth form. The best achievement occurs in geography and the weakest in business studies. The work seen during inspection week indicated standards at least above average. Students have very good language and literacy skills; their numeric competence is also very good. In information and communication technology (ICT), students' proficiency is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and those whose first language is not English follows the school trend and is good.

Year 11 and 13 results

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

*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' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good except in the case of a few who can be disruptive. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good and teaching and learning are good, overall, being best in Years 10 and 11, At least three quarters of lessons are at least good, many of these very good and a few excellent. A small proportion of lessons is unsatisfactory. Overall, assessment is good but there are no arrangements for assessing citizenship in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is good; it supports the needs of individual students and is particularly strong in providing alternative courses for those who need them. Opportunities for students to enrich their school experience are good, particularly after school, and include a successful GNVQ Intermediate ICT course. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory. Students receive very good pastoral care and their personal progress is evaluated carefully. The management of child protection and health and safety issues is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, as is governance. The headteacher is highly committed and well thought of. All, including senior and middle managers, have a clear sense of purpose and work together cohesively, prioritising the raising of students' achievement and teaching. Governors offer expertise from many areas of life and are keen to be involved in the school at all levels.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are well satisfied with the school. Their views are generally positive. They particularly like the way they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. Most parents think the school is well led and managed and that their children are treated fairly. They are pleased with the way their children are introduced to the school, including settling in procedures. Some suggest that bullying can be a minor problem but is normally effectively dealt with when it occurs. Students like the school, in the main. They feel safe and like their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Audit and review the arrangements for citizenship.
- Review strategies to deal with the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few disaffected students.
- Strengthen the profile of business education in Years 10 and 11 by involving the use of local businesses and improving assessment strategies.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST PETER'S SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective sixth form. Leadership and management are very good and students achieve well. They enjoy the sixth form and are pleased with their courses. The sixth form provides good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is very good and is mirrored by very good learning, a consequence of especially constructive relationships between teachers and students.
- Students' achievement is good and results from their responsible attitudes.
- Students receive very good support, advice and guidance from teachers who know them well.
- The range of courses is good but lacks suitable opportunities for low attainers.
- The sixth form is led well.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Standards

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English language and literature	Good. Teaching is good in language and literature and enables good achievement, although the standards between the two subjects vary considerably.
Mathematics	Very good. Examination results and work done day by day are well above national expectations because teaching and management are very good. The students achieve well because of positive, good attitudes and their ability to learn from mistakes they make.
Physics	Very Good. The present attainment is above average and students are achieving very well. The teaching is very good and focus on developing a culture of independent learning in students
Information and communication technology	Good. Students achieve well. Good teaching and learning enables most to reach above average standards in AS and AVCE courses. This area is an emerging strength.
Geography	Good. Standards in geography are above average at the end of Years 12 and 13. Both male and female students achieve well. Teaching is good. Teachers have significant strengths in subject knowledge and how they prepare students for examinations. Leadership and management of the subject are very good
Design and technology	Good. Teaching is good in design and technology. Students' attitudes are very good. There are good procedures for the tracking of individual progress. A good range of courses is offered.
Art	Very good. Standards attained in art are well above average. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching that supports and challenges them in exploring the meaning behind their work as well as investigating materials and techniques.
Drama	Good. Good teaching and an imaginative interpretation of the A-level syllabus result in students achieving above average standards by the end of Year 13.
Music	Very good. The introduction and development of A-level music has attracted more students. Standards and achievements represented in examination results are very good. Teaching and learning are very good.
Physical education	Very good. Hardworking and committed students respond very positively to the very good teaching and achieve well.
Business Studies	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Attainment is below average but achievement is satisfactory.
French	Very good. Standards are above average in Years 12 and 13. Good teaching ensures students are given challenging tasks. Students achieve well and are making good progress.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good advice on careers and further education. The use of a very effective record system enables comprehensive tracking of students' progress. This is underpinned by the very good relationships between students and teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The director of sixth form and the director of sixth form studies are very well supported by a team of very effective form tutors. New strategies to improve the monitoring of students' academic and personal development are in place and are having a positive effect on the quality of the students' work.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

- Students like the sixth form.
- They are pleased that they stayed at this school and are very satisfied with their courses.
- They think that teaching is good.
- They like the friendly atmosphere and social life.
- They would like their own toilets.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' achievement, including those of students with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English, is **good** and standards in work seen are **above average**. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are **well above average** in statutory tests, teacher assessments and results at GCSE.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achieve well across the school, including the sixth form.
- Results in statutory tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average.
- GCSE results are well above average and have recovered after a dip.
- Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students.
- Students' competence in mathematics is very good as are their language and literacy skills.
- Standards in business studies are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Entry requirements to the sixth form are on the low side given the courses available.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

1. Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. This is the case for all subjects except for citizenship, where it is satisfactory but where students' work is not assessed formally. Standards at this level, in the work seen, are above average. More specifically, in Years 7 to 9, they are well above average in English and mathematics; they are in line with expectations in art, history, music, physical education and citizenship and above expectations in other subjects.

2. Results in statutory tests are well above average in mathematics, English and science. Across these subjects, boys and girls perform similarly. Together their results are well above average when compared with their prior attainment and the trend for improvement is above the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.5 (38.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.0 (38.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	37.1 (36.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 179 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Key Stage 4

3. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good in geography and music, unsatisfactory in business studies, satisfactory in design and technology and good in all other subjects. In geography, very good assessment procedures ensure that students know how well they are doing. In music, students' listening skills have improved considerably at this level, affecting both their ability to be critical and analytical. The business studies group is well behind in its coverage of the syllabus and also is blessed with a number of disaffected boys who lack a work ethic. In the work seen at this level, standards are above expectations in most subjects but well above average in mathematics,

geography and modern foreign languages. They are in line with expectations in ICT and citizenship and below average in business studies. GCSE results are well above average for 5 A* to C and 1 A* to G grades and close to average for 5 A* to G grades. When compared with students' attainment when they were in Year 9, scores are average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	67 (60)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.5 (34.7)	38.5 (34.7)

There were 175 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. At all levels, students demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are well above the national norm across the range of subjects they study. There is no question of any being denied access to understanding through lack of number skills. Like numeracy, students' literacy skills are well above expectation; their speaking skills are particularly impressive. Students' competency in ICT is above expectations and indicates very rapid improvement. Some students are becoming exceptional experts in ICT which bodes well for the future.

5. Students with special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress towards their individual targets where they apply in individual education plans.

SIXTH FORM

6. Students enter the sixth form with average standards of attainment. In the spirit of being inclusive, the school has set the entry criteria on the low side and this has caused some students to be entered onto courses for which they are not particularly well suited. Action is being taken to ensure that this does not continue to happen; more appropriate courses are being investigated.

7. In the sixth form, students' achievement is above expectations in most subjects but well above expectations in science, geography, ICT and music and in line with expectations in design and technology and business studies. Proficiency in mathematics and ICT is high and is helping students with all their courses, particularly those of a technical nature. In the work seen, standards are well above expectations in mathematics, science, art, ICT and music, above expectations in drama, geography and modern foreign languages and in line with expectations in the other subjects.

Standards in GCE A/AS and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results		National results	
Percentage entries gaining A – E grades	89.9	(96.8)	91.5	(90.3)
Percentage entries gaining A – B grades	37.8	(36.5)	36.1	(35.5)
Average points score per pupils	214.0	(247.6)	253.1	(254.5)

There were 68 students in the year group

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

8. Attitudes and behaviour are **good** in the main school and **very good** in the sixth form. Personal development is **very good** and attendance and punctuality are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are mature, enterprising and keen to take responsibility.
- Behaviour in the main school is very good in many classes and situations but, on occasions, is marred by a lack of respect for both teachers and fellow students from a few disaffected students.
- Personal development is characterised by a strong concern for others, especially the disadvantaged.
- Good attendance is achieved through the efforts of both teachers and parents
- The number of fixed term exclusions has risen since the last inspection.

Commentary

9. The good attitudes of students are exemplified by their keenness to answer questions and contribute their own ideas to lessons. They listen with respect to others' viewpoints and can show pleasure in the achievements of others. Students' good relationships are exemplified particularly in classes where they work together in pairs or larger groups. While behaviour is generally good, the behaviour of a small number of students has been of concern to the school, as exemplified by the rise in exclusions. A revised behaviour policy with attached sanctions has not cured the situation, though it has improved it. In some classes, there is a culture of chattering that results in undue efforts being devoted to classroom management. More seriously, on occasions, a very small number of students take a delight in interrupting learning with provocative comments. Bullying is relatively rare and usually dealt with well.

10. Students think deeply about problems for example on Trade Justice Day there was a poor man's lunch, with a bowl of soup and a piece of bread. However, some students were chosen at random to have a really good meal, to cries of 'It's not fair'. Realisation that they were modelling the gap between rich and poor nations soon developed and students were still talking about this experience during the inspection. Another example is the link set up between the school and an integrated school in Northern Ireland which provides rich opportunities for reflection. A party from the school lobbied parliament and joined a demonstration about third world debt.

11. Social and moral issues are well covered in assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons and in lessons, with moral issues being often discussed. The school provides rich experiences to enjoy the arts, music drama and literature, both of our culture and others'.

12. There are good support systems in place to ensure that students with special educational needs make good progress where their targets involve improvements in behaviour.

13. Attendance is good and unauthorised absence low.

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
School data 7.1	School data 0.2
National data 7.2	National data 1.1

SIXTH FORM

14. Students in the sixth form have very responsible attitudes. They take their positions of responsibility seriously and are good role models for the rest of the school. Some act as mentors for

the younger students. Their behaviour is very good and harassment unknown. They apply for the Surrey Graduation Certificate, for which they have to demonstrate 30 hours of voluntary work. They participate in Young Enterprise schemes, running their own businesses. Some train as teaching assistants and help in schools for one morning a week. During Rag Week they raise four figure sums for charity. They meet together for advocates of different charities to give presentations and then there is a vote on who receives the donation. On Friday there is a period for spiritual development, involving reflection and meditation and covering such subjects as the portrayal of religion in the cinema and the morality and ethics of genetically modified crops. These examples illustrate that the sixth form thinks deeply about issues, is involved in the whole school and makes a contribution to society. The head students represent the school at open evenings and elsewhere.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.1	School data :	0.2
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

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	853	38	1
White – Irish	7		
White – any other White background	80	1	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	12		
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	1	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	1	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2		
Black or Black British – African	10	1	
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	5	2	
No ethnic group recorded	44	5	

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

15. Teaching and learning are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good or better in three quarters of lessons.
- Teachers use a wide range of strategies; they try to teach to the individual student's preferred learning style.
- Excellent planning, preparation and presentation characterise excellent lessons.
- A few lessons lack rigour and are affected by disruptive behaviour.
- Students with special educational needs are taught well.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form is enhanced by very good relationships between students and teachers.

Commentary

16. Teaching and learning are good or better in about three quarters of lessons. This is similar to that at the last inspection. Good teaching has, therefore, been maintained despite some severe staffing problems in the intervening years. In about a third of lessons, teaching is very good or better and in about one twentieth it is unsatisfactory.

17. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to enhance their lessons. Students respond well enjoying, particularly, the emphasis on the use of technology across the school. Teachers use a broad range of presentation techniques, promoting a comparable range of learning styles. When these are well balanced, students respond well even during long, 90-minute lessons. However, in some circumstances such long lessons present challenges that are not always well met. For example, when teachers employ only a few teaching strategies that are addressed to the whole class.

