

INSPECTION REPORT

MARSHFIELDS SCHOOL

Dogsthorpe, Peterborough

LEA area: Peterborough

Unique reference number: 110943

Headteacher: Mr Will Spurgeon

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 25th May 2005

Inspection number: 268592

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	10 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	159
School address:	Eastern Close Dogsthorpe Peterborough
Postcode:	PE1 4PP
Telephone number:	01733 568058
Fax number:	01733 553855
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Neil Watson
Date of previous inspection:	10 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Marshfields is a mixed, day, community special school which caters for 159 pupils (called students) aged from 10 to 19, each of whom has a statement of special educational need. It has specialist status as a Technology College. At the time of the inspection there were only two students in Year 6. Almost two thirds of students have moderate learning difficulties, 47 have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and 16 have severe learning difficulties. Most students are white; 18 students are from ethnic minorities, mainly Asian. There is a very small number of students from Traveller families. Roughly a third of students are eligible for free school meals, which is a high figure. There are ten students in public care. The school is unusual in supporting 26 students aged over 16 in a local college; these students are not on the school's roll.

Marshfields is involved in several local and national initiatives, including inclusion initiatives, outreach to mainstream schools, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Millennium Volunteers and a DfES research project into tracking student progress. It has an exceptionally wide range of community provision, including adult education and drop-in facilities. The school's work has been recognised by a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Schools Curriculum Award, and School Achievement Awards. It is included in the 2005 list of the most successful schools, published by Ofsted.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Modern foreign language Special educational needs
11041	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
2512	Brian Emery	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology Physical education Religious education
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Geography History
30243	Anne Heakin	<i>Team inspector</i>	English Music
22178	Kate Robertson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology Personal, social, and health education Citizenship.
3055	Clive Tombs	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics Art and design

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Consultants Ltd
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Marshfields is a most effective school with several excellent features. Students do very well because the school provides a high quality of education. Leadership and management are very good and the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent staffing, highly developed teamwork, very good teaching and an exceptionally strong work ethic amongst the students contribute to their very good achievement.
- An outstanding inclusive ethos, exceptional curriculum enrichment, and exemplary relationships in the school community promote students' excellent personal development.
- There are excellent arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of students and for supporting their families.
- The achievement of technology college status has had a very positive impact on standards and provision.
- The headteacher gives inspirational leadership; he and the members of the senior management team provide outstanding role models for staff and students.
- In partnership with the Peterborough Regional College, the school has developed an excellent flexible model of post-16 provision.
- There is a very rich and highly relevant range of learning experiences provided for students over 16, but religious education is not separately timetabled as required.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Since then, the school has successfully bid to become a technology college. This has enabled it to dramatically improve staffing and learning resources, which are now excellent; good improvements to the accommodation have been made, but the school does not have the capital that it needs to improve facilities for teaching physical education. Partnerships with a local college, a family of schools, and the community have been formalised and extended; community links are now excellent. In the absence of clear strategic direction from the local education authority, the school has not fully developed its role in providing outreach to mainstream schools. The school is highly regarded and oversubscribed; decisions of tribunals result in the school having to admit additional pupils, and this is a barrier to further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Very good	Very good
Year 11	Very good	Very good
Year 13	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Achievement is very good. As there are so few students in Year 6, their achievement is not reported on separately. All other students in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well in the subjects which were inspected fully, including English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, personal social health and citizenship education and religious education. GCSE art results are very good. Students over 16 achieve very well, too; all their courses are externally accredited and they leave school very well prepared for adult life.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Students thoroughly enjoy their time at school and have very good attitudes. Behaviour is also very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good.

Staff have the highest expectations of students' behaviour and work rate; students are most co-operative, interested and exceptionally productive during lessons. Highly skilled staff work very well together to support students' learning. Learning resources, particularly ICT, are used most effectively. Staff plan very well for students' different needs and abilities; they ensure that all are equally well challenged. Good assessment involves pupils well in their learning, and enables the school to demonstrate its success. The school provides a very good range of learning experiences; the accommodation for students over 16 is excellent. There are outstanding arrangements to ensure that each student has a trusting relationship with an adult in school. Students receive very good support, advice and guidance. Links with parents are excellent, and the work of the school's family partnership officer contributes very well to students' achievement and well being, as well as to parental satisfaction. There are very good links with schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, brought with him to the school a clear vision for excellence as a technology college, and this is well on the way to being achieved. He and the senior management team work most effectively together; they carry out their responsibilities in a thoroughly professional manner, and are all highly skilled teachers. Staff turnover is very low, and the arrangements for the induction of new staff are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation are very well developed; this is a school that knows exactly what it needs to do to improve, and it has crystal clear plans to fulfil its mission statement. Governance is very good. Although one minor statutory requirement is not met, this is easily rectified. The governors are very well informed, most supportive, and hold the school to account through their committees. They are given an excellent range of well presented information that enables them to evaluate the school's effectiveness, and they play a full part in planning for the school's future. Financial management is very good; all funds available to the school are used most effectively to secure improvements detailed in the school's improvement plan or its technology college submission.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' and students' satisfaction is exceptionally high. Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school is led and managed. They find the staff welcoming and approachable, and are delighted with the gains that their children make in their personal development. Parents and students agree that teaching is of high quality. Students feel trusted; they are confident in having an adult to whom they can go to if they need help or advice, and they agree that staff expectations are high. They find that the school is interested in their views, and they feel fairly treated.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no key issues for the school to address, but to meet statutory requirements governors and staff should:

- Ensure that religious education is taught discretely at post-16.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' achievements are very good. Standards are below those expected for students of a similar age because of the nature of students' learning difficulties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all ages, irrespective of their ability or type of learning difficulty, achieve very well.
- Students' success is attributable to consistent high quality teaching and to the strong work ethic of the students themselves.
- Since the school became a specialist technology college, there has been a steady increase in the standards reached.

Commentary

1. Students enter the school, often from mainstream primary schools, at levels below those expected for their age; national test results show that most students in Year 6 are at Level 1 in English, mathematics and science, with a few reaching Level 2 in mathematics and science. However, they soon start to make dramatic progress, because teaching is very skilled and the school encourages a strong work ethic among the students. Staff meet the individual needs of students very effectively. There are no differences in the achievements of boys and girls, and between students of different ethnic origins or those with different disabilities. In the national tests of summer 2004, four Year 9 students reached Level 4 in mathematics and 11 students reached Level 4 in science.

2. By Year 11, students successfully complete a wide range of courses leading to external accreditation. They do particularly well in art. In the summer of 2004, one student achieved a Grade B in art in GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education), four achieved a Grade C, three a Grade D and three a Grade E. These results represent very good achievement and an improvement on those of 2003, when 12 achieved passes, with three at Grade C. In other subjects, students are entered mainly for Entry level examinations, although the school is considering introducing accreditation that will fully reflect the levels achieved by the most able students in mathematics, science and ICT.

July 2004: Year 11 students passing Entry level examinations

Science	Design and technology	ICT	Numeracy
15	25	18	21

3. In July 2004, 20 Year 11 students achieved the AQA Certificate of Achievement in Literacy, and 13 gained the Youth Award Scheme's (YAS) Silver award; a further 23 students gained the YAS Bronze Award. The school sets challenging targets to raise students' achievements, and these are mostly achieved by Year 9; by Year 11 they are mostly partly achieved.

4. Some of those students who join the school for their post-16 education attain levels well below those expected because they have severe learning difficulties. The provision offers opportunities for all students to pursue courses that lead to external accreditation. The flexible nature of the school's provision means that students complete courses leading to examinations or externally recognised certificates in Year 12, 13 or 14.

