

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Heaton Manor School**

Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108531

Headteacher: Mr John Dryden

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268821

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1940
School address:	Jesmond Park West Newcastle-upon-Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE7 7DP
Telephone number:	0191 281 8486
Fax number:	0191 281 0381
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin O'Neill
Date of previous inspection:	11-May-1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Heaton Manor is a large mixed comprehensive school in the eastern suburbs of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is designated as a technology college as part of the national specialist schools' programme. In September 2004 the school re-opened in a new building, bringing it onto one site for the first time. There are 1,940 students in the school of which 401 are students who have remained at the school to study post-16. In all years there are more boys than girls. The school has grown in popularity over the last five years. Although most students live in the area around the school, increasingly a number of students are travelling from other parts of the city. There are more requests for students to join Year 7 than there are places available. Very few students join or leave the school during a school year. National data indicates that when students are aged 11 their attainment is average. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Around 7 per cent of pupils have special educational needs; this is below average. The school has facilities to meet the needs of students with a hearing impairment. The proportion of students from other ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools. A small number of students have a language other than English as their home language. There are a small number of students from families who are refugees or asylum seekers. The school, along with other schools in Newcastle, is part of the national Excellence in Cities initiative. It plays a leading role in promoting improvement in other schools as part of the Leading Edge programme. The school works closely with the two local universities to provide opportunities for new teachers to train.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1475	Val Lynch	Lead inspector	
13459	Eva Mills	Lay inspector	
27416	Tom Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
33159	Nicholas Whittaker	Team inspector	Science Post-16 chemistry
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31129	Jeffrey Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
32672	Stephen Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Design and technology
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	Geography Psychology
8873	Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History
33153	Philip Hingley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Physical education Post-16 sports studies
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education
31528	Trevor Riddiough	Team inspector	Post-16 biology
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Post-16 health & social care
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Heaton Manor is a **very good** school with some **excellent** features. Standards are **above average** and students **achieve well**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Leadership and management are **very good**. Much of what has been achieved over the last five years is due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the commitment and support of well informed governors and the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and the senior team have a clear vision for the school and the drive and ambition to make it the best.
- Students achieve well because the school recognises and takes very seriously its commitment to meeting the individual needs of all students.
- Teachers' energy, enthusiasm and subject knowledge motivate students to want to learn.
- Behaviour is very good. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and with each other.
- Although some departments are leading the way in developing ways of assessing students' work, there is not enough information for students on how they can improve their work.
- Students' achievement in music and drama is not good enough and there are few opportunities for them to participate in productions and concerts.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent. Test and examination results have improved. The school has grown in numbers; in the sixth form numbers have nearly doubled. The curriculum has been redesigned to meet better students' needs. Teaching and learning have improved. The school has become more outward looking in order to learn from others and to share its expertise. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed, although the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. All this has been achieved at the same time as a new school has been planned and built on one of the two original sites, requiring a heavy investment of management time.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average and were better than results in similar schools. Over the last four years test results have improved, significantly so in mathematics. Results in mathematics are better than those in English and science. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls because the school has worked hard to make sure that boys achieve. Students with special educational needs, including those with a hearing impairment, achieve very well. Students whose home language is not English also achieve well. Students in Years 7 to 9 do particularly well in art and well in all subjects with the exception of music. GCSE results in 2003 were just above average and recovered from the significant dip in 2002 when they were below average. Most students achieved as expected on the basis of their test results at the end of Year 9. Results in 2004 were similar to those in 2003 and the school just missed its targets. Standards of work seen are above those expected nationally in most subjects. In science and art they are well above what is expected. In English standards are as expected and in music they are below what is expected. A-level results in 2003 were average and improved slightly in 2004. Results at A-level were particularly good in 2003 in biology, media studies, French, design and technology, general studies and physics. The school

has already analysed the 2004 AS and Alevel results and can show that students achieved as predicted based on the standards they had reached when they joined Year 12.

Students' personal development is **good**. Attendance is **good** and has improved since the last inspection. Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and relationships are very positive.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall.** Teaching and learning have improved because teachers have become fully involved in the national initiative to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are very well planned and teachers use a variety of activities so that students are often enthusiastic and keen to learn. There have been some changes made to **the curriculum and it is now good**. There are vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the curriculum is divided into modules so that students can be assessed regularly and know what they will be learning next. There are few opportunities for students to participate in musical performances and productions because of staffing difficulties in music and drama. Staff know students well and provide **very good guidance and support**. This is exceptionally well co-ordinated by the students' support service, which includes provision for pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and the team of learning mentors. The school has established **good links with parents and very good links with the community and other schools**. It provides good information to parents but knows that communication on a day-to-day basis could be better.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** Leadership overall is **very good** and the effectiveness of management is also **very good**. Governance of the school is **very good**. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and has led to a transformation in the school. He has generated a real sense of teamwork amongst all staff that has enabled the school to improve and be ready for an inspection the second week of being in a new building. The senior leadership group are a strong team who work well together and enjoy the responsibility they have. Many curriculum and progress leaders are taking responsibility for the quality of all that happens in their teams. Governors are very knowledgeable and have a very good range of skills and experience. They have provided very good support and challenge to the senior team and have been courageous in taking on the challenge of the new building built under a private finance initiative.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Most parents have positive views of the school and feel that their children are taught well. Students agree with this and enjoy coming to school. They feel well supported in their studies. Parents appreciate the commitment of staff and the way the school caters for the individual needs of students. Students and parents agree that teachers expect them to work hard and to do their best. Some parents have concerns about behaviour in school but students feel that only a small minority of students is responsible when behaviour problems arise. Some parents think that the school does not provide appropriate homework or a good range of extra-curricular activities. Many of those parents who have not been happy with the communication between home and school appreciate that systems are now in place in the new buildings to ensure improvements.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- share and extend the good practice in assessing learning in some departments so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve;
- appoint staff with vision and drive to lead in the area of performing arts to raise standards and provide experiences for students to develop their creativity;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- identify and implement ways of meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship;
- provide opportunities for religious education in the sixth form.

## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Post-16 provision is very good and is very cost effective. Although results in 2003 were below average and improved slightly in 2004, they reflect the below average attainment of the group that started courses in 2001 and 2002. Students embarking on their Year 13 courses are achieving well because teaching and learning are very good in most subjects. Leadership and management are very good.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a wide range of very good courses, both during the day and in the evening, that meet the needs of all students who wish to continue in education after the age of 16.
- Students on vocational and occupational courses benefit from working with teachers who have had recent direct experience of working in their specialist industry.
- Leadership is visionary and coherent and ensures that what the school provides for its students and adults is part of what is provided across the city.
- Teaching and learning are very good but there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their oral skills and some are reluctant to read more widely.
- Arrangements for supporting students are innovative and promote their independence and autonomy. However, students' punctuality to lessons is only satisfactory and is not good enough.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Satisfactory</b> in English and <b>good</b> in French. Achievement in English language is better than in literature. Although teachers work well as a team not all teaching is as good as the best. In French teaching is imaginative but assessment is not sufficiently linked to A-level grades.
Mathematics	<b>Very good</b> in mathematics. Although some students struggle with work at advanced level, teaching is very good, characterised by effective use of new technologies.
Science	The focus of the inspection was on biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In the Physics lessons observed, the teaching was <b>good</b> . Provision in biology is <b>good</b> and in chemistry it is <b>satisfactory</b> . Results are better in biology than chemistry. In both subjects teachers know their subject well but do not provide enough opportunities for students to learn independently.
Information and communication technology	Information and communication technology (ICT) is <b>very good</b> . Teachers have expert knowledge and are confident in their use of technology. The curriculum meets the needs of all students.
Humanities	Geography is <b>very good</b> , history is <b>good</b> and psychology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Results in geography have been consistently good. In history not enough work has been done to identify why some students underachieve.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology is <b>very good</b> . Teaching is very good and students have positive attitudes and very good independent learning skills. ICT resources in the department are insufficient.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design is <b>good</b> . Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to challenge their students. However, they do not ensure that students use drawing to select and record particular information.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Sport and physical education are <b>good</b> . Teaching and learning are good and lead to good achievement in examination courses.
Business	No courses were sampled or inspected.

Health and social care	Health and social care is <b>very good</b> . Students achieve consistently above levels expected nationally. Highly qualified specialist teachers use their very good practical knowledge of the vocational area to help students learn.
General education	No courses were sampled or inspected. The sixth form lacks general education courses, including religious education, although some are planned for the future.