18. Excellent teaching was seen in five lessons. In all these lessons and many of the very good lessons seen, the teaching is characterised by excellent planning, preparation and presentation that challenges students at all levels of ability by brisk pace and high expectations. Even in long lessons student engagement is sustained by the teacher's use of a variety of tasks with work matched to individual need. Notable examples were seen in modern foreign languages in Year 9, mathematics in Year 11 and in geography and mathematics and the sixth form.

19. In other lessons much good and very good teaching is seen. Commonly well planned and presented, it inspires good and very good learning. There is a clearly expressed purpose which is well understood by students of all levels of competence. All are well-motivated to learn and stimulated to achieve high standards. Such well-balanced teaching and learning is seen in many subjects both in Years 7 to 11, notably in mathematics, science, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education.

20. Some teaching and learning is marred by a lack of rigour and by insufficient variation of tasks or challenges that results in distracting behaviour that is not always well managed. These occasions are relatively few but significant in their effect upon teaching and learning and consequently up on standards and achievement. The school is aware of these shortcomings and is planning to review strategies for improving the situation. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in five lessons (three in Years 7 to 9 and two in Years 10 and 11). Here the teaching lacked the variety of approaches necessary to meet the many needs of students. Although some of these lessons were well planned they lacked rigour in presentation and pace; they failed to challenge the most able students; they provided insufficient support for students who needed it.

21. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs matches that found overall. In the majority of lessons teachers plan well to meet the requirements of students with

special educational needs, but there are still inconsistencies in planning and methods across some subjects. There are very good assessment procedures for students with special educational needs and these provide good information for setting individual targets where these apply. As a result individual education plans are good. Teaching assistants provide effective and caring support for students with special educational needs.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 160 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3%)	50 (31%)	65 (41%)	35 (22%)	5 (3%)	0	0

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

SIXTH FORM

22. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **very good** with many very good lessons and three outstanding ones. No unsatisfactory teaching is seen.

23. Where teaching is excellent, it is particularly well planned, prepared and presented using a variety of teaching strategies to meet students' learning needs. High expectations and challenge to students at all levels of ability are often characterised by dynamism and energy that enthuses all the students.

24. Teaching and learning are at least good in virtually all lessons and very good in many. All these good lessons are very well planned and creatively presented. Such lessons are commonly very well paced, often briskly so, challenging students to work comparably briskly and productively. Homework is well focused as, for example, in a mathematics lesson where students are asked to listen to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement, analysing the mathematics and statistics involved and how they are employed. Many teachers and students make good use of ICT in many subjects, often related to the school-based distance learning packages accessible from the school's website.

25. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are characterised by especially good teacher/student relationships. Students work well in groups and independently. Higher teacher expectations and increasing student demands have led to a very good range of courses, notably in mathematics science and ICT. In ICT, there are a number of courses on the school's web site for home-based study and extension work. Students enjoyed their learning, researching topics well and using ICT for their presentations. Some particularly good PowerPoint presentations are seen in a range of subjects. At least two students have developed their own sophisticated web sites, utilising the very good teaching and learning skills they have experienced.

Assessment

26. Overall assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good whole school policy on marking, assessment, recording and reporting.
- Most departments have assessment systems which are well organised.
- The quality of reporting is good.
- Some departments do not use assessment data sufficiently to respond to individual needs; in some subjects some students do not understand how they can improve.
- There are no arrangements yet for assessing citizenship in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

27. The system for assessment, recording and reporting students' attainment and progress is developing well. General advice is given to help departments organise their own systems. There is a good whole school marking policy, which gives clear guidance to teachers, and they give advice to individual students. Departments appropriately assess students against National Curriculum levels or GCSE criteria throughout the year. At least twice each year students are given National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 or estimated GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. The data is entered on the school system, and this is available to all staff. There is detailed analysis of the data, and this is communicated to subject departments. Some departments also have examples of students' work at different levels. Some departments have better systems than others, but most are good. However, some students do not know what they need to do to improve. There are no arrangements for assessing citizenship in Years 7 to 9.

28. The assessment co-ordinator organises a good level of reporting to parents; they receive two reports each year with grades and targets. After each report parents meet their child's academic tutor with the child and agree targets. There is also one academic clinic day each year when parents can discuss their child's progress with subject teachers. If there is a cause for concern, the school contacts parents.

SIXTH FORM

29. Assessment in the sixth form is **very good**.

The Curriculum

30. Provision of the curriculum is **good** with good opportunities for enrichment. Resources are **satisfactory**. Accommodation and staffing are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum makes good provision for the majority of students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom workplace learning is appropriate.
- The curriculum is enriched through many and varied after-school and out-of-school activities.
- The planned provision, application and management of citizenship are under developed.
- Insufficient time is allocated to music and art.
- Business education is not enlivened by outside partnerships.
- There is a lack of courses for lower attainers in the sixth form.

Commentary

31. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities and activities to meet the interests and aptitudes of students. Technology status has improved the curriculum in a wide range of subjects, such as science and design and technology, by providing increased access to information and communication technology, although access is still limited. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all aspects and the school provides well for religious education and a daily act of collective worship. Students, including those with special educational needs have good quality access to the curriculum.

32. A broad curriculum is offered throughout the school although art and music have limited time allocation in Years 7 to 9. Although the provision of citizenship is satisfactory, its planned provision, application and management are underdeveloped. Programmes that provide effective personal, social and health education for students are in place and are delivered in discrete time on a weekly basis.

33. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides varied and relevant programmes of study for all students across the attainment range. For example geography has particularly good fieldwork provision. Alternative curriculum provision enables access to Guildford College which provides access to courses such as hairdressing and building; workplace learning continues to be developed. A GNVQ course in ICT is offered outside normal school hours and this has proved to be both popular and successful in terms of results.

34. In addition to the National Curriculum, the school offers a wide range of enriching experiences for students. These include theatre visits, school-based theatrical productions, Master Class catering sessions, Duke of Edinburgh Award activities, Young Enterprise activities, gymnastic and dance displays and a substantial range of competitive team sports.

35. Provision for gifted and talented students is good. Good progress has been made in establishing procedures for identifying gifted and talented students in subjects and developing opportunities for extending their experience beyond the school day. The co-ordinator has established useful links with support organisations both locally and nationally. A recent audit shows a good range of activities offered but these are unevenly spread among the subjects. The co-ordinator does not have a protected time allocation for her role and this is slowing the development of the initiative across the school and its incorporation into departmental planning. Systems for tracking and evaluating the performance of gifted and talented students are not yet in place but form part of a well-structured development plan for the current year. Leadership and management of the initiative are good within the constraints of the time available.

36. Resources are satisfactory. They are adequate overall with some notable strengths and weaknesses; the provision of science textbooks both at home and at school is exceptional; inadequacies of textbooks in citizenship, history, geography and modern foreign languages, especially suitable readers for those needing support, limit the flexibility and range of experience. Provision for ICT is having an increasingly positive impact in most areas of the curriculum although it is particularly lacking in the arts.

37. Accommodation is good overall. There is a shortage of teaching space for music and art is short of storage space. Some subjects such as mathematics and modern foreign languages are not fully suited, but the weaknesses referred to in the previous inspection report have been remedied. The weaknesses are now, therefore, outweighed by very good accommodation in design technology and a good and well used learning resource centre together with a good modern sports hall.

38. Staffing is good; there are sufficient staff to meet curriculum needs. The school has to work hard to recruit and retain staff. This it does effectively. Procedures for inducting new staff to the school and for performance management are very good.

SIXTH FORM

39. The quality and range of the curriculum are good. The curriculum provides for a wide range of interests. Provision is particularly good in English, physical education, music, chemistry, biology, physics and information communication technology but business studies is not enriched by outside school partnerships. AVCE information communication technology has attracted large numbers of students and has been successful. Video conferencing and joint provision arrangements with Guildford College have increased the flexibility of sixth form provision and have proved successful in terms of performance. However, the provision does not fully meet the needs of less academically oriented students. Good provision is made for the development of key skills and many examples of students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT.

40. Staffing is good. Resources are adequate overall with some notable strengths in mathematics, science and design technology, consistent with the status of a technology college. Physical education makes particularly good use of ICT in the evaluation of work on its A-level courses. ICT is making increasing provision for distance learning materials to be available to

students on the school's website. Such provision for ICT is having an increasing impact in other areas of the curriculum although it is particularly lacking in the arts.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good management of health and safety.
- There is very good management of child protection.
- There are good induction arrangements for new students.
- Good [very good in the sixth form] advice is rendered on careers and further education.
- There are very good and trusting relationships between staff and students.

Commentary

42. There is a strong commitment to health and safety and child protection. Particular strengths are the care of 'looked after' students, the regular safety inspections by governors and the Premises Manager and the organisation of child protection, with four child protection officers strategically placed within the organisation.

43. In the main school students' progress is reviewed every half year. For every subject, there is an analysis of expected minimum grade [determined by reference to past performance], actual grade, effort, success at meeting deadlines, participation, attendance and punctuality. A target is given for each subject. Each student has an academic tutor, who follows their progress year on year, and the student, tutor and parents meet to discuss progress twice a year. This is very good practice for tracking academic progress.

44. Welfare is well provided for, with special care being taken of those with special medical conditions. Three students with Down's Syndrome who joined the school this year are very well cared for. Advice is available from the chaplains and a behaviour management advisor is available to help those who experience problems. Form tutors also provide good advice to students. They set targets and review their progress monthly.

45. Students told inspectors how pleased they are with the way they had been introduced into the school. There are good links on curriculum matters and special educational needs and partner schools are invited to use the schools' computers occasionally.

46. Students with special educational needs are very well supported by all members of staff.

SIXTH FORM

47. There is an extremely effective record system for sixth form study that enables tutors and managers to obtain a comprehensive and up to date analysis of students' progress. This also includes details on attendance and punctuality. It is designed in such a way that when printed out it forms the basis for the report to parents. This analysis enables students to receive very good advice on their progress and the attitudes they are showing. They receive very good advice on careers and further education opportunities. They are encouraged to apply for bursaries, taster courses and residential courses to find out what university life is like. When the A level results are available, members of staff give good advice to those who do not achieve the grades they wanted. Those who elect to take a gap year are offered support and advice and are welcome in the school. All this support is underpinned by very good relationships between staff and students.

48. Students complete a questionnaire every year and there is an exit survey at the end of the second year. These help tutors to modify the provision to meet students' needs.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

49. There are **good** links with parents, the community and other educational institutions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with good information.
- Staff are approachable and parental concerns are dealt with well. However, arrangements for parental consultations with tutors are unpopular and undergoing review.
- Parents give the school good support.
- There is a wide range of links with the community, although links with industry are sparse.
- There are good links with partner junior schools and the curriculum is enriched by links with College.

Commentary

50. Parents are provided with good newsletters, a good annual report from governors, an informative prospectus and in the main school two reports per year on students' progress. These are very good on academic progress but lack information on personal development and the form tutor has no input. Parents perceive a need to talk directly with subject tutors in addition, but the most recent attempt to provide this led to long queues and the way forward is currently being reassessed. Parents are invited to discuss individual education plans where these are provided. Parents are provided with courses on ICT, and booklets are provided containing advice on secondary school study, options for GCSE, coursework for GCSE, and managing stress during the run-up to GCSE.

51. Parents gave magnificent support to the recent production of *Oklahoma!* They support sporting activities and hear readers. The parent teacher association is very active in providing social events, raising funds and acting as a funnel for parent opinion. Parents actively support homework and make contributions to the home-school diary.

52. The links with other educational institutions substantially enrich the curriculum, for instance by supporting the alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for students more interested in practical subjects and by helping with higher education awareness. There has been a debate with partner schools in France and Spain on the ethics of cloning, providing fascinating insights into differences of attitude. Mathematics master-classes at Surrey University have proved to be particularly useful, and initial teacher training for St Mary's Twickenham has been very well received by the college and is beneficial for staff recruitment. There is very good collaboration with partner junior schools, for example for the Junior Sports Leadership Award.