July 2004: post-16 students passing Entry level examinations

Personal and social education	LCCI Adult Numeracy-Level 1	CGLI Computer Skills
18	11	12

5. Even the community work which students do is recognised externally through the Millennium Volunteers scheme. Last summer, ten students completed 200 hours of service, and a further eight completed 50 hours. There are also opportunities for students to prepare to become car drivers and achieve the DSA Driving Forces Certificate. Targets set to raise the achievements of post-16 students are expressed as rates of participation, such as increasing the number of those who take part in a day of work experience each week. All these targets are achieved.

July 2004: post-16 students' achievements

Course	Result
OCR Initial Text Processing	5 passes; 1 Distinction
Vocational Access – Catering	5 passes
Certificate for IT Users New CLAIT	5 passes
Health and Safety Executive – First Aid	10 passes
ASDAN FE Up Award	8 passes
DATA Food Technology	9 Bronze Awards

6. Since the school became a specialist technology college, students' achievements have improved each year. For instance, the proportion entered for external examinations in Year 11 has increased from 37% to 92%. The number of students reaching Levels 3-4 in Year 9 science has risen from 43% to 65%. The school attributes this to the increased role given to science as a result of specialist status. Between 2002 and 2004, entries for design and technology at Entry level have risen from 33% to 100%. The subject has been allocated more teaching time, and resources have increased. Almost all students leave to continue their education, and they do so very well prepared for this. A small number of students are successful in securing open or sheltered employment with those employers who provided them with work experience placements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students enjoy being at school and have very good attitudes to their learning. Their attendance and punctuality are very good. Students behave very well and display very good interest in school life. Students' personal development is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school develops in students an exceptional desire to learn.
- The school sets very high expectations for students' conduct.
- Students' relationships with others are excellent.
- There are excellent arrangements to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

7. Students are very happy to be at school, and display very good attitudes to their learning. They are very punctual to school and behave very well both in and out of lessons. Movement between lessons is orderly, and lessons start punctually. Students are very interested in school life and greatly enjoy the exceptionally wide range of activities and opportunities provided for them. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility, and respond with great enthusiasm. They enjoy being members of the School Council, working in the community and being appointed house captains and prefects. Students' relationships with their peers and staff are excellent. The inspection team was very impressed by the manner of the students who were keen to show them around the school; students discussed their work and achievements with justifiable pride. They are extremely polite and well mannered.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.6

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

8. Attendance, at over 94 per cent, is very good and improving. The school has very good arrangements to monitor and encourage students' attendance, and works closely with parents to ensure that students come to school on a regular basis. There have been only two exclusions during the previous year, and both of these were given for good reason and were meticulously monitored.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	140	2	0
White – any other White background	1	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0

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

9. Students display an exceptionally high degree of confidence and self-esteem. This is because staff offer them a very high level of support, praise the smallest achievement and give students many opportunities to experience success. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that the school sets very high expectations for their conduct, and bullying and harassment are not tolerated. The behaviour policy, which is very well monitored by the deputy headteacher, is well understood by students and greatly respected by them.

10. The school is a calm and secure community. Students show a great respect for their own belongings, other people's belongings and school property. There is a marked absence of litter and graffiti, and the ethos of respect for one another permeates the school community. Students have a highly developed desire to learn and achieve well. The encouragement and help given to them by both teaching and non-teaching staff enables them to improve their personal skills and interpersonal relationships.

11. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a privilege room where time can be earned for good behaviour and trust. Students who display good behaviour are encouraged to use the room at lunch times and break if they behave exceptionally well. Where a pupil's behaviour falls below the school's high standards, individual behaviour plans are prepared and very carefully monitored by staff. The school is most successful in improving the behaviour of those students who experience difficulty in maintaining consistently high standards.

12. Students' spiritual development is very well catered for through themed assemblies, the teaching of comparative religions, and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Students are encouraged to reflect on a range of issues, and assemblies meet requirements for collective worship. A Catholic Sister attends the school on one day per week to give shared experience and values, and students visit local places of worship including mosques, churches and synagogues. Students take an active part in both Christmas and Easter services held at the local church.

13. Students' moral development is extremely well promoted. They are encouraged to help in a wide variety of communal and charitable experiences, such as a local charity shop, recycling

unwanted goods, gardening for the elderly, working with the young, and entertaining local residents. A particularly popular innovation is “bag packing”, where students offer to bag customers’ products at a local supermarket and obtain funds for the school. The school has received a St John’s Three Cross Award for first aid training and the Robert F Kennedy Award for self-learning. Through the Student Council, students are given the opportunity to debate moral issues central to school life, and moral teaching is at the heart of the school’s ethos. The council has a strong impact on school life. As a result of its intervention there have been changes to the school’s policies on uniform and anti-bullying measures, improvements to grounds and play equipment, and extra-curricular clubs. Through the council, students have selected which charities the school will support through its fundraising efforts.

14. Provision for students’ social development is excellent. A wealth of opportunities exists for students to socialise and to serve their community. The school organises a large number of school visits, including residential visits to Weymouth, the Quantox Centre, Boreatton Park, the Cardan Sailing Trust and the Ferry Meadows Country Park. The school has a policy that entitles every child to at least one residential visit per annum, regardless of financial means. As a result, all students at the school receive the benefits of out-of-school residential visits. In addition, an excellent range of extra-curricular activities provides a wealth of opportunities for personal development.

15. Students’ cultural development is encouraged and stimulated in an excellent manner. For instance, very good use is made of the local authority’s multicultural service and, through the art syllabus, students study the work of well-known artists such as Matisse, as well as modern contemporary artists. Recent visits include the Burghley Sculpture Gardens, the British Museum and the Tate Gallery. The school has arranged for a local artist in residence to give “hands on” lessons to the students. In religious education, music and geography, students study the diverse cultures and customs of other countries.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good, as is the curriculum. Assessment is good. There are excellent arrangements to secure students’ care, welfare, health and safety, and to involve students by seeking, valuing and acting on their views. Very good support, advice and guidance are provided. Links with the community and with parents are excellent; links with schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent support and encouragement ensures that students are most productive throughout lessons.
- Teachers are highly skilled; they use their very good subject knowledge and accurate assessment of students’ capabilities to plan challenging tasks for all.
- Students respond well to teachers’ high expectations; they show a very good capacity for working independently and collaboratively.
- Very good methods and stimulating resources make learning interesting and enjoyable.
- Relevant homework tasks are used well to reinforce and extend students’ learning.
- Students have a satisfactory understanding of how they can improve, but lesson objectives are rarely evaluated with them at the end of a lesson.

Commentary

16. The school's insistence on high standards of behaviour is outstanding, and students respond very well to this by developing an unusually strong work ethic. They know that they are in class to learn and that they will be presented with interesting and challenging tasks. Students are very well supported by highly skilled staff, and this results in lessons where students are fully engaged and highly productive throughout. A very good example of the students' work ethic was seen in a Year 7 geography class, where students were tired from the previous day's unusual activities; they had all taken part in two performances of the school's production of *Oliver*. Despite this, they showed good recall of the topic they were studying, and were effectively drawn into a discussion, based on photographs about family life in St Lucia. The teacher skilfully included all students, varying the degree of difficulty of her questions. Students listened intently to what others had to say, thus learning from one another. Their attention did not flag, and they tackled written work with the same enthusiasm and concern for presentation as in previous sessions observed.

17. Teachers' ability to plan well for students of all abilities is a particular strength. They do this in a number of ways, including providing different tasks, giving support to those who need it, and expecting more able students to work independently. They also devise different ways for students to record their work. Support is very finely judged, and students do not rely wholly on adult help. Because students' personal development is outstanding, they work effectively in pairs or small groups, helping one another unselfishly and learning from one another. Most teachers are subject specialists and know well how to make learning enjoyable for students; they also know the levels at which students are working, and use this constructively to plan challenging tasks. As a result, students become engrossed in their work, secure in the knowledge that they will experience success if they persevere, and they make very good progress during lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 54 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (7%)	34 (63%)	14 (26%)	2 (4%)	0	0	0

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

18. Teamwork between teachers and support staff, including technicians, is highly developed, and there is also consistency in the deployment of support staff to particular subjects. As a result, support staff acquire considerable subject knowledge, and they use this most effectively to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. They question students well to assess and clarify their thinking, prompt them when they see the need to intervene, and give praise when it is deserved. In all these respects, they take their cue from teaching staff. Support staff also lead lessons competently, in PSHE or tutorial sessions for instance.