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

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Support and guidance in the sixth form are designed to help students make the transition from school to university where they will need to know how to seek help for themselves. Subject teachers monitor students' progress carefully and alert personal tutors to any possible problems. Students do not meet with their personal tutor every day but are encouraged to seek help from a wide range of staff available for a range of academic and personal issues. Not all students feel totally confident with the system because they are still learning how it works. Staff with overall responsibility for the sixth form give good advice and guidance on entry and during courses. The induction programme for students entering the sixth form this year did not include enough subject specific advice after GCSE examination results had been published. A few parents were concerned about this.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Leadership and management are very good. There has been a rapid increase in the number of students enrolling and a corresponding increase in courses to meet their needs. Although the post-16 curriculum does not provide enough additional courses to broaden students' experiences and extend their skills, plans are in place to introduce such courses once the team has settled into their new accommodation. Part of these plans include providing opportunities for all students to participate in religious education. The leadership of the school is very committed to developing post-16 provision within the context of what is provided in the city.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students in the sixth form are very positive about their experiences in school. They appreciate the trust and confidence placed in them by staff and the way in which they are treated as adults. Most are happy with the support and guidance they receive, both personally and when making choices about courses and careers. They value the way their teachers willingly give their time over and above that which would be expected in order to address any issues.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** in Years 7 to 11. By the end of Year 9, standards are **above average** in many subjects. GCSE results are just **above average**. In the sixth form achievement is **good**. Although examination results dipped in 2003 and 2004 and were **average**, the standard of work seen is better than this.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results at the end of Year 9 have improved over the last three years and are particularly high in mathematics.
- Students with a language other than English and those with special educational needs achieve very well in their early years at the school.
- GCSE results improved considerably in 2002 and have remained just above average. There is evidence that results may be even higher next year as students are achieving well.
- Students are achieving well on their post-16 courses. Although results in 2003 dipped slightly, they reflect the attainment of students when they joined Year 12.
- Standards are well below average in music across the school and achievement is unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.0 (34.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.2 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.4 (34.6)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 312 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. When students join the school the standard of their work overall is average. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average and were better than results in similar schools. Results in 2004 are similar to those in 2003. The school sets challenging targets and in 2003 fell slightly short of its targets in English and science and exceeded its targets for mathematics. Over the last four years, test results have improved, significantly so in mathematics. They have fallen slightly in science but improved in 2004. Results in mathematics are better than those in English and science. In English, mathematics and science, a higher than average proportion of students reaches standards above those expected nationally. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls. In 2002 boys did better than girls and in 2003 girls did better than boys. The school has worked hard to make sure that boys achieve well. Students with special educational needs, including those with a hearing impairment, achieve very well. They are well supported by specialist staff and their subject teachers, who have a very good understanding of their needs. Students whose home language is not English also achieve well.
2. Students in Years 7 to 9 are achieving very well in art and well in all subjects with the exception of history, modern foreign languages and music. In modern foreign languages there is not enough time for students to study two languages; the standards students reach are not as good as in other subjects. The school has had difficulty in getting a regular full complement of staff and the right mix of experience and expertise in music. This has had a significant negative impact on the progress that students make both in music lessons and in musical performances.

## Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54.0 (44.0)	52.0 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (88)	91.0 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (94)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.7 (32.5)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 312 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- GCSE results in 2003 were just above average and recovered from the significant dip in 2002 when they were below average. They were as good as results in similar schools. Most students achieved as expected on the basis of their test results at the end of Year 9. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades was also just above average. In 2003, results were close to the school's targets. In 2004, targets were higher. Results were similar to those in 2003 but the school just missed its targets. In 2003 results in English, mathematics and double award science were above average. Results were also above average in art, English literature, physical education and in vocational courses. Results were significantly below average in business studies and German. In 2004, results improved in German but declined in French. Business studies results further declined and the course is no longer running.
- Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are well above what is expected in art and are above what is expected in most other subjects. In modern foreign languages standards are as expected as students have still not caught up on what they have missed lower down the school. In music the lower than expected standards are due to the staffing difficulties the department is experiencing. On the leisure and tourism vocational course students are working at below the expected level but this reflects good achievement for that particular group of students. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their home language continue to achieve well. Students are achieving well in nearly all subjects and work is of such a standard that the significantly higher targets set for 2005 could well be reached.
- Standards in literacy are satisfactory and enable students to learn in their other subjects. Their speaking and listening skills are less well developed than their reading and writing skills. Numeracy skills are good. ICT skills are also good and teachers plan to use and develop these skills in lessons. The use of electronic whiteboards is a feature of much teaching and students as well as teachers use them with confidence.

### Sixth form

- Examination results in 2003 were average and improved slightly in 2004. Results at A-level were particularly good in 2003 in biology, media studies, French, design and technology, general studies and physics. One of the reasons that results in 2003 were not as good as in 2002 was that fewer students than in previous years gained the highest grades. Girls and boys did equally well in 2003, although girls' results were not as good as girls' results nationally. The school knows that the achievement of this group of students was not as good as it could be. It has evidence to show that attainment on entry to the sixth form that year was below average and entry requirements onto courses were not as precise as they might have been to give students the best chance of success. The school has already analysed the 2004 AS and A-level results and can show that students achieved as expected on the basis of the standards they had reached when they joined Year 12. The inspection focused on students in Year 13. Their achievement in all subjects inspected in detail is at least satisfactory and in most it is good. It is very good in design and technology and health and social care. Students

are working at above the expected standard in art, design and technology, geography and health and social care.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attendance is **good** and has improved since the last inspection. Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and relationships within the school are very positive. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' very good attitudes and their good behaviour help them to learn and achieve.
- Very good and constructive relationships enable all students to demonstrate confidence and self-esteem.
- The school's ethos and high expectations and the very good range of sporting activities make a particularly strong contribution to students' moral and social development.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not co-ordinated across the school so there is not a planned approach to these aspects of students' personal development.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students to appreciate the rich variety of cultures and traditions that exist in multicultural Britain.

### **Commentary**

#### **Attendance**

Attendance is above average. All attendance is properly recorded and procedures meet statutory requirements. The punctuality of students is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.9	School data:	0.4
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

7. Behaviour in lessons is very good because the school insists on high standards of behaviour and uses fixed period exclusions to emphasise this. Students state that bullying is not tolerated within the school. Some concerns were expressed by a small number of students and parents about bullying but most were confident that such matters were dealt with promptly and effectively. On the few occasions where the behaviour of students observed was unsatisfactory, it was directly related to the quality of the teaching. The school does all it can to work with disaffected students within the school, excluding them only when there is no alternative.

## Exclusions

### *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	1641	134	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	23	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	26	5	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	114	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	48	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	3	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	6	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	0
Chinese	38	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	0	0

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

8. Students have a good work ethic and determination to succeed. The number of students taking part in the wide range of enrichment activities provided, especially in sport, is high and their interest and involvement is very good. Students from minority ethnic heritages and students with special educational needs are fully integrated into the school community. One important feature of the school is the mutual respect evident between staff and students. Students are valued for their individuality and helped to do well in as many ways as possible. They respond positively to this and develop into confident and articulate young people who are able to express their feelings and concerns. Students are happy to approach members of staff if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work or having personal problems. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work to develop students' social skills further and they willingly share and support each other in their learning.
  
9. The school is a socially harmonious community. It provides significant opportunities for students to take responsibility and develop social understanding. Most subjects contribute effectively towards developing students' social awareness. Students are self-confident and are developing very well as responsible members of the community. They are well aware of right and wrong, have a clear knowledge of what is expected of them and they respond very well. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgements that enable them to develop insights. Where opportunities are provided for reflection and discussion of spiritual matters, students clearly respect the views of others and most are willing to share their thoughts and feelings. Students' cultural awareness is good. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. They demonstrate in their lessons a sound knowledge of other cultures, but there are missed opportunities in most subjects to raise students' cultural awareness. Students demonstrate respect and tolerance in their relationships. However, departments do

not do enough specific planning to ensure that they prepare students to live in an increasingly multicultural society.

10. The school is aware of the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students and the impact it has on their progress, attitudes and achievement. These aspects are developed most effectively through the school's ethos, expectations and wider enrichment and extra-curricular provision, as well as through the formal curriculum. Citizenship and personal, social and health education provide many opportunities for teaching these aspects of students' personal development. The school lacks a co-ordinated approach to these aspects in terms of a shared policy so that opportunities can be planned for in all subjects.

### Sixth form

11. Students' attitudes to work are very good and they behave sensibly and often enthusiastically in all lessons. They have a very mature attitude towards their studies and around school. In lessons, they take great pride in their work in order to achieve the best possible results. Beyond lessons, they participate in a range of activities that widen their horizons and help them to become responsible citizens, for example, the sixth form council. Students work in a productive manner, collaborate very well and are respectful of the values, attitudes and beliefs of each other. They provide excellent role models for younger students, are self-confident and are very good ambassadors for the school. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and with one another. They develop good interpersonal skills and make a significant contribution to school life.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The curriculum is **good**. The care, guidance and support of students are **very good**. The school's links with parents are **good**. Links with the community, business and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. The quality of assessment of students' work is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school places a high priority on the development of effective teaching and learning through involvement in national strategies and innovative projects.
- Lesson planning is very effective and ensures good progress and very positive attitudes and good behaviour of students, although there are not enough opportunities for independent work and not enough development and use of oral skills in the sixth form.
- Marking and assessment are thorough but in a number of subjects students do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- Staff from the student support service and teachers provide very good support for students with specific individual needs.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 168 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
14 (8%)	48 (29%)	69 (41%)	31 (18%)	6 (4%)	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.*

12. The development of teaching and learning is the number one priority for the school. All development activities that take place aim to improve the learning of students. Teaching is now a strength of the school in all subjects and across all year groups, with the exception of music and drama where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.