53. There are good formal and informal links with parents of students who have special educational needs. Parents and students are involved in the review process where this applies.

54. There are very good community links with the Catholic and Anglican churches ; occasionally local parishioners help with reading and examination invigilation.

SIXTH FORM

55. Links with other schools and colleges expand the curriculum, for instance by providing additional A level courses. Many local organisations help with the Year 12 Industry Day and local bakers and architects help to make the curriculum more interesting. Charitable activities bring students into contact with many local organisations, for example Art Venture, a charity located on site that provides Art Therapy for adults with mental disability. The sixth form raised funds to help

them go on holiday. Sixth form reports are very good, with long and comprehensive reports on personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

56. Leadership and management are very good. The governance of the school is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clear vision and focus of the headteacher and his success in inspiring and motivating others.
- The governing body provides strong leadership.
- Management at senior and departmental level is very effective.
- The school uses financial planning very effectively and applies principles of best value well.
- There are shortcomings in the leadership of business studies.

Commentary

57. The headteacher is a very good leader. He has very high expectations, clear vision and drive. Effective team-work among the senior management team, and staff as a whole, results in a purposeful, supportive environment which is focussed on raising achievement. The school has a well-considered mission statement which expresses its Catholic purpose, which includes the intention to help students develop personal moral values, based upon the tradition of the Catholic Church, and develop self-discipline, respect for others, forgiveness and a generosity of spirit. The headteacher has established a strong leadership team with clear responsibilities and all of whom share the commitment to raising standards.

58. The headteacher works tirelessly on behalf of the school promoting its name and ensuring that it is properly recognized for the achievements of its students. He is a visible presence around the school and makes himself accessible to students, parents and staff alike. He is harnessing the considerable potential of both staff and students and much progress is being made.

59. The school has a well-structured management system with a framework of regular meetings. Consultation is well developed, and through membership of working parties, pastoral groups and departmental meeting all staff have the opportunity to have their views listened to.

60. The overall quality of management is very good throughout the school. A particular strength is the quality of leadership in departments, although there are shortcomings in the leadership of business studies. Mostly, rigorous self-evaluation processes are undertaken and are used to identify key issues. Departmental plans are linked very clearly with the overall school development plan. The clear focus of all the departments is of raising students' attainment and their aspirations. In this respect, as in many others, they are being very successful.

61. There are very thorough performance management processes in place for all teaching and non-teaching staff. Teaching is rigorously monitored and policies for managing weak teaching and complaints are clear. Personal objectives set in performance management reviews or appraisals are clearly linked to the school's strategic objectives

62. The school is very fortunate in having a very capable and committed governing body that is very well led. Many governors have specialist knowledge that they are prepared to use 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 an open and honest partnership between governors and head teacher, firmly rooted in a commitment to providing high quality education for all students.

Financial management

63. Financial management is good. Proper procedures are followed and the governors monitor budget spending regularly. However, the budget deficit has risen to £177,000. The governors and headteacher have agreed a deficit reduction plan with the local education authority. Rigorous action has been taken to prevent further growth in the deficit. The governors and leadership team have worked hard to apply the principles of best value to their decision-making.

64. Good improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. The gaining of technology college status, the very significant improvements in the standard of accommodation and the winning of an Achievement Award have all combined to enhance the quality of the education the students receive and help raise their levels attainment.

65. The senior management of the school and the co-ordinator for special educational needs have shown very good leadership in implementing the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. All staff have had appropriate training. The management of learning support is good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,699,694	Balance from previous year	(168,144)
Total expenditure	2,876,854	Balance carried forward to the next	(177,160)
Expenditure per student	2,758		

SIXTH FORM

66. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The director of the sixth form is very well supported by a team of very effective form tutors. New strategies to improve the monitoring of student's academic and personal development are in place and are having a positive effect on the quality of the students' work. The introduction of new courses to address a dearth in the number available for lower attainers is a priority and represents the flexibility and care exhibited by the director of sixth form.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

67. Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and has a significant impact on students' achievement.
- Work does not always match the needs and abilities of all students in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9.
- There are too few opportunities for students to re-draft their work in order to improve it.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not have medium-term, known targets for improvement.

Commentary

68. Attainment upon entry into school in all aspects of English is above average. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and make good progress in the subject. As a result, standards in English at age 14 are well above average. This is reflected in the most recent national assessment tasks in 2003 when standards were well above average in comparison to the national average and average when compared to schools with a similar intake. Students continue to sustain good progress in Years 10 and 11 as they respond to the increased demands of the GCSE syllabus, with students achieving above average grades in both GCSE Language and Literature in the 2003 examinations.

69. Those students with special educational needs receive good support from their teachers and make the same progress as all other members of their class. Students whose first language is not English and those who are either gifted or talented achieve as well as others.

70. Most students in school display good speaking and listening skills, though some lower attaining students are less secure in their oral skills when speaking within a more formal or structured speaking and listening activity. The majority of students listen with interest to their teachers and value the ideas of others when working in groups. Regular chances are given in Years 7 to 11 to take part in class discussions and role-play activities. A good example of this occurred in a Year 9 class with students using their good knowledge of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' to put together some imaginative improvised news broadcasts based upon events in the play. Standards in speaking and listening skills at ages 14 and 16 are above average. The majority of students are good readers. Students are given the chance to read a good range of poems, plays and stories in Years 7 to 9, with opportunities to engage in silent reading activities each week contributing to the development of students' personal reading skills. Critical reading skills are well taught in Years 10 and 11. This enhances their ability to read and understand the demanding texts they are confronted with as part as their GCSE studies. Most students in Years 10 and 11 have a good vocabulary and reading for understanding skills, though some lower attaining students do not always fully appreciate the layers of meaning in the texts they read. Overall, reading skills are above average.

71. Students continue to develop their basic English skills as they progress through Years 7 to 9, and use them to good effect in an imaginative range of writing activities. Students plan their work well, though there are too few chances for students to re-draft their work in terms of syntax and structure, increased detail and the more effective use of descriptive language.

72. Many more able students in Years 10 and 11 display the ability to make a strong personal response to the questions asked of them as part of their GCSE coursework. They appreciate how writers use language to convey ideas, issues and concepts and use this knowledge to good effect in writing about the stories plays and poems they have studied. Students of an average ability produce good quality written work, though they sometimes address questions at a surface level with a focus on the characters and events in the texts they have read. Standards in writing are well above average at age 14 and above average at age 16.

73. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching being observed during the period of the inspection. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed with regular chances for students to take some control of their own learning through well-planned group activities. Teachers use timed targets to good effect to ensure that lessons move along in a brisk manner, though they do not always inform students as to how much work they are expected to produce in the time available. Whilst teachers provide students with a good range of writing activities, occasions were observed in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 where students were engaged in the same activity, and using the same worksheets or writing frame, immaterial of their ability. This resulted in lower attaining students being insecure about the demands of the task and with more able students being inappropriately challenged. In those lessons deemed to be very good teachers had high expectations of all students immaterial of their ability, ensured that activities responded to individual needs and abilities and developed and extended skills in all areas of English within a single lesson.

74. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with all members of the department being committed to the continued raising of standards in the subject. There are good schemes of work in place. The department uses a good range of assessment procedures, though they are not used in Years 7 to 9 to provide students with known and achievable medium term targets for improvement. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

Literacy across the Curriculum

75. Although there is currently no whole school policy, there is clear evidence of the planned development of literacy across the curriculum.

76. Training has been provided in the past to identify and develop this area of the school's work, with workshops having taken place in reading for abstraction of information, and the development of writing skills.

77. It is expected that all departments address the development of literacy skills in handbooks, though the school has not checked on this issue to see if this is taking place in all subject. Despite this there are some good examples of departments focussing on the use of appropriate vocabulary, the promoting of reading skills and the chances to extend writing skills within well planned activities and the use of writing frames to support lower attaining students.

78. There has been no monitoring of the provision for literacy across the curriculum to see how it is working in practice. With nearly a half of the staff having left and arrived at the school in the last two years, it would now be an appropriate point in time to audit current strategies and practices.

French and German

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and students achieve well.
- Leadership and management are excellent, and teachers work very well as a team.
- Some teachers need to use the foreign language more in the classroom.
- Students do not check their written work carefully enough to avoid basic errors.

- It also needs more text books and readers.

Commentary

80. Currently when students enter the school they study French and German. In Year 8 some continue with both languages, but others continue with one. They can continue with one or two languages to the end of Year 11.

81. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national standards in French in 2003. Compared with national standards, French GCSE results were well above average in 2001 and 2003. German GCSE results were well above average in 2001 and 2002. French dropped to average in 2002 and below average in German in 2003 because of staffing difficulties. Results are usually above most other subjects in the college in both languages. The school predicts that the 2004 GCSE results will be well above national standards in both languages. Performance, in the lessons seen, was above national expectations in both languages in Years 9 and 11. In both languages, students are stronger in listening, speaking and reading than in writing. Overall, there is a good amount of written exercises and sustained writing in both languages: however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling, preventing them from achieving higher standards.

82. The overall quality of teaching in French is good and in German it is very good. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are proficient in both foreign languages and have good accents. They use French and German for parts of the lesson to develop students' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but sometimes they use English too much. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involve the students in their learning. Standards of control are generally good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate. Teachers manage classes well, and give students a variety of experiences in the classroom. They provide challenging tasks for the higher attainers, and give support to those with learning difficulties. Most students, including the higher attainers and those with learning difficulties, achieve well and make good progress in lessons throughout the college.

83. The quality of teaching ensures that the vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently.

84. Leadership and management are excellent: the co-ordinator has developed a very strong team spirit in the teachers, and organised a wide range of linguistic opportunities for students inside and outside college. Teachers take students on visits to France and Germany and events in England, so that students can use the languages. There has been good progress since the previous report. Teachers need more text books and readers.

MATHEMATICS

85. Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards attained by the students in public examinations are well above the national average showing an above average rate of improvement.
- The students learn and achieve well because of good teaching and because they are taught to work independently.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Very good departmental leadership and management have maintained high standards in spite of challenges posed by a difficult climate for recruiting and retaining teaching staff.

Commentary

86. Students' results in 2003 and all recent years were well above average both in the year nine National Curriculum tests (SATs) and in GCSE at Year 11. SAT results have shown an upward trend in line with those nationally over recent years. GCSE results fluctuate somewhat from year to year but have always been above and usually well above national results. The 2003 test scores are rather lower than in previous years because of substantial staff turnover. Boys have performed rather better than girls at key stage three. In GCSE examinations there is little difference. Given that the students come to the school with above average mathematical skills these results show that the students are achieving well. Their results compared with previous test scores improve at well above the national rate to the end of Year 9 and continue to improve in Years 10 and 11 so that improvement is good overall.

87. The students' work seen in their books and during lessons was well above average and showed good achievement over time as might be expected from the national test and examination results. In Year 9 some six in ten students are already close to or above level six and can use sine and cosine ratios in trigonometry to solve right angled triangles; even those who find mathematics difficult can define the number of lines of symmetry possessed by two dimensional shapes. Students of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 produce some very good statistical coursework. The higher attaining can solve triangles in three dimensions using trigonometry and Pythagoras' theorem. All of those seen were clearly capable of gaining a GCSE grade, with most capable of a grade E or better and more than seven in ten in line for a grade C or higher.