19. The three-part lesson is very well established. Lively starters often review previous lessons, and students show very good recall, indicating that learning was secure. A very good science lesson for Year 11 students featured an 'attention grabbing' start. The focus, which was the assessment of observation skills, was briefly introduced. The teacher then asked students to watch as he took a white paper tissue from its box, tore it into several pieces, then shaped the pieces into a ball which he held in his closed fist. With a certain sleight of hand he then produced an intact tissue from his fist. Only the most observant students noticed a telltale piece of white just protruding from his clenched hand! This illustrated well the importance of close observation, and students were well prepared for their skills to be tested further.

20. Teachers share objectives with students at the start and review performance at the end. House points are awarded for good work, and students value them. However, teachers do not all evaluate students' achievement of the objectives, and this is an area for improvement. Some very good involvement of students in self-evaluation was seen in an excellent food technology lesson. Students in Year 9 had been making pies with short crust pastry bases and puff pastry tops. At the end they evaluated how well they had done on a three-point scale, with clear criteria for each. They gave honest assessments, and the teacher awarded points based on their response. This was most effective in building students' awareness of their learning and achievement, as well as

promoting their self-esteem. A slide show of the students engaged in the activity was projected on to a whiteboard, and this reinforced well the students' sense of achievement.

21. The school has improved learning resources, using funding obtained as part of its Technology College status. The resources are used most effectively by teachers, particularly ICT. This acts as a powerful motivator for students. In a very successful history lesson on the subject of the Holocaust, the use of projected images enabled students to analyse how the Nazis used images to encourage anti-Semitism. Towards the end, students used the internet to build a picture gallery of positive images of Jews. In a French lesson, the teacher had prepared enough school bags filled with common classroom objects for every student to have a bag each, so each was able to work at his or her own pace, and the sensory approach proved effective in helping students to learn. Visual methods are used well for students with autism. For instance, in food technology a series of photographs helped a student to work independently and assemble ingredients in the correct sequence. In the same lesson, a student with physical difficulties was seated well so that she too could work independently.

22. There is good provision of homework. Teachers select relevant tasks, which students complete well. Homework is also reviewed at the start of the next lesson.

23. Good assessment procedures ensure that the school has a wealth of information about how individuals are doing. Information is collated and analysed well so that the school is well able to demonstrate the value that it adds. The analysis of assessment information, to check that all groups of students are doing equally well, is an area for further development. Students are involved well in setting individual targets as part of individual education plans. They are also involved well in their annual reviews, so they build a clear picture of what they need to do to improve. There is whole school celebration of successes and achievements, and this also motivates students very well.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good, and there are excellent opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent range of activities enriches the curriculum.
- The preparation for further education and employment is very good.
- Staffing, learning resources and the discrete post-16 accommodation are all excellent.
- Provision for students with additional special needs is very good.
- The range of accreditation does not reflect the achievements of the most able students.
- The requirement to teach discrete religious education (RE) at post-16 is not met.

Commentary

24. The well-balanced curriculum seen at the time of the last report has been maintained. The improvements suggested have all been implemented. The new accommodation and specialist school status has had a profound effect on the curriculum; it is now much broader, with technology having an impact across all subjects. Teachers and assistants confidently use the new resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Up-to-date personalised worksheets are prepared; the quality is such that students are encouraged to present their own work carefully and neatly. The provision, known as the Primary class for Year 6 and Year 7 students who have been awaiting placements, is very good. The nurturing environment is successful, and students feel secure; they become more confident and develop a positive attitude to learning.

25. The curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 is very good, with many excellent features. In addition to the expected national curriculum subjects, students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from very good opportunities for work experience, college links and community involvement. A good range of accredited courses is followed. However, in mathematics and science, the higher attaining students

do not have the opportunity to take GCSE courses. Through the school's recently convened 14-19 working group, this matter is under consideration.

26. The school has a stated aim of being at the heart of the community. This is evidenced by, for example, the school's acting as host to a careers convention for nine other schools, the Healthy Schools initiative, and the regular volunteers and visitors to the school. The school prepares students very well for the next stage of their lives, further education or employment. It is clear that the ultimate goal for the school is to educate students so they can occupy a meaningful role within the community, and make a valid contribution once they have left school. The voluntary work and work experience links are all part of this vision for students, and the school is very successful in this aspect of the curriculum.

Example of outstanding practice

In partnership with Peterborough Regional College (PRC), the school has developed an excellent flexible model of post-16 provision.

The school offers post-16 courses at three levels, Foundation (1year), Intermediate (1Year) and PRC Partnership (up to 3 years). There are clear aims and admission criteria for each course, and clearly identified progression routes that enable students to move from a school-based environment to further education courses, training programmes or into the world of work. A student entering the Foundation course in Year 12 could have as much as five years further education. Students who join the PRC course are on the roll of the college, but they are taught for part of the week in the school's post-16 centre. A learning support assistant, funded by the college, is attached to this group, thus providing continuity.

27. The programme for personal, social and health education is very well managed. The school takes seriously the responsibility for sex education and drug awareness training. Additional tutorials are provided for vulnerable students. Tutorials are often the occasion for informal discussion and guidance. The excellent relationships mean that students are able to trust their teachers and assistants, and feel comfortable talking with their classmates. The school considers students' personal development to be of prime importance. This is clear from the high focus on students working independently, and the development of a module of work based on independent travel.

28. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent and is a strength of the school. Every class is entitled to a residential experience each year. An excellent range of experiences includes outward-bound type activities, visits to France, and cultural and leisure activities. Inter-county cross-country, athletics and football fixtures augment the very good range of lunchtime activities. Links with a local secondary school resulted in a joint performing arts venture, which played to the general public. Students are involved in voluntary work, developing an awareness of responsibility for the community and the environment. Summer school has been in place for three years and provides very good opportunities for students to be involved in creative arts and team building activities.

29. All the needs outlined on pupils' statements are very well reflected in the school's curricular provision. For instance, the school has a member of support staff who is qualified in British Sign Language, and students with hearing impairment are fully integrated into classes. Staff have been trained in the management of pupils with behavioural difficulties and are all highly skilled in this respect. Social stories are provided for pupils with autism, and there is a clear action plan for further staff training in the teaching of pupils with autism.

30. Staffing and resources are excellent. Staff are highly trained; many are specialists in the areas they lead. They have access to a broad range of professional development opportunities, and induction arrangements are comprehensive and highly effective. All areas of the curriculum have a wide range of high quality resources which support teaching and learning very effectively. The school's Specialist Technology College status has resulted in an enhancement of resources which is very evident, not only in design and technology, ICT and science, but across the whole school. The accommodation is very good. It is well maintained, roomy and bright, and provides specialist areas for all subjects except physical education. The accommodation has been extended and improved since the last inspection, to increase specialist accommodation. High quality displays of students' work create a stimulating environment.

31. Space and facilities at post-16 are excellent. Each class has ample space for students to work as a group or individually. There is a very well equipped kitchen and life skills area, a dining area, staff offices and a student common room. It has a distinctly adult feel to it, and is separate from the rest of the school's buildings. The curriculum provided for post-16 students is very good. However, religious education is not taught separately as required.

Care, guidance and support

There are excellent arrangements to secure students' care, welfare, health and safety. The provision for the students' support and guidance is very good, with some excellent features. Involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The arrangements for child protection and the care and safety of students are excellent.
- An excellent tutoring system is in place; students have a caring and trusting relationship with at least one member of staff.
- Students receive well informed and very good quality support, advice and guidance.
- Very good advice is given on further study and career opportunities.
- Arrangements for the induction of new students are excellent.
- Students feel highly valued and are exceptionally well involved in school matters.