13. The school has embraced many initiatives continually to develop the teaching skills of teachers. As well as the national strategies, the school is involved in several national projects, all of which involve many teachers in the development of a wide range of teaching styles which they then share with other colleagues. These initiatives have all contributed to the development of consistently good teaching across the school.
14. A universal feature of the teaching in the school is the effective planning of lessons with clear learning objectives and teaching strategies that meet the needs of all learners. Teachers understand well how children learn and so design their lessons to maximise the learning of all students. They tailor their teaching styles to suit both the purpose of the lesson and the learning needs of the students. This enables students of all abilities to work at or near their capacity. Learning strategies are often imaginative and engaging.
15. Because the curriculum and lesson design closely match the needs of the students, the students engage positively with learning and as a result their attitudes and behaviour are generally very positive. Effective teaching strategies ensure that students achieve well. There are limited opportunities for independent learning. For example, some lessons are teacher led and occasionally the teacher over-teaches students before letting them develop their own approaches to learning. The school provides well for the information technologies to support learning across the curriculum. At the time of the inspection, many systems were not on line. However, the potential for the school to use the new technologies is apparent.
16. While marking and assessment are thorough, assessment does not always tell students what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. There is good practice in some departments that it is planned to share and extend to involve others.
17. The student support centre for students with specific individual needs provides outstanding support for students. These students learn very well in lessons. Teachers know them very well and work with support staff to set clear and challenging learning targets. Support staff help students to concentrate and do well. In the best lessons, resources are adapted, modified and used to boost learning, especially for students with a hearing or visual impairment. There is a good dialogue between support staff and students to promote independent learning and reduce dependence on adults.

### **Sixth form**

18. The good quality of teaching is a significant strength in the sixth form and has contributed to the increasing success in examination courses. Teachers know their subject well and have a very good knowledge of syllabus requirements. Relationships are good, with students confident and secure with their teachers and support staff. Monitoring of students' achievement and progress, through frequent assessment and student target-setting, is good. Students know what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, students' attitudes are very positive and they enjoy lessons.
19. Teachers plan their lessons well. Although sometimes there is too much attention paid to teaching the content of the subject and relatively little to developing learning strategies, students are developing their analytical and evaluative skills well. This enables them to approach their work with confidence and maturity. Oral skills are not being used and developed in all subjects. Students find it difficult to engage in discussion, particularly at the beginning of Year 12. They are not confident about speaking or discussing their subject using technical language. In a few lessons, teacher direction detracts from the development of independent learning skills.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** overall and **very good** for students in Years 10 and 11. There is a **very good** range of additional activities outside of lessons. Accommodation and resources are **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is innovative and flexible in meeting the needs, abilities and aspirations of all students, including those in the sixth form.
- Most subjects, apart from music and drama, offer a varied range of enrichment activities.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is very good.
- The personal, social and health education programme contributes significantly to students' moral and social development.
- Accommodation is excellent, but the range and quality of library books are insufficient in some subjects and some departments do not have enough resources.
- The enrichment programme in the sixth form is varied and well supported by students.

### Commentary

20. All the statutory curriculum issues reported in the previous inspection report have been addressed. Students study two languages in Years 7 to 9 but as there is a smaller amount of time for the second language, attainment by less competent students is adversely affected. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 students caters well for their different needs. All students with additional learning needs, including those who have a visual or hearing impairment, have full access to the curriculum. In order to provide for the range of students' abilities, some subjects, including art and design and religious education, offer both short and full courses at GCSE examination. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 has been improved considerably since the previous inspection. The introduction of a curriculum that is divided into modules means that planning is now more consistent throughout and between departments and homework and assessment tasks are identified.
21. Provision for students outside the school day is very good. Activities complement the curriculum and draw on expert help within the wider community. There are regular homework and revision clubs. Other enrichment is very imaginative, for example in ICT. A fast track group in Year 10 is able to complete a GNVQ ICT award in one year. Students who are identified as gifted and talented have an extensive and varied enrichment programme. The school has links with Newcastle, Northumberland and Durham Universities as well as participating in Newcastle city projects. A wide range of school teams and recreational clubs in physical education is well supported, but currently because of staffing problems there are very few drama and music groups.
22. Personal, social and health education, which includes careers education and citizenship, is seen as vital in supporting the development of the whole student, enabling them to develop skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. Students are enabled to reflect upon issues as well as learning about them as teachers are secure in their knowledge and approach topics with confidence. As a result, students discuss sensitive and personal issues maturely.
23. The school has sufficient high quality specialist staff to teach the curriculum, especially in mathematics and special educational needs. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting a curriculum leader for music and drama. A brand new purpose built school ensures that quality of accommodation is excellent in all subject areas. However, some subjects, for example art and design, history, geography and music, do not have sufficient resources. There are insufficient blinds in some humanities classrooms, while the other subjects listed do not yet have access to sufficient ICT equipment.

## Sixth form

24. Students who wish to continue in education after the age of 16 are offered a wide range of A-level and vocational courses, both during the school day and in the evening. This is a considerable improvement on that reported at the last inspection. However, the school still does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide religious education for students in Years 12 and 13. Students who follow vocational courses benefit considerably from the extensive range of subject expertise by the staff. This means that a varied number of courses are offered to meet the differing needs of all students. There are separate dining and study facilities for sixth form students. However, the quality and quantity of books, journals and periodicals in the library for some subjects, for example history and geography, are insufficient to support A-level study and independent research.

## Care, guidance and support

The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **very good**. The steps taken to ensure the students' health and welfare are **very good**. The involvement of the students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The academic and pastoral system, based on subject teachers, personal tutors and progress leaders, provides very good support and guidance for students.
- The very good personal and social education programme prepares students very well for life beyond the school as they move to the next stage of education.
- All students are well supported from before they join the school to the time when they leave.
- Students know their views matter and are taken seriously by the school.

## Commentary

25. The school has invested in developing a high quality academic and pastoral system that provides very good support for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, the visual and the hearing impaired and those with English as an additional language. The school's claim to be very inclusive is fully justified. There is a constant drive for meeting and improving the provision for all students based on their individual needs. Personal tutors and progress leaders build strong relationships with the students and their families. They have very good knowledge of students and their background that helps the school to provide very good support when needed. Personal tutors, progress leaders and the co-ordinator for special educational needs monitor the progress of all students carefully. Support staff ensure students who require additional support in lessons are well accepted and are learning in a safe environment. Students are confident about asking members of staff for help on either academic or personal matters. Academic and personal targets are set during personal interviews between tutor, student and parent are reviewed regularly.
26. There is a very good personal, social and health education programme that supports students' personal and social development. Issues such as sex and drugs education are effectively addressed. The knowledge and understanding that students gain make sure they are well informed. Very clear procedures and good staff training ensure that students work in a safe and healthy environment. Students speak highly of the health adviser's contribution to the life of the school.
27. Very good arrangements for the induction of students ensure that very soon after joining the school in its new building they know their way around and understand procedures. They rapidly form constructive relationships with their peers and with their teachers. Students are provided with and can access impartial advice and guidance from a range of sources, including the careers service, especially when making choices about courses to study to GCSE level. Students know their views matter and are taken seriously by all staff. Plans are in place for a school council to replace the previous two councils that existed on the two sites.