88. All students including the gifted and talented and those with English as an additional language achieve well. Provision in the shape of help from learning support assistants is adequate and is a strong feature contributing to the good progress of students with special needs. Teachers are aware of which students need extra assistance and know their students well so that even when there is no extra support available they enable them to achieve at least as well as might be expected and often much better. An example was a year seven lesson for lower attaining students on using twelve hour and twenty four hour clocks. The students were engaged in and enjoying the work throughout because of detailed planning and the use of games and exercises which challenged them to think and explain which they found fun. The support assistant worked from her own lesson plan provided by the teacher giving detailed guidance on what her special students should do. There was extra work provided for these students to which they had recourse as and when it was required. For the most part they were able to do the same as the rest because of the nature of the activities chosen. This meant that all were included very effectively in the lesson.

89. The students learn well throughout the school. A large contributory factor to this is that most of the teachers encourage the students to assess their own work realistically and develop problem solving skills, which in turn means that they gain in confidence and enjoy their mathematics. Good teaching also leads to the students learning well. Teachers are knowledgeable and most follow the departmental policy of making sure that the students understand work before they move on. For the most part lessons are very well prepared and incorporate a variety of activities, which engage the students' attention. Good use is normally made of the interactive white boards with which each mathematics classroom is equipped. Pace is usually good, although there was one unsatisfactory lesson in which the teacher did not get the students on task and working as quickly as should have been the case at the start of the lesson. Relationships between teachers and taught are also good and contribute to the quality of learning.

90. The leadership and management of mathematics by the head of department and by his deputy are very good. Both are very good teachers setting excellent examples to both students and staff. Very good use is made of departmental meetings to develop teachers' expertise and draw the department together. The students' progress is closely monitored, informing curriculum decisions as well as determining which sets students are allocated to. The teachers continuing professional development is effectively directed to raising standards.

91. There has been a substantial degree of staffing turnover in the last two years which has been very well managed so that the effect on provision has been minimalised by very good induction arrangements and training for new teachers. Teachers who have qualified overseas have played their part but an important factor in finding good new staff has been the very good reputation that the department enjoys with the South West London Teacher Education Consortium. Years of providing very good initial teaching experience to student teachers have been rewarded with the department being able to recruit good quality new entrants to the profession at least one of whom did her training at the school.

92. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Well above average standards have been maintained. The teaching is still good in spite of the many changes that have occurred. Departmental leadership is better.

Mathematics across the curriculum

93. The school carried out an audit of mathematical skills taught in each department and established a whole school policy for number in 2001. Most departments make a satisfactory contribution to the students' improving numerical understanding and are implementing their own departmental policies. However, there is some variable practice. A policy review and update is planned to take place soon. In design and technology classroom skills are good. The students can measure and weigh accurately. They produce good drawing work. Similarly In geography there are good examples of graphical skills with students using a range of tables and graphs for climate and population data etc. In science the work seen in books and in lessons confirms a very good level of mathematical competence.

SCIENCE

94. Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to learn and achieve well.
- Good leadership and management provide a clear direction for raising standards.
- Teachers build good relationships with students that lead to positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The use of student target-setting and self-evaluation is underdeveloped.
- Accommodation is inadequate.

Commentary

95. The results for the 2003 Year 9 national tests were well above the national average and well above average for similar schools. Over the last three years the schools' results have improved more than the national trend. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above the national average and have improved for the last three years.

96. The current standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Students are able to explain the process of photosynthesis with confidence using a word equation and some high attaining students demonstrate full understanding of the symbolic equation. Lower attaining students in Year 9 know how to make a fruit juice battery using different metals but only a few can relate their findings to the reactivity series. The current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. In Year 11 high attaining students are able to apply the concepts of work and power to human activity with confidence but do not always demonstrate mature listening skills. Lower attaining students know that transformers change voltage but do not understand why transformers are used in the national grid system.

97. Students' overall attainment on entry to the school is above average. By the end of Year 9, it is well above average, demonstrating that good progress is made by all students, including those whose first language is not English, those with learning difficulties and the most able or especially talented. Achievement is good. By the end of Year 11 students' attainment is still well above average showing that good progress is being maintained.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and enables students to learn and achieve well. In Years 7 to 9 teaching was good or better in two thirds of the lessons seen and in Years 10 and 11, teaching was good or better in three quarters of the lessons seen. The teaching has improved in all years since the last inspection and has resulted in students making better progress. Where the teaching was good or very good, teachers challenged and motivated students through a well structured series of tasks that required students to work independently and collaboratively, often drawing on ideas taken from the National Strategy. The tasks were usually designed to enable students to use investigative and practical skills to reinforce and extend their knowledge and understanding. Expert management and organisational skills created the appropriate classroom conditions that resulted in students achieving well. For example in a Year 11 lesson on the generation of electricity, students made their own model electrical generators and used them successfully to investigate the factors that affected the amount of electricity produced. In less effective lessons achievement was limited because the lessons lacked pace and unimaginative tasks were used such as copying complicated diagrams from text books. Relationships between teachers and students, centred on teaching and learning, are good and lead to students demonstrating positive attitudes and good behaviour. Teachers assess students work well and encourage them to assess their own work. Students know their current performance grades and what they are expected to achieve but detailed subject specific student self-evaluation and target setting are in the early stages of development.

99. The department is well led and managed by the recently appointed curriculum co-ordinator who has a strong focus on raising standards. A very effective team of teachers and support staff share this vision and the positive effects can be seen in how well students are achieving. Teaching and learning is monitored on an informal basis but no formalised system is yet in place. Resources are good and have improved since the last inspection. The students benefit from very good text book provision, the use of information communication technology and adequate equipment for experimental work. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Two of the eight laboratories available are in need of refurbishing and two more laboratories are often required to accommodate the number of students taught science at any one time. Preparation and storage areas are also cramped and inadequate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

100. Provision in information and communication technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, overall and, consequently, students' achievement is good.
- Some coursework indicates above average standards
- Extra curricular GNVQ intermediate results are above average but main school GNVQ Foundation results are low
- Leadership is very good
- Some students exhibit low level disruption which is unnecessary.

Commentary

101. Standards, in Year 9 teacher assessments, are close to national expectations and reflect those seen in lessons. However, some coursework indicates above average standards and is particularly well presented. Students at this level show how they can design a questionnaire using boxes, different colours, fonts, logos etc. They input graphs from a spreadsheet package into their reports on the findings of their data gathering. They design flyers, booklets, tickets and letters and evaluate each noting strengths and weaknesses. In other groups, students can use and create websites of their choice. These contain text, graphics and hyperlinks. Pencil design in the preliminary work is not always evident. Overall students' achievement is good, including that of those with special educational needs, those who are either gifted or talented and those whose first language is not English.

102. In 2003, results in GNVQ ICT Intermediate were above average with a third gaining merits or, as in the case of one, a distinction. Students took this optional course after school and showed considerable commitment. The pass rate, overall, was 80 per cent. GNVQ ICT Foundation students found the course challenging and did less well. Students who took this course were lower attainers, many with learning difficulties. The third that passed did very well. The others gained some unit passes which they could build upon if they so wished. The department has learned from this group's experience and gives weaker students an extra lesson to catch up. Within the GNVQ courses, students showed that they can use and make a database, record results, enter data, move fields, select information and create reports. Others create questionnaires; evaluate paper based and computer based resources. Boys appear more confident in class but the standards of work seen indicate that the achievement of both girls and boys is similar.

103. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Subject knowledge is adequate and teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, learning is good as a result and is enhanced by the use of a variety of packages. Students of different capabilities generally integrate well. They work on open-ended tasks as others and gain skills from advice and ideas from the teacher and occasionally from their peers. They work in groups, which again enables shared expertise and improves the learning of all. The group that has an extra catch up lesson is offered very good opportunities to improve its understanding; this supports the students very well. Teachers ensure that students know what is expected of them and these expectations are high. Students co-operate by achieving well. However, a few students in Year 11 are less mature and do not behave very well.

104. Leadership and management are emerging as very good. The subject co-ordinator has a clear vision of where ICT is going and has made a great deal happen in the last two years. His team are conscientious and supportive and have also contributed well to the good improvement since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

105. Information and communication technology across the curriculum is well developed in many areas of the school but is inhibited to some extent by a lack of ICT resources, which are, at present, below national norms, though rising. Many departments use the Internet for research purposes and for pre-written tasks. A key project occurs in English, which enables all students in Years 10 and 11 to gain the level 2 Key Skill in ICT. This ensures all receive a basic entitlement. Good examples of use are seen in technology, modern foreign languages, science and religious education and a transition project for students moving from primary schools. In the arts, there is less exposure.

HUMANITIES

Geography

106. Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are leading to rapidly rising standards.
- Teaching is good or better in nearly two-thirds of lessons.
- There is a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Students generally behave well.
- There is a small minority of students in Years 7 to 9 whose attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

107. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Assessment indicates that students enter the school with average attainment in geography. 2003 GCSE results were well above average. Results were above those of most other subjects in the school. Standards are rising.

108. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. This is consistent across all levels of attainment. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students.

109. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9. Where this occurs a small group of insolent and ill-mannered students disrupt the work of the class by causing constant interruption. At present neither the school or the teachers have strong strategies for dealing with this. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students are challenged to think and investigate rather than simply learning basic geographical facts. Teachers have very good subject knowledge both of the factual content for the course and for preparation of students for examinations. There are very good assessment procedures in place in Years 10 and 11 that focus strongly on setting targets for individuals and how to improve performance towards examination success. The focus is not so strong in Years 7 to 9. Students generally behave very well in lessons and have good attitudes to work.

110. Geography makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A very good contribution is made to development of students' numeracy skills and a good contribution to literacy and ICT development. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Schemes of work, department reviews and assessment procedures have been revised and are contributing to the rise in standards that is taking place. The department has a hard working and committed team of teachers. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

History

111. Provision in history is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management provide clear direction.
- Good and very good teaching is rewarded with comparable learning.
- Students' very good attitudes in Years 10 and 11 support their achievement.
- Students' understanding of how they can improve is underdeveloped.
- The learning needs of all students are not being met in a minority of lessons.

Commentary

112. GCSE results were below the national average in 2003. These results were disappointing and the department has taken effective action to tackle improvements in teaching and learning

methods in the current Years 10 and 11. Evidence from the work seen indicate that students' attainment in the GCSE course is above average and their achievement is good. Standards are average in Year 9 and achievement is good for the majority, although less able students and those with special needs in a limited number of lessons do not achieve as well as they could because their learning needs are not met adequately. Students' historical knowledge and skills develop well through the school and students who choose to follow the GCSE course at the end of Year 9 have a good basis for further understanding.

113. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In all year groups, the impact of teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise is seen in the planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. The very good brisk pace of learning, clear objectives, challenge and high expectations are matched by the way in which students apply themselves to work in Years 10 and 11. Students' attitudes, behaviour and enjoyment of lessons in all years are always good and sometimes very good. The ability to work collaboratively and independently makes a significant contribution to students' good learning and achievement.

114. Good practice was seen in the use of a range of differing learning techniques for differing abilities, however, the practice is not yet replicated consistently, in all Years 7 to 9 lessons. Marking of students' work, although supportive and encouraging, is not sufficiently focussed on helping them to understand what they need to do to improve their historical knowledge and skills. The potential of information technology to improve students' learning is not yet being realised through planned access. The way in which the history topics are taught makes a good contribution to students' social and cultural awareness.

115. The department is very well led with very clear vision and high levels of commitment to continued improvement. Management is very good and typified by the way in which issues identified in a recent school self-evaluation of the department are being earnestly tackled. Improvements to the assessment procedures and student target-setting processes are beginning to make an impact on teaching and learning methods especially in Years 10 and 11. There is a clear recognition of techniques that need to be in place in order to raise standards overall and improve individual students' performances in GCSE. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in some materials areas are very high, notably in food technology and in textiles in all years.
- Technical support for the subject is very good.
- Assessment procedures are good in all areas.
- The accommodation and resources for design and technology are very good.
- Students' achievement in resistant materials and to a lesser extent in graphic products is not as good as it is in textiles and food technology.
- There is good practice in students' recording of the progress they make in designing products in textiles and food technology.