Commentary

32. The school offers a very high standard of care for all its students. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and students have great confidence and trust in their teachers' ability to support them well. Many students come from homes where life can be difficult and challenging. Because of the excellent provision that the school makes for their welfare, they make very good progress and thrive.

33. Child protection procedures are excellent. The child protection policy has been recently updated to reflect current legislation, and it fully complies with Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The Child Protection Officer has received advanced training and has cascaded appropriate training to all other members of staff. Records of students on the At Risk Register and students in public care are immaculately kept and reflect the deep sense of concern that the school has for its students.

34. The school has excellent procedures to ensure that health and safety standards of the very highest. Regular health and safety inspections are carried out both by members of the governing body and by staff, and all departments have risk assessments correctly in place. The school has a suitable number of fully trained first aiders, a dedicated and well-equipped first aid room, and the benefit of a qualified nurse who visits the school on a regular basis to address any problems that may arise.

35. Teachers, support staff, ancillary staff and visiting therapists work very closely together in the best interests of the students. All the staff familiarise themselves with students' needs, as set out in their individual education plans in the lower school and their personal learning plans in the upper school. An excellent and very effective tutorial system is based on classroom groups. Through this, all students have access to high quality advice and support for their academic and personal development. The number of therapists and other agencies visiting the school is impressive. Concern for students' health extends to a very good range of healthy options at lunchtimes, and a fitness club for students who are concerned about weight gains. The services of a dietician are used to support students, too.

36. All matters concerning the welfare of a student are co-ordinated and thoroughly recorded by the tutor. Student records are comprehensive, and the school is in the throes of transferring data on

students from one electronic system to another that allows a more detailed picture to emerge. This system is extremely comprehensive, is personal to the individual and will be most beneficial to all who are reviewing a pupil's needs.

37. Where advantageous, review meetings are held at the student's home. An example of this is where parents could not attend the school because of other family commitments, such as caring for a young baby.

38. Induction of new students is excellent. It includes working closely with feeder schools and a thorough familiarisation programme for prospective students and their families or carers. A senior staff member rigorously organises and co-ordinates this process. Where necessary, it includes liaison with social services departments and the school health services.

39. Preparation for leaving school is very good. Careers guidance is very good and highly relevant. The school has very good links with further education colleges, commerce and industry. Some students have obtained jobs with the same employers where they enjoyed successful work experience. Links with Connexions are good. The school works closely with this organisation to build up the best possible transition of students at the age of 16.

40. The school council is accorded high status by staff; it has its own budget, is chaired by a student, and has its secretarial duties also carried out by a student. It forms a very useful vehicle for seeking students' views; these are taken seriously by staff and acted upon. Students' views are also sought through an annual questionnaire, and their views taken into account when deciding on matters such as extra-curricular activities and homework. Students form an important part of school evaluation, and they feel valued and respected as a result.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are excellent. The school provides excellent information to parents about students' standards and progress. The school has very good procedures to ensure satisfaction, and to deal with any concerns or complaints. Links with the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has excellent links with parents, and provides them with excellent information about the school and students' standards and progress.
- Links with the community are also excellent.
- The school has very good links with other schools; at post-16, links with the local college are excellent.

Commentary

41. Parents are extremely satisfied with the overall provision made for their children, and this is demonstrated by the fact that the school is greatly oversubscribed. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school was well led, their children were very well cared for and enjoyed coming to school, and parents received very good information about the school and about their children's progress. The inspection findings fully concur with all these positive remarks.

42. The provision and quality of the information provided to parents is excellent. The school prospectus is a very well produced document giving comprehensive information about the school's facilities, ethos and policies.

43. The school holds two parents' meetings each year to discuss their children's progress, and an extra meeting for the parents of new students. The headteacher and class teachers are available to meet parents at any time by appointment or by telephone, and regular information on children's progress is passed to parents through the Home/School Diary.

44. A significant development has been the appointment of the Family Partnership Officer, who works extremely well and closely with parents and provides a strong link between the school and home. In addition to her duties at school, she carries out a large number of home visits. Parents interviewed during the inspection week considered that her help and support was invaluable to them. Actions taken as a result of her intervention have been central to students' well being and support their achievement well.

45. The school has arranged a number of information evenings for parents to inform them of their legal rights, and a monthly lunch club is organised for parents to exchange views on childcare and arrange networking. The school regularly surveys parents for their views, and recently adopted their ideas on the issue of homework and a new behaviour policy.

46. Regular newsletters are produced, which are of high quality and give parents up-to- date information on new events and innovations that the school is to introduce. An ICT training evening has been arranged for parents and children to learn computing skills together. The Friends of Marshfields Association is a lively body to which all parents belong. They arrange a number of fundraising activities, including summer fête, winter fête, regular Bingo sessions, a cooking evening and summer raffle. Last year they raised the sum of £4,000, which was gratefully received by the school and used towards the purchase of the school bus.

47. Links with the community are excellent, and they provide outstanding opportunities for students' personal development. The school has been able to formalise links as part of its technology college status. For instance, it has arranged through Sure Start for a food technology course for young single mothers in the community. The school hosts a PHAB club (physical handicap and able-bodied group) for members of the community; this is staffed by teaching assistants. The ICT technician gives lessons in computing to members of the community. Visitors from the community include St John's Ambulance Brigade, who run first aid courses, and Peterborough Road Safety Department, who provide cycling courses. Members of business and commerce regularly give talks to students on careers, provide mock interviews, and act as mentors for students on work placement. Local drama and music groups perform at the school. Students offer help at a local pet refuge, and help in a senior citizens' charity shop and in the local deaf and blind centre. They also repair picnic benches at a local hospice, provide gardening facilities for senior citizens and help with local environmental projects. The school has a very good relationship with a local recycling centre that provides a structured work experience programme for students.

48. The school has an excellent link with Peterborough Regional College, which offers a variety of suitable courses for school students; in turn, staff from Marshfields teach a number of students on the college's roll for part of their timetable. Students are also engaged in a wide variety of courses and experiences at a number of venues in the city, including a link course of horticulture at Malton College and work experience placements. Highly developed communication and collaboration exists between all parties, resulting in continuing goodwill and strong partnership.

49. The school has strong links with a cluster of local primary schools, and provides them with interactive whiteboard and ICT training. Staff from local primary schools attend Marshfields to work alongside its staff. The head of design and technology offers support to local primary schools and gives demonstration lessons. The school has strong links with Homerton College, and provides teacher training placements for postgraduates. Newly qualified teachers spend time in the school to familiarise themselves with special school provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Leadership and management of the school are very good overall. Governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides exceptional clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
- Leadership and management by members of the senior management team are very effective.
- Day-to-day management of the post-16 centre is excellent.
- Governors make a very good contribution to the leadership of the school and contribute to its many successes.
- The school places great importance on appointing suitable staff, developing their skills, and deploying them effectively.
- Financial management and administration are very efficient and help the school to achieve its educational priorities.

Commentary

50. The headteacher's personal leadership is inspirational and has a most powerful impact on the work of the school. He provides clear and energetic educational direction with an unremitting concern for raising standards in every aspect of the school's work, based on a process of continual self-evaluation. He leads by the example of dedication and hard work, for example by taking a subject co-ordinator's responsibility and by personally teaching to a very high standard. He inspires staff and students to give of their best, and to share and work together to fulfil the aims and mission statement of the school. He delegates responsibilities well, and provides strong support and encouragement, thus empowering staff. The headteacher's commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunities is amply demonstrated in the content, relevance and enrichment of the curriculum. It provides full access, using highly effective teaching methods, to a burgeoning inclusion programme and links with other schools and the community. The effectiveness of his leadership is confirmed in the very good improvements on the findings of the previous inspection, by the school's high reputation with parents and in the local community, and by the number of prestigious awards gained by the school, including becoming a Specialist Technology College in 2003.