### **Sixth form**

28. Support and guidance in the sixth form is designed to help students make the transition from school to university where they will need to know how to seek help for themselves. Subject teachers monitor students' progress carefully and alert personal tutors to any possible problems. Students do not meet with their personal tutor every day but are encouraged to seek help from a wide range of staff available for a range of academic and personal issues. Staff with overall responsibility for the sixth form give good advice and guidance on entry and during the courses. Not all students feel totally confident with the system because they are still learning how it works. The induction programme for students entering the sixth form this year did not include enough subject specific advice and a few parents were concerned about this.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with parents are **good**. Links with the community, business and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The sharing of expertise and good practice with other schools and colleges effectively supports teachers in developing their practice to the benefit of students.
- There is an extensive programme of adult learning in school that encourages community involvement in learning. However, not enough opportunities are provided for older students to participate in community based voluntary activities.
- Although a small number of parents expressed concerns at the parents' meeting, the school has good relationships with the majority of parents, who are consulted regularly about school issues.
- The school works very well with partner primary schools and other providers of education and training in the city.
- Partnerships with local industry help to widen and enrich the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

29. The school is very proactive and successful in developing very useful links with other schools, colleges and universities. Its participation in national initiatives such as the Leading Edge Partnership and Network Learning Communities have led to a sharing of expertise and good practice with other local schools, which has a very beneficial effect on students' learning. The liaison between the school and local primary schools is also very effective. The 'Building Bridges' programme ensures that relevant information is transferred and that the induction process is as smooth as possible. Teachers from various departments visit primary schools to work with pupils in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, students in Year 7 are familiar with staff and lessons when they arrive in school. Local universities also work well with the school, including the provision of 'master classes' for pupils on the gifted and talented register.
30. A major improvement since the last inspection has been the development of community learning on the school's new site. An extensive range of learning opportunities is now available for adults in the community, providing academic, vocational and leisure courses. The school's aim to encourage lifelong learning is significantly enhanced by this provision.
31. The school has maintained its good links with parents. Most parents are very pleased with the school, which is popular and held in high regard in the community. Parents particularly appreciate the high quality teaching and the very good relationships that have been established in school. The school consults parents regularly and acts upon any concerns that come to light. A number of parents expressed concern about communications but these seem to be a result of the school being on two sites and teachers and tutors not always getting messages quickly. The school has put systems in place to resolve this.
32. There is very good contact between progress leaders and parents which supports students' learning and their welfare. Target-setting days are well attended and, although some parents

have expressed reservations about the organisation of these consultations, many find them useful and informative. Contact with the parents of pupils with special educational needs is very good.

33. Links with local and regional industry are used very well in some subject areas, especially design and technology. Companies donate materials and provide work placements for students, helping to prepare them for the world of work.

### **Sixth form**

34. Links between the school and other schools and colleges providing education post-16 are very effective. Staff are able to extend and share their expertise with others and to draw on the resources of higher educational establishments. The local and national initiatives which are effective in the main school are equally effective in the sixth form. Information provided for parents is good and parents are fully involved when students make choices. Although sixth form students make full use of the local community in their learning, there is little contribution in the form of community service.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership overall is **very good** and the effectiveness of management is also **very good**. Governance of the school is **very good**, despite not meeting all its statutory requirements.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has undergone a rapid transformation under the excellent visionary leadership of the headteacher.
- Governors have been bold and courageous in taking on the responsibilities associated with planning and developing the new school through a private finance initiative.
- There is a very good continuing professional development programme for all staff at the school which promotes the concept of learning being for teachers as much as students.
- Although there are some good procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, they are not consistently used at curriculum leader level.

### **Commentary**

35. The school has made outstanding improvements since the last inspection and has been transformed under the excellent leadership of the headteacher. The leadership of the school has the capacity to ensure that this level of improvement will be maintained. There is a clear focus and determination by the governors, headteacher and senior staff and others to continue to raise standards and improve the school.
36. The school has undergone a rapid transformation since the last inspection in 1998. The school moved to new premises in September 2004 as part of a multi-million pound private finance initiative. The headteacher, together with the governors and senior leadership team, has successfully steered the school through this period of significant change and turbulence. The changes have incorporated a move onto one site, a new building and the development of comprehensive post-16 provision and community education programmes. The school has gained technology college status, has redesigned the curriculum and overhauled the management structures. At all times, the leadership of the school has stuck to its belief of placing the needs of learners first. There is now a real sense of students wanting to learn and being proud of their school.
37. The governing body is resolute and takes the initiative when required to do so. It has also been able to make and take difficult decisions to move the school forward. Its strategic planning is very good and this links to the clear vision that it holds for the future of the school. Governors' leadership of the private finance initiative project has been skilful and courageous. The project necessitated close partnerships and trusting relationships between the governing body, the senior leaders of the school, the local education authority and the contractors. The

new school opened in September 2004. The quality of the design and the positive learning climate that it has created for all learners who come to the school are a testament to the commitment, vision, tenacity and ingenuity of those responsible. All of the recommendations identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, with the exception of providing daily collective worship and religious education in the sixth form. The governing body knows that it does not meet statutory requirements and is actively seeking ways to resolve this.

38. The school has also made improvements in many other important areas. These include considerably raising students' attainment; improving the quality of teaching and learning; and providing greater curricular opportunities for students. The school is a successful technology college and is currently re-bidding for specialist college status in mathematics and computing. Consequently, there has been an improvement in the overall quality of education and the academic standards that students and sixth form students now achieve throughout the school.
39. Through the innovative continuous professional development programme, which is closely linked to performance management, the school has developed a learning community for all who work in the school. Teachers have become independent learners themselves and are offered a wide range of opportunities related to their needs. Both programmes are thorough and effective in bringing about improvement. The school links with three universities to contribute to initial teacher training. This provision is highly effective in successfully training student teachers.
40. Leadership and management of curriculum leaders and progress leaders are often very good and of learning support are excellent. The head of learning support effectively manages the provision for all students with learning needs regardless of their abilities and attitudes. There is a positive team approach amongst all staff working in the team. Teaching assistants are highly qualified and have been delegated substantial responsibility that they fulfil well. Relevant training supports all staff. The head of learning support monitors and evaluates provision and teaching constantly to ensure that the support is making maximum impact on the education of the students in her care. Monitoring and evaluation do not sufficiently involve middle level leaders knowing about teaching and learning in their curriculum area and working together to share best practice.
41. The school improvement plan provides a good basis for moving the school forward. However, the success criteria are not always clear and measurable and do not help the school to monitor its progress and improvement as effectively as it might.
42. There are secure financial systems. The school receives broadly average funding and has secured significant additional funding through other sources for the benefit of the students. Funding for special educational needs is prudently and well spent. The school provides very good value for money.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income A	5,807,750
Total expenditure B	5,593,924
Expenditure per pupil	2,935

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	380,165
Balance carried forward to the next	593,991

## Sixth form

43. Leadership and management are very good. There has been a rapid increase in the number of students enrolling and a corresponding increase in courses to meet their needs. Although the post-16 curriculum does not provide enough additional courses to broaden students' experiences and extend their skills, plans are in place to introduce such courses once the

team have settled into their new accommodation. Part of these plans includes providing opportunities for all students to participate in religious education, which the school currently does not provide. The leadership of the school is very committed to developing post-16 provision within the context of what is provided in the city. The provision at the school is very cost effective.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision for work related learning is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students following vocational courses learn well through planned links with industry.
- There are good arrangements for all students to participate in work experience and lessons in careers education and guidance.
- The new guidelines for the full implementation of work-related learning have not yet been shared with all staff.

### **Commentary**

44. The school is developing work-related learning well. It is not possible to comment on the impact of work-related learning on students' overall achievement. However, the work that is being done to develop vocational courses is having a very positive effect on the learning and achievement of students on these courses. Teaching and learning on these courses are very good.
45. There is a good programme for careers education and guidance within the citizenship and personal, health and social education programme. In particular, students in Years 7 and 8 are starting to challenge stereotypical views about people in employment. Work experience is managed well for all students in Year 10 and students are encouraged to organise their own placements. Careers education and work experience are making a good contribution to students' understanding of the world of work. There are good arrangements for monitoring placements for health and safety by the Connexions service.
46. The manager for work-related learning uses her good knowledge and experience of working with industrial partners to help the vocational teachers develop and use industry links effectively as part of the course. She is encouraging subject leaders to think about how they can contribute to work-related learning. There are already a number of opportunities to bring representatives from the world of work into the school. The policy for work-related learning is being developed but does not yet include detailed strategies for the development of all aspects of the framework, specifically the teaching of business enterprise. Arrangements are not yet in place for all students to record all their work-related experiences.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of the most competent students and those with special educational needs is very good.
- There has been a significant improvement over the last two years in the standards attained by girls in the national tests at the end of Year 9.
- Standards attained by all groups of students in the 2003 GCSE English literature examinations were above average and achievement was good.
- Students of average competency in English language are under-achieving.

#### **Commentary**

47. Standards in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average for boys and girls. This represents good achievement when account is taken of their average levels of attainment on entry to the school. The trend over recent years has been for the boys to perform better than the girls in comparison with boys and girls nationally. Girls' results improved in 2003 and then again in 2004. The most competent students did well in 2003, attaining well above average results at the higher Levels 6 and 7. Students with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds progressed well and their levels of achievement were good. The results overall were above average compared to similar schools and were an improvement on what was attained at the time of the previous inspection.
48. The proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A\* to C range in the 2003 English language examinations was average and achievement was satisfactory. Boys did better than boys nationally but the performance of the girls was slightly below that of their national counterparts. The least competent students and those from a different cultural heritage did well and their achievement was good. Students of average ability, however, under-achieved and so results and achievement overall were not as good as they were in Years 7 to 9. Results overall were similar to those attained at the time of the previous inspection. There was an improvement in English language results in 2004. The 2003 English literature results were above average for boys and their achievement was good. Girls performed the same as girls nationally and their achievement was satisfactory. The results in 2004 were broadly similar to those of 2003.
49. The quality of written work seen at the start of Years 9 and 11 is above the standard expected nationally for boys and girls and achievement is good. This improvement in the performance of the older students in English language is because of better monitoring of their progress and the provision of additional support to improve the structure and coherence of their extended writing. Students' ability to write analytically and to use language flexibly in a range of contexts is good. Reading skills are well developed and the issues students reflect on in the course of that reading contribute to their moral, social and cultural awareness. Students talk confidently about their work and show respect for the contributions of others in discussions. The skills of reading, speaking and listening are above the standard expected nationally by Year 11 and achievement is good.
50. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was seen which was very good and outstanding because it engaged students in analytical work that was demanding and challenged their thinking through probing questioning. Students responded well to such high expectations and worked keenly and with enjoyment. Some teaching, however, failed to adapt in the course of a

lesson to how well students were learning and so it failed to motivate them. Learning is good because students have positive attitudes to the subject and they behave well. They make good use of computers for drafting and presenting their work and for research purposes. Additional time is given outside lessons to help students prepare for tests and examinations and there is a programme of extra-curricular activities to extend their enjoyment of the subject.