Commentary

117. The aggregated results at GCSE in 2003 were around national averages. Food technology results were well above average. Electronics, graphic products and resistant materials results were below average. An analysis of the results show that in these last three subjects Year 11 students' results did not match their potential.

118. Standards observed during the inspection largely reflect the results. By the end of Year 11 standards are average if attainment in all subjects is aggregated. In textiles and food technology Year 11 standards are well above average. Achievement by all students including those with special educational needs is very good in textiles and food technology but satisfactory in the other subjects. Overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Food technology and textiles folders are very well organised and clearly show very good progress in designing and making. In the other subjects there are deficiencies in a number of areas. Some folders are incomplete while others feature poor presentation and superficial treatment of the required tasks. Drawings are poorly annotated and commentary on research areas is, for example, copied directly from the product web sites or brochures. There is very good use of ICT evident in the best folders and general ICT use is good and adds significantly to the quality of presentation and communication.

119. The teacher assessments awarded at the end of Year 9 were above national averages. These levels are reflected in the work of the current Year 9. The evidence gained from an analysis of work recorded in course booklets, from scrutiny of a sample of the artefacts made by students and from discussion with students it is evident that standards of attainment are above national expectations. Students enter the school with design technology skills, knowledge and understanding that are roughly average. Across the range of materials areas they make good progress following the National Curriculum programmes of study. By the end of Year 9 they conduct research into the products they are designing often using the internet. In the stronger subjects they have the confidence to generate good design ideas and to set them down on paper in the form of sketches and accurate working drawings. Their records of work logically set out the progress they make thinking about and designing their products. They make considered evaluations of their work. In the weaker subjects their folders are less well organised and offer a poor record of progress. Practical skills are generally good. Achievement is good.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In food technology and textiles it is very good. In the other courses it is mainly satisfactory. The principal differences between teachers are in the degree of support and guidance given and in the level of expectation. This is immediately evident when course folders are analysed. In food technology and textiles there is a clear, logical and well-ordered commentary of the design process and students work to tight course deadlines. In the other subjects there are clear deficiencies in all of these areas.

121. There are differences evident from observation. The best lessons start with very clear and brief introductions that set out what has been and what is to be covered. Teachers organise students' efforts by providing very clear guidance. Practical lessons are purposeful and teachers work around the class at pace clearing up individual problems and setting very good levels of individual challenge. Where appropriate and possible, as in textiles, display around the room celebrates individual achievement as well as providing good levels of stimulus. These lessons are busy featuring varied activity and very good pace. Closing sessions are well used to discuss progress, to point out individual gains and to plan ahead. Less successful lessons lack the urgency and the organisation of the best lessons and leave students to work at their own pace. Assessment procedures are good and are generally well used to set targets that match ability.

122. The leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory. There are a number of problems to be faced in the department and the head of department is working to solve them. A priority will be to share the good practice that exists in the department. The technical support staff make a valuable contribution to raising standards in design and technology through preparation and some teaching.

123. There is good overall improvement since the last inspection. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow a design and technology course. This was not the case at the time of the last inspection. A good range of examination options is now offered. Accommodation and resources including ICT are very good. Textiles is now offered to all students as an examination course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject supports students very well across a broad range of materials and techniques.
- Good leadership sets a clear, well-structured progression for students' artistic development.
- Facilities for ICT within the department are inadequate to promote and teach its use as a creative tool.
- The timetable allocation for art and design in Years 7 to 9 adversely affects continuity and achievement.

Commentary

125. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were slightly above the national average and close to the results for 2002. This shows a decline from preceding years that may reasonably be linked to a period of very unstable staffing.

126. Students join the school with mixed experiences in the subject from over 30 primary schools but overall standards on entry are below average. Standards attained by Year 9 are average representing good achievement over Years 7 to 9 for all students, including those with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English. Students at this stage gain a secure grounding in using a broad range of materials and techniques including good examples of card construction. By Year 11 standards in work seen are above average representing further good achievement over Years 10 and 11. Students demonstrate a good knowledge of art, from their own and other cultures, and a willingness to explore different ways of using materials for colourful and textural effects. Researches and findings are recorded in lively, well-presented sketchbooks. Students make good use of the internet for research and of digital photography to record work in progress but facilities within the department are inadequate to teach or promote ICT as a creative tool. The relative performance of boys and girls varies considerably but there is no consistent pattern across the age range.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers are very knowledgeable in the subject and versatile in their use of materials as shown in the very confident demonstrations of painting and construction techniques. As a result students learn quickly and effectively. The monthly rotation of the expressive arts' timetable in Years 7 to 9 disrupts continuity and restricts the depth of students' learning as at the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11 teachers place greater importance on research, and students' work is enriched by a growing understanding of artists' approaches to the GCSE themes. At all stages there is an emphasis on individual tuition that effectively meets the needs of students of all abilities and sets appropriate challenges. Gifted and talented students are not identified as a group and so do not gain extra benefit from working with their peers.

128. Leadership and management are good overall. The head of department sets a good example of enthusiasm and commitment. She has a clear vision of how students' work develops through the school, from close guidance to increasing independence and individuality, clearly laid out in an accessible scheme of work. Procedures for assessment are good though the tracking of students' performance is not yet fully developed. The time given to art and design is significantly below the recommended allocation in all year groups. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement, have improved from unsatisfactory to good and procedures for assessing students' work are also good. Inadequate facilities for ICT and smaller than usual curriculum time, however, remain unchanged.

DRAMA

129. Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching makes a positive contribution to students' achievement in the subject.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject contribute to above average standards in external examinations.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development.
- A number of students are insecure in their ability to evaluate and write about their own improvised dramas.

Commentary

130. The majority of students enter Year 7 with a limited knowledge of role-play and educational drama. Students develop an understanding of a satisfactory range of drama skills in Years 7 to 9, though the limited time devoted to the subject inhibits their ability to explore them in depth and to use them regularly. Standards at age 14 are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

131. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 as they use their drama skills within an increased range of demanding drama activities with the result that standards at 16 are above average. This is reflected in the most recent GCSE examinations in 2003 when students achieved above average grades. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of students' written work indicated that the current Year 11 students are on target to maintain these standards.

132. Students in Year 7 develop a satisfactory range of drama strategies, such as freeze frames and thought tracking and incorporate them into their work. This was observed in a very good lesson as students engaged in an imaginative piece of improvised drama on the theme of 'Evacuees'

133. As well as working on devised and scripted drama students are also given the chance to develop knowledge of the history of drama. This was seen in a Year 9 as class as students explored a range of characters from Italian *Commedia del' Arte* within devised pieces of drama. Although a number of groups of students produced work of a good quality, the work of a significant minority was influenced by their lack of self-discipline and their ability to stay on task.

134. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 as they respond to some imaginative drama activities as part of their GCSE studies. Good progress was observed in both years as students engaged in the exploration of a range of extracts from some demanding plays. Students worked with interest and enthusiasm as they focused on the key skills of physicalisation of character, the use of gesture, tone of voice and the use of space to denote status and relationships.

135. Although a number of students in Years 10 and 11 are able to write in an effective manner about the activities they have been involved in, others tend to focus on describing their activities, rather than evaluating the techniques and strategies they have used and the final impact on their work.

136. The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching being observed during the period of the inspection. The teacher observed in all lessons is very secure in her subject knowledge and uses it to good effect in the planned activities provided for students. There are regular chances for students to evaluate both their own and others' works, and with opportunities for students to share and celebrate what they have achieved.

137. Leadership and management in the subject are good. Drama is led by a well-informed and enthusiastic Head of Department. There are good schemes of work in place with effective

assessment procedures ensuring that students have a good understanding of what they have to do in order to improve the quality of their work.

138. There is a drama club, with all students being given the chance to take part in annual whole-school musical productions. There are also regular chances for students to see a range of drama productions in order to extend their wider knowledge of theatre.

139. With the need to work in an inter-active manner and the chance to explore a range of contemporary issues and plays from around the world, the subject makes a valuable contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

Music

140. Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The particularly strong leadership, commitment and vision of the head of department and the very well qualified, devoted and hard-working music staff are very valuable assets.
- The very detailed planning, presentation and delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum for music, with a strong focus upon improvement in all aspects, combined with the considerable opportunities for curriculum enrichment enhance the department.
- The good teaching, learning and achievement contribute to improving standards;
- The lack of sufficient and appropriate access to ICT, accommodation and time for music in Years 7 to 9 is a continuing concern, as at the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

141. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show standards to be better than satisfactory with boys only slightly poorer than girls. Work in class confirms this and augurs very well for continuing rising standards in the future, especially given the very low attainment in music upon entry in Year 7. Results of small but increasing numbers of candidates in GCSE music are very good, especially given students' prior levels of attainment. Standards of the few students taking A-level are very good.

142. On entry to the school, students' standards of attainment in music are well below average: often far less than national expectations of standards by the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in teachers' assessments are slightly above average by the end of Year 9, representing very good achievement, although a few students have difficulty with some important musical concepts. These assessments do not include ICT in music, which is not available in Years 7 to 9 as it should properly be. The majority of students develop greater confidence in singing and playing both as individuals and in larger groups. The focus of students' attention, especially when listening critically and analytically to music, is improving significantly and provides a secure if not yet sufficiently broad and deep foundation for those yet small but increasing numbers who elect to follow GCSE courses. Much remedial work remains to be done in Year 10 as in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 11, students' musical skills are further improved: standards and achievement are very good. In the sixth form, small numbers of A-level students have attained very high standards, continuing the very good achievement.

143. Teaching and learning in music throughout the school are never less than satisfactory and ordinarily good or very good with some outstanding features, for example a Year 12 lesson on the work of Debussy. In all year groups, the influence of very well qualified teachers and expert musicians is clear in the very detailed planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. Teachers' very high expectations of students' engagement with music in performing, composing and critical listening is characterised by unusual levels of energy and dynamism coupled with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. This promotes increasingly positive attitudes, behaviour and attention to the

task in hand by the vast majority of students who clearly value their music lessons highly. Lapses in such very high standards are rare and then when they do occur they are very well managed by the teachers. Consequently, every lesson observed had positive outcomes, especially in the high levels of achievement seen. The music staff and students demonstrate their enjoyment of music making and their commitment to the life of the whole school by their involvement in a range of instrumental and vocal ensembles, performing in school concerts and productions (most notably in the very recent production of *Oklahoma!*) and further afield in the local community: at local primary schools; performing carols in the local city centre.

144. The department is very well led with very clear vision of musical educational priorities and unusually high levels of commitment and energy. Management is very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and rich in its cultural and stylistic variety. However, it is severely constrained by available time and accommodation especially in Years 7 to 9. It is kept under regular review, revised and refined as changing circumstances demand. Planning for improvement is very good. The department makes significant contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, notably in support of the Roman Catholic liturgy and major Christian festivals, embodying the all-inclusive and very good ethos of the school. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection when provision for music must then have had some unsatisfactory features. The very high expectations of teachers are continuing to improve standards rapidly.

145. There has been significant progress since the last inspection, including the introduction of A-level music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination are well above the national average.
- Good relationships and good lesson management means students have a very positive attitude to the subject.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported.

Commentary

147. In recent years students have gained A*-C grades in the GCSE examination that have been above the national average. In July 2003 the department entered an increased number of students for the examination and the number gaining the higher A*-C grades was improved again, and was well above the national average. Student's attainment in this examination compares very favourably with their attainment in their other subjects. The majority of the current examination students are achieving well with several able students performing at the highest level.