51. The headteacher is well supported by a talented and enthusiastic deputy headteacher and senior management team. All are very good teachers and make notable contributions to the quality of teaching and learning and to the curriculum. They work well together, carry out their whole school responsibilities conscientiously, and provide excellent role models for other staff and students. The day-to-day management of the school is very good, and in the post-16 centre it is excellent. They operate as orderly, considerate and purposeful communities. Students are busy, settled and well behaved.

52. The school attaches great importance to the appointment and induction of new staff. Recently appointed teaching and non-teaching staff are helped to become quickly established and effective. The performance management of staff, including learning support assistants, is thorough and effective, and contributes to improvements in teaching. It also ensures that staff feel valued for the part they play, and their ability to influence future outcomes. Professional development opportunities are closely linked to the needs of the school, and in particular to that of managing behaviour and of meeting the challenge of working with mainstream students and colleagues in settings outside the school. Well planned and relevant school based in-service training also makes a significant contribution to the very effective teaching and teamwork of support staff.

53. A stable, well-trained and experienced governing body operates very effectively through a number of committees. Governors have precise roles within the governing body and all have a responsibility for an aspect of the school's work. For example, each governor is linked to a curriculum area or to an important aspect of school life, such as child protection, and each makes regular focused visits to the school to monitor these areas. In this way, governors find out for themselves the challenges facing the school and how well it is responding to them. The strategic planning committee, along with the headteacher, are influential in setting the vision and long-term planning of the school, and are most active in monitoring and amending the school improvement plan. Performance management procedures are rigorous and are closely monitored by the governing body. All statutory requirements are met with the exception of post-16 students' entitlement to discrete religious education lessons.

54. Financial planning is very good. Astute planning reflects and supports the school's aims and priorities very effectively. The school improvement plan is an extremely ambitious and challenging working document, and the aspects in it are clearly and realistically costed. The governors' finance committee has an assured system of resource allocation that monitors the impact of spending on learning outcomes and which ensures best value. The school has moved from an overspending budget in 2001 to one of considerable strength. The budget now is appropriately balanced to ensure significant investment in new initiatives and resources without compromising staffing levels. Good examples of this are the introduction of the new workforce reforms and the recent appointment of a full-time family partnership officer. The LEA has devolved all funding to the school, and the office manager is very efficient in managing and accounting for the school bank account and the separate recurrent funding of the Specialist Schools Programme.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,490,261.00	Balance from previous year	90,000.00
Total expenditure	1,515,209.00	Balance carried forward to the next	65,052.00
Expenditure per pupil	10,378.00		

55. In the light of students' achievements, the quality of the curriculum and teaching, the value added in extra-curricular provision and support to families and the community, and the overall efficiency, the school gives very good value for the money it receives.

56. A significant barrier to further improvement is the impact of decisions made by tribunals on the size of the school. This results in the school constantly being required to take additional students.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **very good**, with some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme of study offered to students is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- In work-based situations, inclusion of students is excellent.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.
- The school provides an extensive and varied range of curricular activities to prepare Year 10 and 11 and post-16 students for leaving school.

Commentary

57. The new statutory requirement for WRL is met throughout the school. Younger students receive elements of careers and work related learning as a constituent part of their PSHE and citizenship programme. Students in Year 10 and above take part in work experience placements that are carefully matched to their individual needs. The WRL co-ordinator is instrumental in finding students suitable placements in the community and liaising with employers. Through these placements, students learn work skills. They are prepared very well for these placements. They have mock interviews, guidance on what to expect when working for the employer, and discussions with a personal adviser from the Connexions service. After the placement, students review their experiences, which they have recorded in their diaries, and employers provide reports on their progress. Students at post-16 undertake work experience in real situations for up to three days a week and also learn work skills through their participation in the Millennium Volunteers scheme. For instance, they have been very well supported in their designing of the school website. Students also learn about work by taking on roles and responsibilities in enterprise projects. Students currently make 'hurdles' from willows, which they grow for both home and school use. Future plans include making bird boxes in design and technology, to be sold at the school's summer fête.

58. Arrangements for work experience are exceptionally good. These opportunities are very well planned and linked very well to forms of accreditation, including the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) award. The school recently piloted *Foundation for Work* for higher attaining students and, in addition, a career skills award is being introduced for the less able. Students go to an extensive range of work places, and all complete diaries of their experiences. Staff work closely with employers to ensure that there is a focus on the key skills students will need in employment. Work placements are prepared for, supported and followed up very effectively by staff. The expectations for students are very high, and are appropriate in supporting their understanding of what is expected in a workplace environment. Providers, too, are well prepared by staff from the school to ensure the full inclusion of students. As a result of their wide, relevant experiences, all students develop excellent social skills and awareness. An annual 'Marshfield's Careers Convention' is organised, where parents and students are able to meet a range of work providers and representatives from local colleges; local mainstream schools are invited, thereby making the event more inclusive.

59. The teacher with responsibility for WRL provides excellent leadership and management, and is also the deputy headteacher. He works very hard with the post-16 staff and with the Year 10 and 11 staff to ensure smooth transition between the phases, and he has excellent relationships with a range of local employers and services and is developing new ones. He is very experienced, knows the students and staff exceptionally well, and supports them in an extensive range of workplace and life skills experiences, which are researched thoroughly. Technology college status has ensured that the innovative and attractive work experience diaries and independent travel packs produced by the co-ordinator are of high quality. It has also provided funding for a variety of software and hardware to support learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of highly effective teaching.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- The specialist status of the school has a direct impact on teaching and learning.
- The organisation of the curriculum meets students' learning needs effectively.

Commentary

60. Students achieve very well in English. Teachers throughout the school have very high expectations that students will behave appropriately, be positive about their lessons, and be motivated to do their very best. This ethos has a strong effect on achievement in English. In all the lessons seen, it was evident that the mutual respect between teachers, support assistants and students results in students becoming more confident in speaking, more prepared to listen, and keen to improve their reading and writing. A further reason why achievement is very good is that the school has placed a strong emphasis on developing students' communication skills, making speaking and listening a priority area for development, and incorporating drama into the curriculum. While some lessons are taught as traditional literacy lessons, specific times in the day are allocated for reading and discussion. Staff are consistent in using literature as a basis for the very well planned modules of work; this has been particularly effective in ensuring that students are studying similar texts to students in mainstream schools, and in extending their appreciation of literature and promoting their cultural development. These factors, plus the impact of the specialist technical college status of the school, result in very good improvements in achievement since the last inspection.

61. Teaching and learning are very good in all year groups. The subject managers have been industrious in reviewing and developing the planning for English. Lessons are focused very specifically on students' individual learning needs, with speaking and listening as an ongoing priority. A small number of students have been identified as needing additional literacy work, and this is provided on an individual basis, ensuring their very good progress in acquiring basic literacy skills. Lessons are consistently challenging, lively and enjoyable. The excellent relationships within the school mean that students are happy to ask questions and are prepared to tackle work that is planned to challenge and motivate them. The teaching assistants are very active in supporting teachers and students in lessons; they quietly refocus students, reinforce teaching points and provide encouragement and personal guidance for students. The specialist status of the school has added a further dimension to the teaching of English. Teachers throughout the school make very effective use of the electronic whiteboards; staff were seen demonstrating letter-writing skills in a post-16 class and, in Year 9, identifying the lesson objectives and confirming students' success in achieving them. Very good use is made of listening stations so that students can listen, discuss what they have heard, and reinforce their understanding. Having watched their teacher using the electronic whiteboard to demonstrate, Year 11 students were able to take advantage of their individual laptop computers to research the News Round web site, investigating and recording the salient facts about topical events. Typical of all lessons was the very good use of assessment to identify and develop students' individual levels of learning, and the very good questioning techniques which encourage students to communicate, explaining their thoughts and reasoning.