51. Leadership and management are good. The two senior English teachers provide strong leadership during a period of considerable change with the move to the new school. Morale is high because of well-managed teamwork and a strong sense of common purpose. Procedures are in place for monitoring teaching and learning and systems are established for tracking and evaluating students' progress. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

52. Students' command of written and spoken English enables them to achieve well by Year 11. There is good provision for the many boys and girls who have special educational needs and those whose home language is not English. The improvement in their language competency by Year 9 is good.
53. The school has done much to raise the profile of literacy. Teachers have received training in strategies to improve students' ability to use the English language fluently and flexibly and this has resulted in much good practice. Provision is good in geography, for example, where students read a range of challenging specialist texts. Effective work is done in design technology in developing students' understanding and use of technical terms. There are occasions, however, where students are not taught to adapt their writing to the different subject requirements. All subjects in their planning identify how they will use and develop students' literacy skills.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and lessons are consistently well planned.
- The department is well managed and very well led and standards are improving.
- Standards are not high enough in the second foreign language because there is not enough time allocated to it.
- Teachers' marking of students' work does not tell them enough about how to improve.

### **Commentary**

54. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are in line with what is expected nationally. This is satisfactory achievement, since students' have no experience of a foreign language when they joined the school. In lower sets in Year 9 the standards in the second language are not as high as they should be because they have too few lessons in Year 8 to build up their skills, knowledge and confidence, especially in speaking.
55. GCSE results in French in 2003 were average. This is satisfactory achievement and in line with the standards they attained in Year 9. Boys did not perform as well as girls, but the difference is much less than seen nationally. GCSE results for German for the same year appeared to be well below average, but the school entered 95 per cent of its students. This is much higher than the national norm. Now that modern foreign languages are no longer compulsory in Years 10 and 11, the future entry will more closely match the national picture. Predictions for the 2005 GCSE examinations now suggest that standards will be above average in French and German. The standard of work seen confirms this and achievement is good.

56. Teaching is good because the teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and get on well with students. Teachers' lesson planning is consistently good and this enables students of all abilities to learn well. They also plan carefully so that classroom assistants provide good support to students with particular learning needs. In the best lessons, teachers combine all of these good features with imaginative methods and challenging pace, resulting in excellent teaching and good achievement.
57. Students' work is marked regularly and carefully, but students are not given enough information about how their work compares with national standards. In Years 7 to 9 the teachers are also not clear enough about National Curriculum levels, so the information the students get only provides a satisfactory guide as to how they are doing and how they can improve.
58. The teaching in French and German is good because the subject leaders make sure the team of teachers follows their high expectations. The leadership has a very clear vision of the department's future and of its place in whole school developments. The management of the department is good. All the teaching areas are well decorated and create a stimulating environment for students. Materials and equipment are well organised and provide a good support for learning. The department runs smoothly because teachers who have posts of responsibility are well matched to their tasks and understand their roles well. The department keeps a good record of students' test results, but the way this information is used to help teachers plan their lessons is only satisfactory.
59. A wide variety of trips abroad not only gives students practice in what they have learned, but they have real opportunities to appreciate the culture of the countries they visit. Voluntary lunchtime language sessions also offer a positive support for students preparing for examinations. Russian has recently been re-introduced in after-school sessions and enriches students' experience of language. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the department has a strong team of well-qualified teachers who have the skills and professionalism to raise standards further.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- There is an excellent match of teachers' qualifications and experience to meet the needs of the curriculum.
- Teaching is very good and engages students in their learning very well.
- Examination and test results are above average.
- Marking of students' work does not provide enough comments on how they can improve.

### **Commentary**

60. Year 9 tests in 2004 showed a continuation of the above average standards of recent years, indicating good achievement by students. The attainment of girls has improved significantly and in 2004 it was better than that of boys. Lower attaining students did not make sufficient progress when compared to what is expected nationally. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE results were lower than in 2003 but represent satisfactory achievement by students. Boys' results were better than girls' results, especially at the higher grades.
61. Currently, standards are above those expected nationally. By the end of Year 9 this represents good achievement when compared to attainment on entry to Year 7. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average and students are achieving well. The most able students are given opportunities to enter for GCSE early and some of these students have already attained good pass grades in an AS module. The quality of work seen reflects students' very good attitudes to learning. There is no difference in the achievement of students

from different ethnic or social backgrounds. Those with different learning needs and lower attaining students achieve well.

62. Teaching is very good. Enthusiastic teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles and interactive whiteboards to develop students' interest and participation in their learning. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan lessons that encourage students to work at a challenging pace and result in very good learning. Excellent lessons develop new concepts and students display interest and self-confidence in their learning. Where challenge is only sufficient, learning is satisfactory. Learning support is effective, ensuring that students with special educational needs benefit fully from their lessons. Assessment during lessons is effective and teachers respond rapidly to students' difficulties. Marking of students' work is accurate and regular but does not tell them what they have achieved nor what students need to do to improve.
63. Very good leadership and management of the department have ensured students get high quality teaching. There is a clear vision of how the department can progress further to increase the success of students. Teachers work well as a team and many have responsibilities well matched to their skills and experience, providing a unified approach to improvement. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. The use of ICT as a teaching tool and the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy have improved the quality of teaching. Accommodation is excellent.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

Students' mathematical skills are above those expected nationally and support learning in other subjects well. In science subjects, teachers contribute to the development of students' skills in their use of graphs and a wide variety of measures. Geography and history lessons use students' graphic skills when presenting data. Joint projects have been developed between the mathematics department and other subjects to use real data in calculations. There has been whole school training in the development of students' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is well planned, organised and taught by enthusiastic subject specialists.
- Students reach high standards by the end of Year 11 and students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well.
- National initiatives in teaching and learning are having a positive impact on the work of the department, although there are insufficient opportunities for students to develop and articulate their ideas through independent and collaborative work.
- The effectiveness of assessment in individual lessons is variable. Marking and feedback do not always identify areas for improvement and next steps in learning.

#### **Commentary**

64. Year 9 test results in 2003 were above average. Results in the GCSE double award science course in 2003 were well above average. A very high proportion of students achieved grades A\*, A and B at GCSE. Attainment on entry to the school is average. Students make good progress and achieve well during Years 7 to 9. Students continue to achieve well to the end of Year 11 when their attainment is well above national expectations.
65. Teaching and learning are good. The national strategy for raising standards in Years 7 to 9 is being implemented very effectively. This is contributing to improved planning and teaching. The curriculum is well organised and lessons are well planned. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to interest and engage students. In the best lessons, teaching is exciting, engaging and highly imaginative. In these lessons students enjoy learning science and make

excellent progress. In a Year 9 lesson, students were engrossed in a problem solving mystery. Discussion in groups was animated and students showed a high level of understanding of the environmental and inherited causes of variation. Students gave detailed explanations and built successfully on each other's ideas. Their learning and progress were excellent. In some lessons the range of learning activities is more limited and opportunities for students to develop and articulate their ideas independently are missed.

66. Assessment of GCSE coursework is thorough, with helpful diagnostic comments. Teachers' assessment of other work is variable. Students are sometimes unsure about the standard of their day-to-day work or how to improve. Students are regularly set homework, which helps them to extend their learning. ICT is used to present work and for the analysis and presentation of data. The department has ambitious plans for developing ICT to motivate students and enhance their learning. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches students' learning.
67. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum leader provides good leadership. He has high expectations and provides clear vision and direction. The management and organisation of the department are good. Teachers with responsibility contribute effectively to the overall leadership and management of the department. Teachers in the department work well as a team. Whilst the curriculum leader analyses students' achievements thoroughly and evaluates the work of the department regularly, not enough is done to monitor the impact of strategies on learning.
68. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved and new curriculum developments are beginning to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning. Specialist teaching rooms in the department are excellent and there are very good resources to support teaching and students' learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent leadership leads to very effective teaching across the department.
- Expert knowledge of teachers and very good use of modern teaching aids are improving standards.
- Excellent curriculum planning meets the needs of all students.
- ICT is being increasingly used in a number of subjects but it is weak in music, design technology and art and design.