148. Students arrive at the school with a variety of levels of physical education skills and experiences. They settle into the school quickly, make good progress and by the end of Year 9 the overall level of attainment is at least in line with national expectations, with a significant number doing even better. In games activities, they demonstrate good levels of skills, often showing good ball control, and being aware of simple attack and defence strategies. In gymnastics most students are able to perform a wide range of balances and turns with an increasingly competent ability to link them together to create good quality sequences. The overall attainment of students, by the end of Year 11 is better than that seen nationally. Good levels of skill are clearly evident in a wide range of activities. They have a good understanding of tactics and strategies and are able to apply the skills they have practised when they are playing in competitive games. Many students have also achieved high levels of skill in rock climbing.

149. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. They are given much support by teachers and other students and are reaching good levels of attainment. Talented students are encouraged to extend their skills both in school and with outside clubs.

150. At the time of the inspection the head of department was on sick leave and a specialist supply teacher was covering her work. In spite of this, the good quality teaching noted at the time of the last inspection has been continued. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach lessons that are well structured, use a variety of activities, and are conducted at a brisk demanding pace. There is an expectancy that students will work hard, behave well and achieve good standards, and generally these expectations are met. Students' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.

151. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The number of students opting for the GCSE in the subject has increased and the number gaining the higher pass grades has improved significantly. The indoor accommodation has been very significantly improved by the opening of the superb new sports hall. This is helping to enhance students' attainment and improve their enjoyment of the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

152. Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are offered good opportunities to develop their ICT skills.
- In the better lessons students learn well because of the challenges presented.
- The use of assessment and examination data as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning is weak.
- The quality of learning requires enhancement through the development of some innovative curriculum partnerships with local industry.
- A more robust approach to dealing with the immature behaviour of a minority of students is required.

Commentary

153. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examination were average but there was a noticeable difference in the performance of boys and girls. The results for boys were above average, but for girls results were below average. The school's own value-added analysis of these results indicates that, overall, value-added was less than expected, suggesting unsatisfactory achievement.

154. The work of present students in Years 10 and 11 is of a below average standard overall, but this judgement covers a range of abilities and some students are working at levels that are well above average. During the inspection, no clear differences in standards between boys and girls could be identified. The prior attainment of these students is broadly average, thus their present levels of achievement are unsatisfactory. Two reasons for this can be cited. Firstly, in both years there are small cohorts of mainly male students who exhibit immature behaviour which adversely affects not only their own work, but also the work of the more committed majority. Secondly, in Year 11, a number of students are presently behind in their work. There is thus a distinct possibility that they will attain lower than predicted grades as a result.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better lessons staff prepared a range of challenges well and the students are encouraged to work either independently or collaboratively to solve relevant problems and discuss business problems. In these lessons, students make far better progress, their enjoyment is more obvious and they are also offered good opportunities to apply their ICT skills. In other lessons the quality of learning is less strong and the

progress students make is slower because there are fewer challenges and the lessons tend to be dominated by the teacher. In such instances learning is inclined to be more factual with fewer opportunities offered to the students to investigate and apply ideas for themselves. It is in these lessons that a minority play up and this further slows the pace of learning. Students are set much work and it is marked well, but for standards to rise further the quality of set written work needs to be more exacting. All students would benefit from being required to write in more detail; too much of the present written work requires short answers that rarely extend beyond a couple of sentences. Planning also needs improving so that the work that is set is suitably modified to meet the requirements of different groups of students. At present, all students are set the same tasks irrespective of their potential.

156. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory, though it is managed satisfactorily. Day-to-day planning is sound. For example, staff are up to date with course requirements and students are offered suitable opportunities to practice their ICT skills. However, the quality of learning is not enhanced by any curriculum partnerships with local businesses, so any simulations that are presented to the students tend to be textbook examples. A further weakness is that inadequate use is made of assessment and examination data. The department has inadequate data relating to the students' past performance and the setting of target grades and monitoring progress against such targets in a robust way is not regular. This is a practice that needs to be developed if standards are to rise further. Overall satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The computer system, which was criticised last time, has been significantly improved, while standards of attainment and teaching and learning have remained broadly constant.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

157. The programme of personal and social education is combined with citizenship and makes a good contribution to students' personal development. No lessons of personal and social education were observed during the inspection but evidence from the work scrutiny and discussion with the co-ordinator indicates that a wide range of topics including sex and drugs education are appropriately covered. The personal and social education programme is taught by form tutors in all years using, as a basis for lessons, well planned and researched topic booklets.

Citizenship

158. Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good learning resources for lessons are used
- No whole school framework or policy is in place that identifies what contributes to citizenship.
- Assessment, recording and reporting procedures are not in place to support students' learning.
- Progress files are only in place for some students.

Commentary

159. Although provision is satisfactory when all aspects of school life that contribute to citizenship are considered, there are aspects of planned lesson provision which are unsatisfactory and have not yet been addressed. No specific citizenship lessons were observed during the inspection; however, evidence for judgements were secured through discussion with students, examination of schemes of work, interview with the co-ordinator of PSE/Citizenship, a scrutiny of work and a consideration of the wider school opportunities.

160. Students in Years 7 to 9 are in line to achieve the expectations of the national curriculum end of key stage descriptor for citizenship, with a similar picture at the end of Year 11. However, the school has no effective mechanism in place which can assess the attainment or progress students make in this subject in any year. From the work seen achievement is at least satisfactory.

161. Teaching and learning, as judged from the work sample, are satisfactory with good learning resource booklets used across all years. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for students to be involved at first hand in actively experiencing what it means to be an informed citizen. For example a BT £2000 award is developing connections with people in Palestine; students have lobbied parliament with others for better deals for the poor in the third world and there are regular contributions made by students to charity events. However, there is no consistent recording of information about what students know, understand or can do in citizenship. Progress files are only in place for Years 7 and 8 but not for any other students. Arrangements for marking and assessment are unsatisfactory.

162. Leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved and has already begun to tackle areas for development. Management is unsatisfactory because the subject is not yet fully established in the school and there are significant aspects that secure the subject's place in the curriculum, not yet managed. Lesson planning is not clearly focussed on citizenship learning objectives. There is no overall framework which clarifies whether other subjects contribute to citizenship teaching and learning or what activities provided within school can also be effective contributors to citizenship. The combined course of PSE and citizenship covers the statutory elements of the national curriculum programme of study but it is addressing too many objectives within a small time slot of 45 minutes per week for it to sustain high standards.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth forms.

163. In the inspection, 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.

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

Level 3 GCE A level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	5	100.0	96.1	60.0	48.7	96.0	85.1
Biology	15	100.0	91.6	20.0	36.3	76.0	74.1
Business Studies	5	80.0	96.4	20.0	32.8	64.0	76.5
Drama	5	80.0	98.1	0	41.5	48.0	82.9
English	15	93.3	98.3	6.7	36.5	60.0	80.1
English Literature	20	100.0	98.5	65.0	43.7	92.0	84.3
French	7	100.0	96.2	57.1	46.1	91.4	83.0
Design and Technology	9	88.9	95.3	11.1	35.5	68.9	76.5
Geography	9	100.0	97.1	55.6	40.5	93.3	80.9
History	8	100.0	97.1	25.0	41.0	65.0	81.2
Mathematics	12	100.0	93.3	58.3	52.2	96.7	84.7
Other social studies	11	100.0	77.7	90.0	38.9	110.9	77.7
Physics	10	100.0	92.8	30.0	42.8	66.0	78.6
Religious Studies	9	100.0	96.3	66.7	44.0	93.3	82.2
Total	152	97.4	94.8	40.8	39.4	81.2	78.6

Level 3 GCE AS level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	5	100.0	89.1	20.0	31.7	34.0	35.4
Chemistry	6	100.0	84.8	0.0	36.9	31.7	35.2
Design and Technology	6	83.3	89.2	16.7	32.0	33.3	35.7
Mathematics	8	100.0	74.2	25.0	34.3	37.5	31.3
Religious Studies	6	100.0	90.9	83.3	38.9	51.7	37.9
Physical Education	5	100.0	88.2	0.0	27.7	28.0	33.8
Total	61	96.7	86.0	27.9	33.6	37.0	34.8
Information Technology	38	94.7	84.3	32.9	24.5	76.8	64.3
Total	38	94.7	84.3	32.9	24.5	76.8	64.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

165. Four A-level lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. One in each of Years 12 and 13 for A-level English language and the same for English literature

166. Provision in A-level English language and English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributed to the achievement made by students on both courses.
- The department interprets the A-level English language and English literature syllabi in an effective and demanding manner.
- The good working relationship between teachers and students makes a positive contribution to learning.
- Standards achieved by individual students are much influenced by the wide range of ability upon entry into the two demanding courses.

Commentary

167. The school operates an inclusive policy for entry into the sixth form. This policy results in some students having satisfactory, rather than good GCSE language and literature grades as they enter the two demanding course offered by the English department.

168. Students are given the opportunity to develop good analytical and linguistic skills in the A-level language course as they move through Years 12 and 13. Many students find the course difficult with the results that grades in the most recent examinations in 2003 were below average. Students make good progress in the A-level English literature course. They develop a growing awareness of a range of poetry, novel and plays and become more confident in their ability to respond to them. However, standards in the most recent examinations in 2003 were below average. Mid-course examinations, lessons observations and a scrutiny of students' written work indicate that standards for the current Year 13 English language students remain below average, though standards for the current Year 13 English literature students are above average.

169. Students in Year 12 on the A-level English language course could be seen making satisfactory progress in their knowledge of the language of power and inter-action, with short scripted role-play activities helping students to appreciate how this works in practice. Good learning was observed in a Year 13 lesson as students considered the power of persuasive language in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Although linguistic and critical and analytical skills are very well taught in the school, many students still have problems in putting them into practice in their coursework.

170. Students in Year 12 could be seen to be using previous homework activities to good effect as they shared their ideas and opinions about specific features of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, with students extending their knowledge and understanding through the efforts of others.

171. Students in Year 13 could also be seen in making real gains in their knowledge and understanding of the poetry of the First World War as they engaged in an animated discussion on the merits of Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's poetry, with individuals and groups of students making strong arguments for their preference supported by evidence from individual poems.

172. Most students display good oral skills, with many students on the English literature course making mature and perceptive points about the texts they have read. The majority of students have good reading skills and appreciate how writers use language to convey ideas, issues and concepts and information in different ways.

173. Many students, particularly those on the A-level literature course are good writers. They can write in a confident and extended manner about different texts and genre within a single essay and have a good understanding of how poets, novelists and playwrights explore similar issues in different forms and from different perspectives.

174. The quality of teaching at A-level is good, with some very good teaching being observed during the period of the inspection. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students in an informed manner. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning styles and give students the chance to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities. Students are also given the opportunity to engage in personal research to extend their knowledge of the texts they are studying. The good working relationships between students and their teachers make a positive contribution to learning.

175. Leadership and management in the subject are good. The two A-level syllabi are interpreted in an imaginative and demanding manner. The department uses the syllabus assessment criteria to good effect, with individual support for students ensuring that they have a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve the quality of their work.

176. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

Literacy across the curriculum

177. Literacy is above average at this level.

FRENCH

178. The focus of the inspection was on French, but work in German lessons was also sampled. In German, AS results were above national expectations in 2001; they were in line with them in 2002 and 2003. A2 results were above in 2002 and 2003, but there were no candidates in 2001. One AS and one A2 lesson were observed: teaching was very good in both lessons.