62. The school has quite rightly identified speaking and listening as a priority area of social development for all students. In lessons throughout the school, and in social times, teachers and assistants are very good role models in encouraging discussion. The impact of this is evident in the courteous way students respond to visitors. Students have a genuine desire to talk sensibly and make great efforts to engage in discussion, making good eye contact and talking easily and confidently about their lessons, their work experience, and residential holidays.

63. Reading skills are taught very well throughout the school. The school has adopted a highly structured reading and spelling programme that motivates students and is used effectively in raising levels of achievement. Specific times are allocated for a reading focus. Detailed records demonstrate students' progress in reading aloud with clarity and expression. Students study a very good range of texts including work by Roald Dahl, William Shakespeare and E. B. White, as well as a good range of traditional stories. The newly developed library is a delightful and welcoming environment, encouraging students to read and research. Students take responsibility for managing the computerised loan system during lunchtime. Reading is frequently given as homework and students respond very well to the incentive of house points; consequently, achievement in reading is very good.

64. Writing skills are taught very well. The structured reading and spelling programme has a successful impact on students' ability to communicate through accurate writing and improved spelling. Samples of students' work show that teachers are constantly working to develop students' writing in different styles. Many students find the challenge of writing imaginatively to be very difficult. The school has recognised this, and a system of assessing students' unaided writing has been introduced; this is helping teachers to accurately assess students' work in line with national standards. Students make very good use of their word processing skills to redraft their work. Throughout the school, teachers present documents, worksheets and displays very well, and in turn they expect the same from students. As a result, exercise books are tidy and students take care with their written work. The students in the post-16 provision, unlike the rest of the school, do not have discrete literacy lessons. They work on accredited courses and make very good use of their writing skills in modules of work based on work experience, healthy living and community activities. The results of accredited courses confirm that students in post-16 continue to achieve very well.

65. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The team approach is effective in raising students' achievement. The subject leader has worked closely with external advisers and colleagues in school; the result is very good improvement in planning, assessment, the development of the curriculum, and teaching. Teachers have embraced the opportunities presented by the specialist status of the school, using the excellent resources effectively to raise students' achievements in English.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Language and literacy skills are promoted very well in subjects other than English. Every opportunity is used to encourage students to talk and to develop listening skills, to take turns, and not to talk over other people. This is very effective. Discussions form a valuable part of most science lessons; in geography, students are expected to listen and are encouraged to make observations. Music and drama lessons are used very effectively for students to learn to make eye contact, to be confident in their own ability to communicate, and to be aware of the need to let other people have their say. The enthusiastic performance of *Oliver* by Years 7 and 8 bears testimony to the impact of music and drama on students' ability to perform and communicate with an audience.

French

67. The subject was not a particular focus for this inspection and too little evidence was gathered to make possible a secure judgements on standards and provision. One lesson was seen, and teaching and learning were good. Year 7 students were consolidating their learning of the names of familiar classroom objects. Good, well-prepared resources enabled students to work in pairs to name objects as they withdrew these from a school bag. By the end of the lesson, students showed good gains in recalling correctly the vocabulary they had been practising.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all ages and abilities achieve very well because teaching is of a consistently high standard.
- Students enjoy mathematics and have developed a capacity to work independently and in groups.
- Specialist Schools status has had a very positive impact on students' achievements and the resources for mathematics.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Marking is not consistently evaluative, and planning does not always take account of pupils' individual targets.

Commentary

68. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Teaching is challenging, well paced, relevant and suitably matched to the different needs of students. In this way, all students experience a sense of achievement in their work. A notable feature in the quality of teaching is the very good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs), which ensures that everyone is included and receives the appropriate support and encouragement. Lessons are underpinned by excellent relationships based on mutual respect and consideration. Lesson planning is detailed, and there are well-timed changes of activities to maintain students' interest and focus. Well-targeted questions both assess learning and help students to further their knowledge. In addition, regular homework consolidates and extends their learning. As a result of this consistent high quality teaching, students make very good progress in lessons and over time.

69. Students enter the classroom with an air of expectancy; mathematics is hard work but fun! In a Year 9 lesson on geometry, for example, students learned the subject-specific vocabulary such as *obtuse*, *acute* and *right angle* and practised measuring angles with a protractor. They then had the opportunity to estimate angles on an interactive whiteboard, using a computer program called 'The Banana Hunt'. The nearer a pupil got to correctly estimating the angle, the more bananas the monkey showed. This acted as a powerful motivator for students, who concentrated well throughout the session. In a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere, students display a consistent and positive work ethic and respond readily to the teachers' high expectations. They are confident and thoughtful learners and work productively either as individuals or in small groups. Their positive attitudes are further reflected in their workbooks, which are neatly presented and with all work completed.

70. The achievements of all students have risen significantly as a result of the school gaining Specialist School status. Additional government funding has been used well to improve resources, staffing, and the school and classroom environment. In addition, cross-curricular links with mathematics, science, design technology and ICT have been strengthened. Very good resources include interactive whiteboards and network and Internet links in every classroom. The increase in staffing has enabled the school to offer intensive numeracy provision for those students who require

it, and building improvements include an extension to the mathematics room to provide a small but useful practical area. The skilful use of very good quality resources motivates students, supports their learning and gives them every opportunity to succeed. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on data, co-ordinates, graphs and charts, every student was able to work independently and competently on a lap top computer, while in a Year 11 lesson, students used the Internet and holiday brochures confidently to explore and plan a holiday abroad.

71. The subject leader provides very good leadership and management for mathematics. An effective development plan gives the subject a clear sense of direction and purpose. It quite properly includes serious consideration that higher attaining students should have their achievements recognised through GCSE accreditation. Students are currently accredited through the AQA Entry Level in Numeracy Levels 1,2 and 3, while post-16 students follow a numeracy module on number handling as part of the ASDAN Bronze and Silver Award. Minor areas for further improvement include more consistent and evaluative marking and more reference to students' numeracy targets in their individual education plans during lessons. There has been very good improvement in this subject since the previous inspection, building on what was already a strong subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Mathematical skills are reinforced well in other subjects of the curriculum. In science, for example, students measure, read scales, and represent results with a variety of graphs. In food technology they weigh and measure ingredients and set and check cooking times, and post-16 students read timetables, shop with real money, and learn how to open a bank account.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of teaching and learning, harmonious relationships, and highly motivated students all combine to secure very good achievement.
- Students are very well managed and kept safe during laboratory investigations.
- Very good use has been made of additional resources funded through technology college monies.
- External examination results have steadily improved.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

73. Students' science work shows that they cover a broad range of learning experiences, across all the areas of science, and that practical and investigative methods are widely used, including the successful use of information and ICT for research purposes. In a Year 6 and 7 lesson, students investigated floating and sinking. They made predictions, and demonstrated that they already understood the meaning of force. Discussion was very good, and students developed their own conclusions. They were able to make simple recordings of their findings. They found out that objects which float often contain more air and that size does not affect floating. Higher attainers began to grasp the concept of density.

74. Students' growing understanding and use of scientific vocabulary is very noticeable. Teachers carefully introduce key words and use them frequently; words are displayed, and students are questioned to check their understanding of terms. In a lesson where students were investigating magnets, they showed increasing use of the terms *poles*, *attract* and *repel*. Concentration levels were commendable, and the success with which students work in pairs is a good indicator of

excellent peer relationships. In a Year 9 lesson where students tested the hardness of rocks, it was evident that all understand what constitutes a fair test. Lessons often begin with a question and answer session, and students display good recall in these, confirming the effectiveness of their learning in previous lessons.

75. In Years 10 and 11, students follow the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA) science course. However, teachers are careful to extend those students who were assessed at levels 3 or 4 in Year 9, with the result that many students progress by close to one National Curriculum level by Year 11. Examination results in Year 11 are commendable.