### **Commentary**

69. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average and show very good improvement since the last inspection. Results were below average in the GNVQ intermediate course. However, observation of standards in lessons and predicted Applied GCSE grades show a significant improvement and standards are now above those expected nationally in Year 11. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to excel through stimulating summer school and sessions after school. There are excellent arrangements to cater for the students who have special educational needs and they achieve very well.
70. Teaching is very good. Students consistently work at or near their capacity and sustain very good gains in their learning. Progress is rapid in lessons as students are challenged to reach high standards. The high level of achievement is the result of the very good attitudes of students and the very good teaching. There is no discernible difference in achievement between boys and girls. There is marked harmony amongst all students in lessons. Teachers have established strong working relationships with students resulting in a rapid pace of learning, which builds students' confidence. Teachers' expert knowledge encourages students to produce very good work, particularly in website designs. Teachers are enthusiastic and

expect high standards. Teaching is innovative, developing students' skills and identifying different work schemes for various ability groups. Students aim confidently for high standards because they are aware of their progress and the level they are working at. Many of them learn independently, particularly on their computers at home, and therefore gain skills beyond expectations.

71. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a highly effective team spirit inspired by the curriculum leader who has a clear vision for the future resulting in excellent schemes of work that embrace new teaching technologies and strategies. There are frequent visits by visiting speakers and links with the community are strong. The curriculum leader is an excellent example to her team. She works tirelessly to improve standards and increase learning opportunities for students. Self-evaluation is rigorous and very good staff development increases the effectiveness of teachers.
72. Accommodation and resources are very good. Teachers make excellent use of interactive whiteboards and classrooms are well equipped with sufficient modern computers for individual use in the largest classes; the ratio of computers to students meets national recommendations. Wall displays are bright and aid learning. The technicians and network manager are competent and highly valued. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with a heavy investment in hardware and software.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

Although network problems prevented inspection of the full range of ICT resources in the school, very good facilities are available in most departments. Most teachers are adept in the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning. ICT resources are quite outstanding in the student support centre and these resources contribute very much to students' learning. Other areas of good practice include mathematics, English, geography, modern foreign languages and health and social care. ICT is not used enough in music, design technology and art and design because there are not enough computer based resources in these departments.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching motivates and enthuses students so that they learn well.
- Most students show very good interest in lessons and achieve well.
- Teaching of GCSE classes ensures students are well prepared for their examinations.
- The assessment scheme for Years 7 to 9 does not give the highest attainers enough opportunities to reach the highest levels.
- Comments on work in Years 7 to 9 do not give students enough guidance on how to improve.

### **Commentary**

73. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with that expected nationally. Most students achieve satisfactorily. In lessons where the work is motivating and challenging, they achieve well. Students with special educational needs usually achieve well because teachers support them well. The highest attainers achieve satisfactorily but they are not always set sufficiently demanding work.
74. The attainment of students by the end of Year 11 is above average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average for A\*-C grades; an above-average proportion gained A or A\* grades. Boys' attainment in 2003 was well above the boys' national average. In 2004 a similar proportion of students gained an A\*-C grade, but the proportion gaining A or A\* grades fell. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above that expected

nationally; the highest attainers' work was well above average. The majority of students achieve well because they are taught well and because they are prepared to work hard in order to succeed. They learn to use sources for information and the highest attainers learn how to evaluate sources and make deductions from them.

75. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is nearly always good. It is consistently good in Years 10 and 11. As a result, students learn well. They respond very positively to the good teaching, work hard and therefore achieve well. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, high expectations of behaviour and hard work, and effective classroom management. This creates a purposeful learning atmosphere. Teachers use a range of activities that motivate students and keep them actively involved in their learning. The best lessons finish with a short session in which students and teachers review what has been learned. This does not, however, happen successfully in all lessons. Although work is marked regularly, comments do not always tell students in Years 7 to 9 clearly enough how they might improve their work in the future.
76. The department is well led and managed satisfactorily. The curriculum leader has created an effective team of teachers who are willing to embrace change where it can be seen likely to lead to an improvement in standards. As a result the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and improvement is satisfactory. Although the performance of the department is reviewed carefully, insufficient time is given to monitoring lessons and sharing good practice.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are good and are improving because dedicated and hardworking teachers plan interesting lessons that motivate students to learn.
- The department has used advice from consultants to develop alternative ways to support learning.
- In spite of recent developments in students' self-assessment, some are still not sufficiently sure about what they need to do to get better results.
- Very good use of computers to help teaching in lessons, and by students for their coursework, is helping to raise standards further.

### **Commentary**

77. In 2003, standards at GCSE were above the average and boys performed particularly well. GCSE results were lower in 2004 but these students nevertheless made good progress and achieved well. Current work from highly motivated students is good and reflects skilful teaching. Achievement is good.
78. In 2003, standards at the end of Year 9 were just above average. Students come from their primary schools with very different experiences in geography. The carefully planned modular course develops the skills necessary to become good geographers so that by the end of Year 9 they have made good progress. Work seen indicates that most of the present students are reaching expected levels and many are performing well.
79. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. Dedicated teachers share their specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for geography with their students in interesting and fast moving lessons. The design of the course encourages students to explore links between the different factors that change the world in which we live. This understanding helps students to obtain high grades. Good interpersonal relationships mean that students work well with each other and with their teachers. Well-planned lessons and the use of computerised projectors and carefully chosen resources make lessons easy to follow. Teachers regularly check the progress of learning. In some lessons, these checks do not involve enough students. In Years

8 and 9, a small number, mostly boys, display low aspirations. Apparently 'busy', for example, drawing graphs, they avoid reaching the more challenging tasks planned for the later parts of lessons so that their achievement is unsatisfactory.

80. The department has been training students to assess each other's work according to National Curriculum descriptions. Students are able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in work and suggest areas for improvement. Students do not yet set self-improvement targets on a regular basis and end of year reports do not provide clear guidance on how they might improve. Very good teaching combined with detailed assessments equip students well to tackle the demands of the GCSE course. Attitudes to learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
81. Good teamwork between teachers and highly trained classroom assistants ensures very effective support for students facing barriers to success. They make very good progress, especially those with English as an additional language and those with hearing impairments. Teachers take particular care to ensure that students acquire and use the specialised vocabulary of geography. Word processed assignments reveal sophisticated use of computers that become more widespread as students move through the school. Carefully planned fieldwork and advanced use of computers to record and display the information gathered results in very sophisticated projects. Numerical data is analysed well and presented in graphs and diagrams.
82. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum leader is enthusiastic about geography and knows how to further improve standards. The department shares his vision and has sought the help of external consultants to develop methods of student self-assessment, which it can now share with other departments. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good.

## **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and makes a very good contribution to students' achievement.
- Outstanding leadership and very good management of the subject ensure that students experience a rich curriculum.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- Assessment of students' work is well established.

### **Commentary**

83. Standards in the GCSE full course were average in 2003 and were much higher in 2004. Almost half of the students took the GCSE short course examination at the end of Year 10. Eighty-six per cent of them achieved an A\*-C grade, an excellent result.
84. By Year 9, standards are above average in relation to the Newcastle local education authority agreed syllabus, an improvement since the previous inspection. Given students' average standards on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. Students are well able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences. By Year 11, standards are above average. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. They make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. They usually question and explore their own attitudes in depth because teachers help them to do so. This enables them to achieve well. Students' spiritual and moral awareness is very good. They demonstrate a profound respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other.

85. Teaching is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers' very good use of discussion and questioning enables students to express their opinions and form clear judgements about religious and moral issues. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good because students are provided with good support and work that matches their needs. The use of key words and subject-specific language enables students to improve their speaking and listening skills. Students make good progress as a result of the teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and an awareness of individual students' needs. Teachers' use of effective methods, coupled with high expectations and challenge, enable all students to make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding. Homework is well used to allow for individual research and to extend students' understanding. Assessment procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand. Comments made by teachers on students' work enable them to know what they need to do to improve.
86. Curriculum leadership is excellent with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The curriculum leader has a clear view of the needs of the subject. The subject is managed very well with very good planning and effective monitoring of teachers' and students' work. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management have transformed teaching.
- Very good planning with clear learning objectives enables students to be very clear about what they are to learn.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Drawing, designing and the development of ideas are not good enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The choice of projects in resistant materials and the insufficient ICT equipment within the department limit progress.