179. Provision in French is **very good**.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and their current attainment is above average.
- The teaching is very good; the teachers have high expectations.
- Resources are very good, especially those from the internet.
- Teachers plan well together to give students varied linguistic experiences.
- Some students need to analyse their work more to improve their performance.

Commentary

180. Over the last three years, numbers for AS and A level courses have varied. AS results were above national averages in 2001, and in line in 2002 and 2003. A level results were above in 2001 and 2002, but below in 2003. The results have been at least in line with the ability of the students, and often better than would be expected. Current students are achieving well and their attainment is above average.

181. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in the students' files during the inspection showed that they were expected to achieve grades A-C at AS and at A level. French pronunciation and intonation are good. They could understand the general meaning of spoken and written French, and pick out important details from what they heard and read. They could express opinions. They could write on different topics with a variety of structures and tenses: accuracy varied with the ability of the students. They have developed a wide range of vocabulary related to the environment, health,

and other topics. They have good research skills: they download current information from the internet and use the library. This develops their reading skills and their overall knowledge of France and world issues. They are also encouraged to listen regularly to tapes and French radio and work independently at home.

182. Overall the teaching of French in the sixth form is very good. The teachers' expectations were high, and the students achieved very well. The lessons had clear aims, which were achieved by the end on both occasions. They were very well planned to both challenge and interest the students and exploit the department's very good resources. In the first Year 12 lesson, students discussed what they would do if they won the lottery: this gave them opportunities to fantasise. They also listened to a French tape about a man's holiday job. In the second Year 12 lesson students discussed adjectives describing personal characteristics and listened to an entertaining tape of a girl discussing boys with her mother. This generated an interesting discussion, which was well led by the teacher. In the Year 13 lesson students read an article about a teachers' strike in France and discussed it with the teacher. The teachers gave encouragement and help if the students could not understand parts of texts or tapes. If they gave synonyms or explanation in French, the students were quick to confirm understanding. The lessons went at a brisk pace, but the teachers ensured that the students had sufficient time to complete the tasks. These varied activities have helped them to practise and develop their language skills well.

183. The students have a mature approach to their work and most organise their time well. They write plans before writing essays, and do appropriate research to consider topics in depth. They have been given good advice on how to develop their skills. They make good notes on grammar points, literary works and the topics, and can use the information to discuss ideas with their teachers. Most try to speak in class, and seek help if they lack vocabulary to make their point. They have good research skills, use dictionaries and other reference material well, and can exploit information technology well. They are responsible, and use private study sessions and free time in school to do their work. They show interest in class, and are pleased with their French course. They are achieving well and making good progress. They have very good relationships with the teachers.

184. The staff that teach French in the sixth form are very thorough and well organised. They meet regularly, and agree who will deal with which topic. The teachers have good knowledge of the course requirements, and mark work according to the examination criteria. These criteria are also given to the students, so they know how they could improve their work. However, some students need to analyse their work more to improve their performance. Teachers use the internet to obtain relevant resources for the students.

MATHEMATICS

185. The school offers courses leading to mathematics at AS level and A level. The students study a combination of pure mathematics, decision mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Two Year 12 students are studying further mathematics. They are making very good progress and are attaining well above average standards. Occasionally special arrangements are made for individual students to retake GCSE but none are doing so currently.

186. The main focus of the inspection was on AS and A level work in mathematics. Lessons were seen and work scrutinised for students on the mathematics and further mathematics courses.

187. Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have been above or well above national norms in recent years because of very good teaching.
- Students' enjoy their mathematics; their attitudes to their work and their teaching are very positive; they are good independent learners; hence they achieve well.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Commentary

188. A-level results in 2002 and 2003 were above the national average following well above average results in 2000 and 2001. Students usually perform better in mathematics at A level than they do in other advanced level subjects they take. There is no significant difference in the results achieved by boys as compared with girls. The results obtained compare favourably overall with what might be predicted from the students' performance in the GCSE examinations they took two years before. AS level results present a similar picture with attainment well above that seen nationally.

189. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirmed that standards are well above average overall. Students in Year 13 are all on course for grade C or better. They have a very good basic grasp of their work; they can, for example, manipulate algebra to simplify results and apply the rules to differentiate products and quotients in the calculus. Higher attaining students can apply the necessary techniques to solve problems with trigonometric identities quickly whereas weaker students sometimes need guidance. Year 12 students are also likely to achieve higher grades A to C with just one or two attaining lower. Higher attainers are confident in applying basic calculus to solving problems such as finding the least amount of cardboard needed to make a box of given volume, whilst lower attainers are improving their ability to manipulate algebra with confidence when, for example, solving quadratic equations by completing the square.

190. Teaching is very good so that the students are improving their understanding of the various aspects of mathematics very well. Lessons are very carefully prepared and presented providing the right level of pace and challenge. The teachers are all experienced and well qualified. All of the sixth form teaching seen during the inspection was good, with the larger proportion very good and excellent. Effective use is made of the interactive whiteboards to be found in each mathematics classroom. Skilful discussion and question and answer techniques ensure that students understand. Teachers do not move on from one topic to the next until the students are confident and understand what they are currently doing. Very detailed lesson planning in decision mathematics and cross-referencing and comparisons with real life situations in statistics and mechanics enliven lessons so that the students take pleasure in their work and find it interesting. An example of this was seen in an excellent lesson on moments of a force in which an example of particularly innovative ladder design was demonstrated. Some of the students, when interviewed, spoke of "inspirational" teaching and of how much they enjoyed their mathematics.

191. Assessment is very good. There are examples of very good practice in using model answers and very clear marking schemes which demonstrate how examination questions should be answered to best effect. Students are required to do short term, timed tests, marked to examination standards, and so appreciate the importance of answering under pressure. All work is checked through, usually in class with very good support from the teachers. The departmental philosophy of encouraging the students to become independent learners is realised in that they are encouraged to annotate and correct answers carefully and fully doing corrections where they are needed.

192. The students feel very well supported by their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in difficulties. They work hard and their folders are well organised with a goodly number of notes and examples in them.

193. The mathematics department is very well led and managed. The teachers are enthusiastic about their mathematics as well as very knowledgeable. A reflection of their commitment is that

they give very generously of their time outside of lessons, at break, lunch time and after school to provide extra tuition whenever students ask it of them. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Results then were below average and now are well above. Teaching also has improved from good to very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

194. In general the students' skills in mathematics are well developed and there was no evidence to suggest that their academic progress is being restricted because of difficulty experienced with numerical or graphical concepts. On the contrary, in some subjects skill levels observed were good or very good. In chemistry, for example, students perform very good work with ionic equations and in design technology the use of formulae, measurement and interpretation of statistical data are all of a high quality. The fact that the school does not offer a course in key skills and has no policy for numeracy across the curriculum in the sixth form is not, therefore, having an adverse effect of any significance on the students' work overall.

SCIENCE

195. The focus was on physics but biology and chemistry were also sampled. In biology and chemistry, examination results were average and students did as expected considering their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed in chemistry and both were at least good. In one, very good teaching resulted in high levels of student preparation for the lesson in which students presented their own research into environmental chemistry followed by very well focused teacher evaluation of what students knew and understood. Students made very good progress not only in their own particular topic but in what they learned from each other. The lesson observed in biology demonstrated very good teaching methodology that enabled students to prepare and deliver high quality presentations on adaptation to the environment and as a result, students learned well from each other and achieved very well.

Physics

196. Provision in physics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables students to learn and achieve very well in lessons.
- Students take responsibility for their own learning and prepare well for lessons.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Students' self-evaluation and subject specific target setting are underdeveloped.

Commentary

197. In 2003, A level results were well below average and were similar to the previous years' results. However, students overall obtained grades only slightly below what was expected of them considering their GCSE results.

198. The standards seen in Years 12 and 13 were well above average and reflected recent modular test results. In Year 12 students know and understand the principles of the potential divider and its applications, they have a good understanding of the behaviour of materials that are deformed by forces but do not always question concepts and terminology obtained from web sites. In Year 13 students, using an electrical circuit, are able to measure, record and tabulate experimental results accurately and plot an appropriate graph choosing their own scales. They can use their graphs to determine previously unknown electrical values. However many students are not able to answer searching questions on circuits involving the internal resistance of a power supply. All students demonstrate high levels of competency in the use of mathematics and ICT.

199. The teaching seen was very good and students achieved well. Teachers plan their lessons well in advance using methods that develop high quality independent learning skills in their students. For example in a Year 13 lesson on particle acceleration students delivered very high standard presentations on particle acceleration that had been prepared beforehand. The teacher intervened at various points to relate the topic to other concepts in physics and to ensure that students were continually challenged on their understanding. The teacher also required students to question each other on their understanding. The presentations were enhanced by the very effective use of ICT and each presentation was sent to other students in the group by e-mail where appropriate. This highly interactive form of collaborative learning led to very good student achievement. Students enjoy physics and are well motivated as a result of the imaginative teaching methods employed. Students' work in files is thorough, challenging and well marked. Students know the current levels they are working at and also their expected grades. However subject specific self-evaluation and target setting is underdeveloped.

200. The subject is well led and managed. The widespread use of methodology, that encourages and enables independent learning in students, is becoming established and is already resulting in higher achievement in recent modular examinations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

201. Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Exam results for AVCE are well above average.
- Students' response could be better.
- There is no suitable course for low attainers.

Commentary

202. In 2003, results for AVCE were well above average for those students with higher grades (A and B) and in line with the average for those with grades A to E. These results were better than those in 2002. ASVCE results were also well above average and compare well with other subjects. However, the number of ungraded students was disappointing and reflected the capabilities of the students entered, many of whom have left. The course was clearly too challenging and a more appropriate replacement is being sought. Students' standards in the work seen are above average. They know how to choose an internet service provider, how to create a website and how to create an organisation structure. Sometimes they are slow to respond and one or two very knowledgeable students hold the floor.

203. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject which they convey in a way that students can understand. They are enthusiastic and know how to add interest. All students do not respond with similar enthusiasm but generally this reluctance improves as lessons proceed. They settle to tasks well and are confident that they will learn the topic at hand. Learning is good. Students do well when analysing different Internet service providers, a couple of students excelled, being able to list the main services provided as well as a comprehensive list of their advantages and disadvantages. It is clear from sixth form projects that the teaching of web design is good. Students have produced detailed plans for their unique web sites and, in most cases, given full descriptions of how to produce these.

204. Students enjoy the AVCE course and expect to pass. They are pleased that they chose it; they feel they will find it useful in the higher education routes they have chosen. They like the way they can follow their course on the internet at home and prefer the large coursework element where they find their ICT skills enhance their presentation. They have a clear idea of how they are doing

and are aware of their predicted grades. Apart from some initial difficulties with new software, which are soon solved, they find all units do-able. However, they prefer the website creation unit to the internet service provider one.

205. Leadership and management are very good at this level too. Schemes of work, audits and other essential information are in place and enable considerable progress to be made. The course is major contributor to the sixth form and recruits large numbers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

206. Students regularly use ICT to research and present their work. There is good use across most subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

207. Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students show very good attitudes to work and achieve very well.
- Assessment procedures are very good and show students how to improve their work.
- Students are very well supported by their teachers.
- Take up for Year 12 and retention into Year 13 is low.

Commentary

208. In 2003 too few students were entered for AS and A level for comparison to be made against national statistics. Four students were entered for A level. Two passed at grade A and two at grade C.

209. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average at the end of Year 12 and the end of Year 13. Male and female students achieve equally well. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE grades. Too few students choose geography in Year 12 and retention into Year 13 is low.

210. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge for work at this level. They also have good knowledge of how best to prepare students for examinations. Teachers' planning and preparation for lessons are thorough and detailed. Students are kept informed about their likely grades and how they can improve their work. Very good assessment procedures provide good information for teachers and students about the progress students are making. Working relationships between teachers and students are very good and there is a relaxed but businesslike working atmosphere in lessons. Students report that they are very happy with the support they receive from teachers. Students show a very high level of motivation and develop very good independent learning skills.

211. Good use of fieldwork enhances curriculum provision and contributes to raising standards. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department has shown very good leadership in identifying priorities and in her leadership of a strong team of teachers. The subject has made good progress since the previous report.

History

212. History AS level was sampled. In the lesson observed students were working on their coursework. They showed a good understanding of what they needed to achieve, had positive attitudes to their learning and appreciated the way in which the AS course was now building on their previous knowledge from Years 10 and 11. Despite standards below the national average in 2003 students are currently benefiting from a greater emphasis being given to tracking their progress and achievements. Standards overall are in line with the national average and they achieve well.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

213. Provision in design and technology in the sixth form is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good
- Students' attitudes are very good
- The Year 12 range of courses is good and the number of students opting for AS level has increased threefold
- Procedures for tracking students' progress and setting relevant and frequent targets are good

Commentary

214. Results, in the 2003 design technology examination, were around average. The previous two years yielded above average results. The numbers of students entered in all three years were low. The present Year 12 offers three courses: food technology, graphic design and resistant materials and numbers are much higher. Textiles will be offered from this year. This is good curriculum provision and reflects the status of the school as a technology college.

215. Current Year 13 students attain at least average standards and are achieving well in the product design course. They make very good use of ICT using a good range of software to enhance presentation, to communicate design ideas as well as to manufacture products. Their folders give good evidence of ways in which their products develop from initial ideas right through to the chosen design. They provide clear commentaries on their research. Students' sketching to design is effective though some students lack confidence and this affects the quality and number of sketches. Achievement is good.

216. Year 12 students make good progress acquiring the knowledge, skills and understanding required in the relevant syllabi. The research they conduct is well focused. Their customer surveys are sound and they use ICT well to communicate their progress through the design process. Their practical skills are above average and this gives them confidence to attempt a good range of products.

217. Teaching is good in all courses. Teachers have established very good relationships with students and this leads to good dialogue. There are clear procedures for the tracking of progress that ensure that students' efforts remain focused. Teachers review work with students every week and agree targets for the coming week. Teachers have good subject knowledge and effectively share this with students through good quality written and spoken feedback. Challenge is good in all courses.

218. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The impact of technology status plus the increased popularity of the courses contributes to the judgement that improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject supports students very well in following their personal interests and developing their own style.
- Very good leadership sets a clear, well-structured progression for students' artistic development.
- Facilities for ICT within the department are inadequate to promote and teach its use as a creative tool.
- Very good relationships permit very good, open discussions and group evaluations of work.

Commentary

220. Results in the A level examinations in 2003 were well above the national average. This represents a rising trend over recent years alongside a steady increase in the number of students taking the subject at this level.

221. Standards on entry to Year 12 are average. Students entering the course cover a broad range of attainment and, in recent years, have included several who have not taken art and design at GCSE. These students initially show significantly less perception than others in their evaluations of their own and artists' works. Higher attainers at this stage show good research into artists linked to their themes and combine this well with an experimental approach to working with materials. By Year 13 work is of a very high standard showing very good achievement in Years 12 and 13. Sketchbooks and folders show a progressive refinement in the selection and use of materials as students develop an awareness of their own artistic identity. Finished pieces are often on a very large and ambitious scale. These vary from dramatically presented life sized figures to wall hangings that show high levels of delicacy and control in their use of textiles and fragments of writing.

222. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with a clear emphasis on refining and applying knowledge and skills learned in earlier years. Very good individual tuition sessions extend and challenge students' thinking about their work at levels appropriate to their experience and ability. Relationships between students and with teachers are very good. Well-managed group discussions encourage students to make and consider evaluations of their own and others' work and further strengthen their use of art vocabulary. Procedures for assessing students' work are very good with very frequent verbal assessments and detailed written summaries of progress within projects. Facilities within the department for ICT are inadequate, slowing students' development of ideas and imagery.

223. Leadership and management are very good overall. Leadership is very good in creating a very supportive ethos that gives students confidence to find their own ways of working. Management is very effective in most aspects of the course but there are weaknesses in the tracking of students' performance and the time allocated is below average, placing undue demands on teachers' non-contact time. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards attained, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning have all risen significantly.

Drama

224. Provision in Drama in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the subject results in real gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The A-level Drama syllabus is interpreted in an imaginative and demanding manner.
- Students' enthusiasm for, and commitment to the subject is a significant factor in the good and very good achievement in lessons.

Commentary

225. The school operates an inclusive policy for entry into the sixth form. Not all students who enter Year 12 have studied the subject at GCSE level, nor have all students achieved a good grade in their GCSE language or literature examinations. Students, however, make good progress in their drama skills over the two years of the course, though standards in the most recent A level examinations in 2003 were well below average. Mid-course examinations, lesson observations and a scrutiny of students' written work indicate that the able students in the current Year 13 are on task to achieve above average grades in their final examinations.

226. Students in both years approach their work with a great deal of interest. This was observed in Year 12. Students engaged in some imaginative devised drama linked to Margaret Atwood's novel *A Handmaid's Tale*, with students exploring the power and relationships between the sexes. Students had engaged in personal research for this work and utilised it to good effect in their approach to work.

227. A similar approach was observed in Year 13 as students worked with interest on exploring selected scenes from a number of demanding plays. Students worked extremely well together, listening to and valuing each others' ideas and opinions, exploring a number of approaches and eventually arriving at an agreed format for their finished work. Discussions with students revealed that they had a good understanding of the working methods of a number of influential theatre practitioners and had taken them into consideration in the rehearsing, acting and staging of their work.

228. Students' enthusiasm for the subject was much evident during the inspection, with groups of students continuing to rehearse their work at the end of the school day in order to improve it.

229. The quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching being observed during the inspection. The teacher who leads the A-level course is very secure in her subject knowledge and uses it to good effect in supporting and advising students, yet still allowing them to retain ownerships of their work. The teacher's personal enthusiasm for the subject was a significant factor in the creation of an animated and motivating working environment in the two A-level lessons observed.

230. Leadership and management of the subject at A-level are good. The A-level Drama syllabus is interpreted and implemented in an in an imaginative and challenging manner, with good assessment and self-evaluation procedures and one-to-one support ensuring that students have a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve the quality of their work.

231. Chances are given for students to see a range of productions in order to extend their knowledge of drama and theatre.

232. The subject makes a positive contribution to students' personal, moral and cultural development. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.

Music

233. Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction and development of A-level music has attracted more students.
- Standards and achievements in work seen and in examinations are very good.
- High standards of attainment result from very good teaching and organisation.
- Students are increasingly developing independent learning skills.

Commentary

234. Provision for music in the sixth form began less than two years ago and now caters for six students in the current Year 12 and two in Year 13 with greater potential candidate numbers in the present Years 10 and 11.

235. Standards seen in lessons and in scrutiny of work confirm overall the already good impression made by the achievements of Year 13 students in gaining A and C grades. These results are above the average for other subjects in the school and are approximately in line with expectations based on GCSE results. This represents very good achievement for these students. Work seen during the inspection indicates that these high standards are likely to be sustained over time.

236. Students are extremely well motivated and enjoy their music studies, which leads to a good environment for learning.

237. Teaching and learning are very good in the lessons and the work seen. The teacher has an excellent command of the subject matter and plans very well so that students are taking responsibility for their own progress and become truly independent learners. In the lessons seen they take turns to contribute to discussion, in order to learn from each other. They set about organising their work in a responsible and enthusiastic manner, consulting their teacher about ideas and then developing their own thoughts about the nature of impressionist music.

238. This course, which is new to the school, is very well led and managed by a comparatively newly-appointed head of department. With continued student enthusiasm and commitment from the teacher, the department has the capacity to build on the current high standards.

239. There has been significant progress since the last inspection when there was no A-level music.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good. It is well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good, which leads to high expectations for attainment and good progress.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work, taking well-organised notes that help them to revise effectively for tests and examinations.

Commentary

241. In the July 2003 examination a small number of students took the A level examination and gained passes that reflected their AS level grades and were in line with that attained nationally. A slightly larger group of took the AS examination and again their results were in line with the gained nationally. A number of students have gone on to university to study sports science.

242. Inspection evidence indicates that the students currently in Year 13, who will be taking the A level examinations, are achieving well and are attaining standards that are in line with the 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 are able to 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 range of skills in a variety of activities. Most students can analyse practical performance confidently, and then use their evaluation to refine their work. They show real rapport with their teachers and relationships are very good. Students were observed debating the influences that the English public schools exerted on the development of physical education in England and were able to put forward their views with vigour and conviction.

243. The teaching of the A level courses is very good. Enthusiasm for the subject and a wide subject knowledge enable staff to interest and motivate students. 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 know 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. Teachers make full use of their ICT skills to present new topics as powerpoint presentations. They also encourage students to access the internet as a means of enhancing their own personal knowledge and to use computers to improve the presentation of their written work.

244. All students have very positive views of the course and of the teaching they receive. The course has lived up to their expectations and they are enjoying the subject.

BUSINESS

245. The focus was on AS/A-level business studies, though one Year 12 economics lesson was sampled. Standards in this lesson were well above average. Learning was good because of the challenges presented and all students achieved well.

246. Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Course pass rates are very high, especially in relation to the students' levels of prior attainment.
- The re-introduction of economics is enhancing the prospects of some high-attaining students.
- The use of assessment and examination data as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning is weak.
- The quality of learning needs to be improved through the development of some innovative curriculum partnerships with local industry.

Commentary

247. The 2003 A-level results were below average. Though all students gained at least a pass grade, no high level grades were awarded. These results mirror the pattern of recent years. This group's levels of prior attainment were below average; thus their results indicate satisfactory achievement. As the numbers involved were small, no analysis of the results based on gender is valid. For present students in Years 12 and 13 standards remain below average, though they are

higher in Year 12 than in Year 13. Again achievement is broadly satisfactory because levels of prior attainment are below average. No differences in attainment based on gender were discernible.

248. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, though it is good in Year 12 where the students are more responsive and show a greater propensity to work independently. In contrast the Year 13 students are reticent and less confident and there are weaknesses in their prior learning. Where learning is of a higher quality, the students work well both independently and collaboratively and are confident in presenting their ideas and explaining relevant theories and trends. This was illustrated well in a Year 12 lesson where the students were required to identify external economic constraints that affect businesses and explain possible outcomes. The students tackled this task well in the time allocated and gave some good presentations of their work. In contrast, Year 13 students are less confident and their progress in lessons is reduced because their prior learning is not strong and they struggle to evaluate and analysis business situations with any confidence.

249. This curriculum area is satisfactorily led and managed. Course retention rates are good and in the A-level examination, a 100 per cent pass rate is usually recorded. A strength of the provision is the development to the curriculum which has seen the re-introduction of economics. Though numbers are small, the course is taught very well and is successfully providing for the needs of some very able students. In other respects, the key features of the leadership and management are similar to those that apply to the main school. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and adequate provision is made to develop the students' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, but self-evaluation needs improving and more use should be made of assessment data as a device for improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to further raise standards. The curriculum also needs enriching by ensuring that partnerships are developed with local businesses.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice: Through a game of mathematical hopscotch students, in a decision mathematics lesson, learned how to use the transportation algorithm. In a test taken earlier, they had shown uncertainty and a lack of confidence. By the end of an excellent, pacy outstandingly well presented lesson involving the teacher and them using an interactive whiteboard, they were able to complete examination questions correctly and at speed.