76. At post-16, as a result of the extra Technology College funding, one group of students is able to continue science with a view to improving their results obtained at the end of Year 11. It is still early days, but evidence available points to positive outcomes of this move. The work of the post-16 science group was away for moderation at the time of the inspection. Science for the remaining post-16 students is taught as part of other topics, such as diet and healthy eating, the environment and use of materials in design and technology.

77. Most of the teaching and learning is very good, with some excellent practice. Good qualities in teaching are numerous. Lessons are characterised by very good planning, with appropriate work for lower and higher attainers, plenty of challenge and excellent pace. Not a minute is wasted. Relationships at all levels are very good. The skill of teachers to use teaching aids such as the interactive whiteboard and ICT greatly enhances students' motivation as well as gains in knowledge and understanding. Behaviour management is excellent and students respond extremely well, thoroughly enjoying their science experience. They are industrious and very keen to show what they know and can do. Students often achieve well beyond their own expectations. This has a profound effect on their self-esteem. The strong work ethic in science lessons is almost tangible.

78. The teamwork of teachers and support staff is outstanding. Classroom assistants are always very well deployed. Monitoring of the subject is very good at all levels, and findings are well used to make positive improvements. There is still some room for improvement in day-to-day assessment and student self-evaluation. Resources have been upgraded and are very well used. A fume cupboard has been installed to widen the range of scientific experiences, especially for older students. Data logging equipment has been purchased and is beginning to be well applied. The monies have enabled the formation of a lunchtime science club and the extension of residential experiences with a scientific flavour. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. There are clear plans for further development of the provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Technology college status has had a significant impact on ICT provision.
- Students' achievements are very good, and improving.
- Teaching is of very high quality.
- Leadership of the subject is outstanding.
- The resources available are excellent.

Commentary

79. The development of ICT from small beginnings to its current very good level is an outstanding feat of leadership, combined with the benefits accrued from technical college status. Of particular note is the extent to which the very good range of equipment has been accepted, and its uses grasped by the school's staff. Additionally, joint training and projects between the school and local mainstream schools further extend provision and opportunities for inclusion. For example, the

school hosts termly problem-solving activity days, a recent example of which was movie-making with Year 7 students. Excellent leadership has motivated staff to develop their skills through ongoing training, and then have the confidence to use these skills in the classroom.

80. Students engage in a broad range of activities that have been selected from the National Curriculum, and modified in such a way that they are relevant to their learning needs. Topics covered are very well designed so that students can build up their skills progressively at their own pace. There is a strong emphasis on computers, but other aspects of ICT are very well covered. For instance, students in Year 8 showed growing skills when using video equipment to make a facsimile weather forecast. They handled cameras very well and used software appropriately whilst rehearsing.

81. As ICT has been a rapidly developing subject over recent years, it is likely that the achievements of students will continue to improve as they progress through the school. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well, developing skills that will prepare them for the next stage of education, or for life after school. Currently, students in Years 10 and 11 are entered for Entry Level accreditation, whilst at post-16 the higher attaining students work on the CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) syllabus in addition to WJEC Entry Level Work Skills. They learn to understand and use the technology found in everyday life. While the accredited course in Years 10 and 11 is suited to the attainments of most students, it will not fully reflect the achievements of the few highest attaining students. With this in mind, the proposed introduction of new courses offering a progressive route to higher accreditation is timely.

82. All students make very good progress and achieve very well, in lessons and over time. Teaching in discrete lessons is consistently very good, and this leads to very good achievement. Students observed showed familiarity with the functions of word processing, and had transferred these skills to a range of programs, such as PowerPoint and Excel. The particular skill and teamwork provided by support staff makes a very good contribution to overall achievements. Generally, class teachers have good subject knowledge and understand the special educational needs (SEN) of the students. Behaviour management is excellent, ensuring that the focus of the lesson is on the task to be completed. Time and resources are very well used, expectations are high, and students are inspired to want to learn, becoming excited with new learning and achievement. Assessment, which includes an element of self-assessment, is good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

83. The use of ICT across the curriculum is very well developed in the core subjects and is developing well in foundation subjects. Students develop their skills very well in those lessons dedicated specifically to ICT, and also through their use of ICT throughout the school day in other subjects. For example, word processing is used in English, data handling and graphs in maths, data logging forms part of science, and digital cameras are widely used for recording in most subjects.

HUMANITIES

History

84. History was not a focus subject for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to enable secure judgements to be made about standards and provision. However, a very good Year 9 history lesson about the holocaust was observed. In a brisk starter, students shared what they had found out about the holocaust for homework. A further memory jogger was provided by the projection of six symbols onto a whiteboard; these helped students to recall the restrictions placed upon the Jews by the Nazis, such as the curfew. A series of projected advertisements was then explored; skilful questioning by the teacher enabled students to identify how these influence people's opinions. The main task was challenging, as students had to analyse a 1930s cartoon and say how this portrayed the Jews. Students were well supported; for instance, there were different ways of recording, depending on students' abilities. This meant that students could work

independently. The timing of the task gave a sense of urgency, and students worked industriously and well. They made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding during the lesson, and relevant homework about the diary of Anne Frank was set.

Geography

85. Geography was not a focus subject for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to allow make secure judgements on standards and provision to be made. A good lesson was observed where Year 7 students were learning about life in a Caribbean country, St Lucia. All the students had been involved in two performances of the school's production of *Oliver* the previous day, and were clearly tired. However, they were most attentive, showed good recall of the topic in an initial discussion, and contributed well to a class discussion. The teacher skilfully extended their knowledge by using photographs, discussion and questioning. The varying degree of difficulty of questions addressed to individuals ensured that all were kept thinking. Students were then able to record what they had learned; they produced neat, well-presented written work. The final session took the form of a question and answer session which served well to reinforce learning.

Religious education

Provision for RE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching means that students achieve very well.
- The very good subject leadership has a major impact on students' achievements.
- Post-16 students do not have discrete lessons for RE, and this is a breach of statutory requirements.

Commentary

86. The achievements of students of all ages is very good. This is because of very good, informed and sensitive teaching, and because lessons provide excellent opportunities for students to learn about religions and spirituality in a way that is meaningful to them. For example, students in a Year 7 lesson showed a sound understanding and knowledge of Judaism. Very effective questioning established what the students already knew and understood, and neatly introduced the next topic. By the end of the lesson, students had knowledge of Hebrew writing and the Torah. In a Year 8 lesson, students studying the Muslim faith demonstrated good knowledge and used appropriate vocabulary. Very good teaching effectively addressed the depth of students' understanding. For example 'Why do Muslims wash before prayers?' and 'Why do they wash certain parts of their bodies?' The students' response indicated very good knowledge, understanding and empathy that had not been evident at the start.

87. In a Year 10 lesson, students addressed the ways in which the Christian faith affects the way people live. The teacher very sensitively led a challenging discussion about Christian communities and charities, with a focus on Christian Aid and the fight against world poverty. She successfully explained, using a card game, the lottery of how people around the world were born into and lived in poverty. Using a video sequence about African street children, which moved the class greatly, she very sensitively encouraged them to take a moment to reflect on their good fortune and the plight of children much worse off than themselves. The class gained great insight into the issue of world poverty, the uneven balance of wealth and resources in the world, and how religious organisations work to improve matters.

88. The subject is very well led. The subject leader, who is responsible for the subject up to Year 11, has a very good knowledge and understanding of world faiths, presents sensitive and challenging issues very well and uses resources effectively to support students' understanding, including a great range of artefacts. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been very good. The failure to teach religious education as a discrete subject to students in the post-16

part of the school is a weakness that is easily rectified, as these students are taught a reasonable range of RE topics in a cross-curricular manner.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of very high quality and students' achievements are very good.
- The curriculum is very well planned and relevant.
- The subject is very well led and has a positive impact on students' achievements.
- Resources for all aspects of the subject are excellent.
- Accreditation opportunities for higher attainers are limited.