#### **Commentary**

87. GCSE results at grades A\* to C were average in 2003. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are in line with those expected nationally. They represent good achievement because students arrive in Year 7 with below average standards in this subject. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above what is expected and represent good achievement from the average standards in Year 9. The overall profile of standards indicates a rising trend. In food, graphics, systems and control and in textiles technology, students make particularly good progress as a result of very good teaching linked to GCSE or National Curriculum programmes of study. Good achievement is made possible by very good planning of modules of work and lessons and the team approach to the subjects. Students' progress in resistant materials in Years 7 to 9 is limited by poor choice of project tasks that restrict their experiences of different materials and processes. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 show standards just above average, but these assessments are too generous.
88. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Staff come from a variety of technical backgrounds and work well together in a collaborative professional atmosphere. Links with local regional and national industry and other support organisations have been established which has helped to enrich the subject. The school is at the forefront of design and technology education.
89. However, drawing and idea development are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 so that all students do not develop personal approaches to design problems. Students show very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons is very good. Students with special educational

needs are identified and helped to make good progress across the department. ICT equipment within the department is insufficient for the effective teaching of many aspects of the subject.

90. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The ambition, direction and energy of staff are excellent. Subject leaders have been very effective in raising the profile of the subject within the school. The department is very well organised with excellent technical support which makes a significant contribution to the learning of all students.
91. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Achievement, teaching and learning and the leadership and management have improved dramatically. The subject is well placed for future development and further success.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Art, music and physical education were inspected in depth and drama was sampled during the inspection. Provision in drama is unsatisfactory because students in the main school and in the sixth form are underachieving. Standards in the public examinations are well below average and the quality of the work seen was also well below the levels expected nationally. This is as a result of poor leadership and management. The absence of a subject leader to monitor and improve performance has meant that the quality of teaching and learning is variable. Good teaching was seen which encouraged students to be analytical and to evaluate their own and each other's work. There was, however, unsatisfactory teaching which failed to engage students' attention because it was dull and repetitive. Standards and the quality of provision have fallen considerably since the previous inspection.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievements are very good because of their very positive attitudes to challenging teaching.
- Standards have risen and are now very high, especially at the end of Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good because teachers' planning is good and they have high expectations of creativity and behaviour.
- Leadership and management are very good because of strong teamwork and a desire to improve.
- Very good assessment helps students improve their work.
- Pupils do not use drawing or sketchbooks to gather particular information or to experiment with materials or composition.

### **Commentary**

92. Standards are above national expectations in Year 9 and show very good achievement from the students' well below average standards when they entered the school. Results in recent GCSE examinations were well above average and considerably better than at the previous inspection. The work in Year 11 is well above expectations and improving, continuing students' very good achievement. Students with special educational needs do as well as others while those who are most able make excellent progress.
93. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan, introduce and teach their lessons so that students are quickly engaged and keen to please. Lessons start with a clear explanation of teachers' high expectations of creativity, commitment and behaviour. Occasionally, the shortage of time prevents pupils discussing their own and their classmates' progress at the end of lessons. Students enjoy their work and quickly improve their practical skills because of the challenging activities. They combine imagination and observational drawing to create good quality, original compositions in painting and sculpture. Sketchbooks are not used for investigation and experimentation into methods and

materials. Students do not make use of computers in art, although a minority uses digital cameras to plan portraiture. They are adept at creating very accomplished, often large scale, exciting compositions but are less comfortable analysing and recording particular information about light, colour, space, form or texture through drawing. Their continued failure to make good use of sketchbooks is preventing them collecting and storing information for future working. Teachers are interested in their students, know them well and encourage them to accept responsibility for their work. Students in Years 10 and 11 take the initiative and strive to succeed at the highest level. The assessment of students' work is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11, guiding students and setting targets to maintain the pace of their learning.

94. The department is very well led and managed. The curriculum leader is ambitious for his students, staff and the development of the subject. Skilful teachers and strong teamwork are central to the department's success. The department's progress is monitored carefully and there is a capacity to improve still further. The curriculum permits pupils to use a wide range of processes but until very recently the lack of access to computers and specialist software made it difficult to teach the full National Curriculum. There has been excellent improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of achievement have improved considerably and teaching and learning are now very good.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of students' work and their achievement are not good enough.
- There has been no effective leadership and management of the subject for some time.
- Accommodation for music is very good but currently the department is severely under-resourced.

### **Commentary**

95. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 9. Students' musical ability is also well below national expectations on entry to the school, so their levels of achievement are unsatisfactory. This is so for all students. Teachers' assessments are over-generous, indicating that girls' attainment is higher than that of boys, and both above average. During the inspection, standards were well below those expected nationally and similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. The standard of work by the current Year 11 is below average and their achievement is also unsatisfactory. Performance in the 2004 GCSE examination was well below what is expected with few students attaining A\*-C grades. These results are worse than those reported at the previous inspection. Students struggle to produce extended compositions within a coherent structure and their use of technical language is under-developed. All students have been affected by disruption to lessons caused by staffing problems. They have considerable gaps in their musical understanding and knowledge and weaknesses especially in their compositional work. Students can refer to musical words but struggle to use them correctly in written and oral evaluation work.
96. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, but some examples of satisfactory teaching were seen during the inspection. Teachers have accurate subject knowledge and have recently revised their lesson plans in order to meet the needs of all students. Since the previous inspection music accommodation has improved tremendously, so that there is now a very good range of class and practice rooms. However, teachers are unable to teach a variety of activities because of a severe lack of percussive, keyboard and computer equipment. Where teaching is adapted to the individual needs of students, they enjoy their lessons and are motivated to do their best. On occasions, teaching is pedestrian and this leads to lack of interest by students. Students are unsure at times how to improve their work and teachers have to work hard to adapt their questions so that students develop their answers using musical language. Some written work is done but because it is not always kept by students, especially those in Years 10 and 11, it does not build into revision notes for examinations.

97. The department has made poor progress since the previous inspection. There have been considerable staffing difficulties and currently there is no head of department. There is no vision and the department has lost a sense of direction. Current teachers are working hard to support each other and develop a consistent approach to assessment and planning. New extra-curricular activities are planned. Some external support has been provided and more is planned until a new appointment can be made.

## **Physical Education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are very high and achievement is good.
- Leadership and management are very good and there is good teamwork amongst staff.
- Teaching is very good and students learn well and develop positive attitudes to the subject.
- There are no regular opportunities for students to take on responsibilities outside lessons.

### **Commentary**

98. Students join the school with standards that are in line with those nationally. Standards at the start of Year 9 are above national expectations and students' achievement is good. At the start of Year 11, standards seen in core physical education lessons are also above national expectations and students make good progress. They can apply skills and techniques effectively in complex, competitive practices and adapt their technique in response to changing circumstances. In 2003 and 2004, GCSE results were very high and students achieved very well.
99. Teaching and learning throughout Years 7 and 9 are very good. Teachers use a range of teaching methods and students' contributions to lessons are valued and encouraged. Tasks are very well structured and consistently support the development of skills and knowledge. In an excellent Year 9 gymnastics lesson seen, students were inspired to the higher levels of performance as the result of an exciting learning atmosphere. Probing questioning promoted very effective self-evaluation and the main task based on flight allowed for students of all abilities to reach levels of achievement beyond their own expectations.
100. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are also very good. In core physical education lessons teachers adapt tasks and resources to best suit students' differing abilities and as a result they make good progress. In the GCSE group, teaching and learning are very good. The standard of students' written work is above average. In their personal exercise programmes the analysis of training principles for different athletes was very good and the most able use sophisticated ICT tools to enhance the presentation of their work.
101. In Years 7 to 9 boys do not have access to the activities of gymnastics and trampolining to the same extent as girls. Outside the curriculum there are few, regular opportunities for older students to develop their leadership and enterprise skills. Accommodation and resources are excellent.
102. Leadership is very good. There is a clear vision for future development and aspirations are high. Staff work together as a very effective team with shared values and they are excellent role models for pupils. Management is also very good; self-evaluation is rigorous and planning is informed by the analysis of performance and comparative data. The recruitment, deployment and retention of staff are managed very effectively. The appointment of two leisure attendants ensures the time for teaching and learning in lessons is used to the fullest extent. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Vocational subjects**

In Year 11, GNVQ courses were sampled in hospitality and catering at intermediate level, and leisure and tourism at foundation level. In Year 10, intermediate and foundation health and social care were sampled.

The provision for vocational subjects is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students learn well because of very good teaching.
- In a small number of lessons teaching is too directed.
- The leadership and management of vocational courses are excellent.
- Students have good access to the world of work in the different vocational settings.