Commentary

89. As a result of very high quality teaching, students' achievements, and the progress they make in their knowledge, understanding and skills, are very good. They show great enthusiasm for the subject, and there are excellent resources available.

90. Some outstanding lessons were observed, both in work with resistant materials and in food technology. For example, in a Year 9 class, students were working in metal on individual projects. The quality of their design work was very high and, because of the very good teaching they received, they were able to embark on ambitious projects requiring considerable knowledge, understanding and skills. Students confidently used machine tools, including the lathe and drill, and demonstrated good techniques when working on metal by hand; for example, sawing, filing and finishing. They used brazing to join metal and were conscious of the need to ensure their work was finished well. In a Year 10 lesson, students were able to modify their designs as work progressed, because of their very good understanding of the processes involved, and of the high quality teaching they received. Working mainly in wood, they produced work of very high quality, such as coffee tables and table lamps. A strong feature of students' work is their ability to use different materials to complete their projects, such as making metal fittings for their coffee tables. They show very good knowledge and skill in basic techniques, such as using a plane, sawing, finishing and employing a variety of joints.

91. In food technology, students' achievements are equally high. In a Year 10 class, the very high quality of the teaching enabled students to produce 'healthy' cookies by modifying the recipe to include wholemeal flour, bran and chopped fruit. They weighed ingredients accurately, and described the reasons and effects of changing recipes to produce a healthier product. As a result of the high standard of teaching and the excellent resources available, students' work is of a very high quality. They understand hygiene and health and safety issues, and are willing to evaluate their work in a mature way. Students in the post-16 department of the school also undertake work in design and technology. With the support of staff from their department, they work with specialist staff to produce work of high quality. In one lesson, students working with resistant materials and textiles produced a range of products which required them to work with wood, metal, plastics and textiles.

92. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The subject is very well led by a two specialist teachers who have expertise and excellent knowledge of their subjects; they maintain very good relationships with students and have high expectations that students will produce work of which they can be proud. All students receive a very broad, balanced and relevant experience in the subject, and gain accreditation in Entry Level awards. However, given the ability of some students, the standard of work they produce and the high quality of teaching, students

would be capable of gaining accreditation at higher levels if given the opportunity. Resources for all aspects of the subject are excellent; well-equipped, roomy and attractive areas are available for work in resistant materials, food technology and textiles. Assessment arrangements are good, with detailed information maintained of students' experiences, knowledge, understanding and skills.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

93. Art was not a focus for this inspection. Insufficient evidence was gathered to make a secure judgement on overall provision. Two lessons were seen; teaching and learning were very good in one, and good in the other. The teacher is a specialist with high expectations of pupils and a good understanding of the subject and examination syllabuses; she is skilled in the use of methods that cater well for the different needs of students. Very good accommodation and resources enhance students' learning. Effective use is made of ICT, as a medium for storage and for generating images, and as a tool for investigation and research. Students display very positive attitudes in art, which they find enjoyable and satisfying. They settle quickly and quietly. They locate their folders of work and carry on steadily with their current project, discussing and developing their ideas and working in a range of materials and techniques. GCSE and Entry Level results for students in Year 11 show that students' achievement is very good. The subject leader has led well the introduction of GCSE as a means of accrediting the most able students' work. The subject development plan shows that older students visit art exhibitions, that the subject continues to be well resourced and that the teacher keeps up to date with training.

Music

94. This subject was not a focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to enable valid judgements to be made on provision, teaching, learning or achievement. The music teacher has developed a very good programme of work. The National Curriculum programmes of study have been combined with additional modules of work so that the subject is relevant to the learning needs of the students in the school. Planning shows that each year group has an opportunity to perform for an audience of friends and family. The production of *Oliver*, which coincided with the inspection, was a very good advertisement for the enjoyment and success students experience in singing and performing. Discussion and records show that students learn to play percussion instruments to accompany the celebration of Christian festivals. The teaching seen was of very good quality; students not only prepared and rehearsed their performance but also made detailed evaluations of their success and the skills to be improved. Good use is made of the available technology. The teacher is experimenting with a very sophisticated visual system of recording students' achievements. This used as a method of helping students to appraise their performances and of providing the school with evidence of students' achievements in confidence, self-esteem and communication. Music makes a very good contribution to students' social and cultural development.

Physical education

This subject was not a focus for the inspection and too little evidence was gathered to make possible a secure judgement about standards and provision.

95. Two lessons were observed, and both were satisfactory. Resources for the subject are good, but the absence of a dedicated sports hall detracts from the school's provision. For example, gymnastics and indoor games are taught in a small, multi-purpose hall containing stored furniture. However, the school does have a heated outdoor pool, which is greatly enjoyed by students in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

96. Through a link with a local college, there is a choice of pre-vocational options for students in Year 11, such as motor vehicle studies and industrial catering, but these were not a focus for the inspection. Too little evidence was gathered to allow secure judgements to be made on provision. Part of an industrial catering session at the college was observed, and an informal discussion with the lecturer and students showed that students do well; they thoroughly enjoy the course and make high quality finished products. Students' positive attitudes and very good behaviour were well evident in the college setting.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good day-to-day activities permeate the whole school to promote students' personal development.
- Teaching and learning in PSHE and citizenship are very good, and so is students' achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

97. The PSHE and citizenship curriculum is very broad and, together with the very effective teaching, makes a considerable contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Every opportunity is taken for students to learn independence, become mature and be successful in dealing with others. The wider curriculum supporting personal, social, health and citizenship education achieves a high level of inclusion for students in a wide range of interests locally and further afield. The very good use of school and community facilities extends students' knowledge and understanding of the community and the world of work, as well as extending and enriching their social experiences. For instance, extensive work focusing on the functions and responsibilities of magistrates is extremely valuable in enlarging the understanding of post-16 students. Also, the richness in many additional activities taking place throughout the year makes an outstanding contribution to students' knowledge and understanding. Students' confidence in themselves and their self-esteem are very effectively promoted.

98. Teaching and learning are very good. Students throughout the school achieve very well in their personal development, because what is taught at each stage is well planned to support their progress. The students' interest is maintained throughout lessons by carefully sequenced activities, stimulating and varied approaches to exploring personal, social and health education and citizenship issues, and the excellent management of discussion. Students are taught about sex and relationships in an expert and sensitive way. This enables them to gain essential knowledge and deal with challenging matters in an open, mature manner. In a sex education lesson observed in Years 7, 9, and 10, students listened carefully in discussions. They treated each other's contributions with respect. They co-operated well in paired and group activities and showed growing maturity in their responses. They are friendly and courteous to visitors and show confidence, for example when asking for the names of visitors or requesting help or information.

99. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, and health education is very well provided through a programme of visitors who contribute to education in sex and relationships and in alcohol and drug abuse. The school's nurse is involved and the dietician provides support for groups of both boys and girls as part of the *Fun to be Fit* initiative. Students in Years 10 and 11 and in the post-16 groups learn essential skills for independent living and benefit from the excellent work experience programme.

100. Students' knowledge and understanding of being a good citizen are promoted well, and the citizenship element meets requirements. They explore roles and responsibilities in the community through an array of activities such as the *Help the Community* day, where Year 10 students plan and prepare their own activities, such as gardening. The students' many opportunities to go on visits out of school, and the varied work experiences offered to them ensure that they exercise their sense of responsibility in a wide range of challenging contexts.

101. The subject is very well led and managed, and this is achieved in a high level of collaboration between key staff across the school. They see PSHE and citizenship at the core of learning, and their management of the subject has ensured that this is the case. As the subject permeates so much of the work with students, it makes a significant contribution to how well all students are involved in the full breadth of learning. The requirements for sex and relationships education, drugs education and citizenship are met well. The additional impact of technology college status has ensured that resources are very good and that the promotion of community links has been formalised. This has resulted in good improvement both in the provision for the subject and in the achievement of all students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*