### **Commentary**

103. Standards are above average. The 2004 unconfirmed results show a high number of passes in both the foundation GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism and hospitality and catering. Achievement overall in lessons is good. Students have regular access to ICT to present information and this motivates them very well. In leisure and tourism students were preparing their curriculum vitae and with the support of their teachers produced high quality work. Hospitality and catering students achieve better in their practical units. In lessons, students investigate different employment possibilities as part of their written coursework with the good support of their teacher. Intermediate students in health and social care achieve very well and have a very good understanding of the differing needs of different groups of people. In the foundation course students make good use of the Internet to select images to show their knowledge of different aspects of health.
104. Teaching and learning overall are very good. Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to enliven lessons and class management is good. Team teaching is used effectively in lessons where there are large numbers of disengaged students and this enhances learning. In a minority of lessons there is too much teacher direction instead of opportunities for independent learning.
105. Leadership and management are excellent. Experienced co-ordinators of the different areas have prepared excellent systems to monitor student progress and to ensure high quality assessment. Self-review is detailed and reflective and priorities for improvement are well developed. The number of vocational courses continues to expand and students are offered a vocational course that best meets their needs and interests. There are very good opportunities for students to learn from first-hand experience through visits to the world of work in different vocational sectors. They also have good access to teachers who have had extensive work experience outside of teaching. These courses were not previously inspected.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Citizenship education is taught as a separate subject within the personal, social and health education programme. Personal, social and health education lessons were observed and these, alongside other observations, enable the team to make a judgement about citizenship.

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All students follow a course in personal, social and health education that includes citizenship so the school provides what is nationally expected.
- Teaching is good and makes a clear contribution to students' achievement and conceptual development.

- Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure that students are provided with a rich variety of experiences.
- The monitoring of citizenship is used well to develop the subject further.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students to participate in school and community based voluntary activities.

### **Commentary**

106. By Year 9, standards are above what is expected. This represents good achievement. Students are developing well in their knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship. By Year 11, standards are above expectations in the lessons observed and achievement is good. Students demonstrate a good understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities, justice and fairness and can relate these to their own and others' experiences.
107. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to students' personal development. The programme has been developed very well and significant steps have already been taken to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. Careful thought and attention have been given to how to teach this aspect of students' personal development. A small team of skilled teachers ensures that students make good progress. It is well supported by related themes and topics covered in other subjects, especially in humanities. Students have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school council. Not enough opportunities are provided within the wider community for students to participate fully in active citizenship.
108. Good teaching challenges students to develop their own attitudes towards citizenship well. In lessons, teachers' good knowledge and confidence enable students to develop important skills of analysis and evaluation. Good use of questions and a range of teaching styles enable students to think about their own responses to issues. They develop skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. Students with individual needs make good progress because they are provided with work that matches their needs. Students speak highly of the opportunities provided. These activities provide a good basis to enable students to develop a clear awareness of what it means to be responsible citizens.
109. Very good leadership and management of the subject make a significant contribution to students' progress in the area. Teaching of citizenship is very well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work and clear assessment procedures that enable the coverage of topics to be recorded. Monitoring of the work of the subject is well established. Citizenship makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students both in terms of the content of the curriculum and teaching styles that encourage students to develop attitudes and values. Good progress is being made in the development of citizenship.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	18	66.7	80.1	11.1	23.7	22.2	29.9
Biology	17	76.5	65.2	5.9	11.1	21.8	20.6
Chemistry	12	66.7	72.7	8.3	13.9	21.7	24.1
Film and media studies	8	87.5	86.4	12.5	23.8	30.0	32.0
Dance	1	100	86.9	100	35.0	60.0	34.5
Drama	2	50	86.5	50	19.6	25.0	30.6
Economics	1	100	73.6	0	20.1	30.0	26.4
English language	3	66.7	82.9	0	17.5	20.0	28.7
English literature	6	66.7	85.9	16.7	19.1	21.7	30.2
French	7	71.4	78.2	14.3	18.9	24.3	27.6
Design technology	1	100	74.9	100	15.1	50.0	25.3
General studies	2	0	73.9	0	17.8	0	25.7
Geography	12	83.3	74.3	33.3	19.8	34.2	26.5
History	8	62.5	80.7	0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Mathematics	28	53.6	61.9	21.4	17.1	20.0	22.1
Psychology	25	36.0	69.7	0	16.7	8.8	24.1
Physics	6	50.0	68.6	16.7	14.4	16.7	22.7
Religious studies	1	100	80.2	100	22.6	60.0	29.8
Sociology	5	60.0	71.8	0	18.4	20.0	25.4
Sports Studies	3	66.7	73.2	0	11.4	20.0	23.1

**Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	19	94.7	98.6	42.1	50.2	72.6	87.5
Biology	39	100	96.4	35.9	39.2	81.0	78.6
Chemistry	20	95.0	97.6	40.0	49.0	82.0	84.9
Film and media studies	16	100	99.4	56.3	37.8	90.0	82.1
Drama	12	100	99.5	8.3	40.1	70.0	83.6
Economics	8	100	98.9	50.0	52.0	87.5	88.3
English language	8	100	99.4	37.5	36.3	77.5	80.9
English literature	27	100	98.8	71.4	51.5	100	87.6
Design and technology	14	100	97.8	57.1	35.0	87.1	77.9
General studies	6	100	94.7	50.0	31.0	86.7	73.1
Geography	18	100	98.7	44.4	44.5	85.6	84.0
German	1	100	98.4	100	47.9	100	84.8
History	18	94.4	99.0	44.4	44.6	73.3	84.6
Mathematics	19	89.5	96.7	31.6	55.6	73.7	88.8
Music	4	100	98.8	0	38.9	60.0	81.1
Other languages	2	100	96.9	50.0	64.5	100	93.8
Psychology	31	90.3	97.4	12.9	42.7	65.2	81.8
Physics	21	100	96.7	52.4	44.6	85.7	81.7
Sociology	9	88.9	98.2	44.4	44.3	73.3	83.6
Sports studies	10	100	98.0	30.0	30.9	74.0	75.2
VCE Health and social care	20	90.0	67.7	25.0	14.5	68.0	63.5
VCE Information technology	44	93.2	77.9	6.8	23.4	65.5	64.9
VCE Leisure and recreation	6	100	62.9	50.0	10.2	83.3	57.9
VCE Travel and tourism	14	100	71.8	14.3	14.5	77.1	62.2

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and work effectively as a team.
- Students are making good progress in the newly introduced English language course.
- Many students are under-achieving in the A-level literature course.
- Some students have poor independent learning skills.

#### Commentary

110. All students who entered the 2003 A-level English literature examinations passed. Female students attained average results and their achievement was satisfactory. That of the male students, however, was unsatisfactory because of their well below average performance, well below what they should have done. Results improved significantly in 2004, especially for male students.
111. The standard of A-level English language work seen at the start of Year 13 is above the levels expected nationally and students' achievement is good. There is, however, under-achievement in the A-level English literature course because of a lack of commitment on the part of some students and because independent study skills are not sufficiently developed. Standards by the start of Year 13 are therefore below expected national levels and achievement is unsatisfactory. The department is implementing measures to address the problem through the provision of independent learning programmes for students who need more structure and guidance in their work.
112. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and the examination syllabuses. Students' performance is evaluated rigorously and guidance given on how to improve. There is variation, however, in the effectiveness of the teaching seen because not all teaching has the rigour and challenge of the best. A lack of punctuality to lessons, particularly at the start of the day, revealed less positive attitudes on the part of some students.
113. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well as a team and review their performance on a regular basis. The curriculum has been broadened to meet the wider range of needs of the increased number of students studying the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. There is a realistic appraisal on the part of the department's senior teachers of what needs to be done to raise achievement in English literature and the will to implement those measures.

#### Language and literacy across the curriculum

Standards for reading and writing are at the levels expected nationally. There are areas, in design technology and ICT, for example, where students' command of the written language enables them to progress well. Students' ability to speak at length and in depth about their learning and to enter into lively discussion about their work is not sufficiently developed, however, in all subjects. Some students do not have the confidence and fluency in oral work normally seen in sixth form lessons. In a number of subjects students do not do the wider reading required for advanced study.

## French

Provision in French is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good both between teachers and students and amongst students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- Teaching is good. In the best lessons, it is also imaginative.
- Students lack confidence and fluency in speaking in Year 12.
- There is good support for students' learning through links with local universities.
- The marking of work is not linked clearly enough to A-level standards to help students improve.

### Commentary

114. A-level results in 2003 were above average and the students performed better in French than in their other subjects. This is a good achievement because they started their A-level course with average GCSE results. The same students' results in AS level in 2002 were below average. The numbers taking Alevel in 2004 were very low, but results were in line with expectations. Standards at AS level in 2004 were slightly below expectations, but they were adversely affected by the poor attendance of a group of students. The department now sets stricter conditions for entry to the course.
115. The standard of work seen at the start of Year 12 is average. Students lack confidence in speaking and are hesitant and uncertain with pronunciation. The standard of work seen in Year 13 is average, but some writing is above average and shows a good grasp of grammar. Speaking by all the students in Year 13 is more fluent than in Year 12 and shows satisfactory progress. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Achievement at A-level is satisfactory.
116. Students learn well because they have very good relationships with the teacher and with each other. This creates a distinct feeling of teamwork in the lessons. Students help each other to meet the high expectations set by the teachers' good or very good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers use imaginative methods to make sure that students of different abilities and levels of confidence are fully involved and learn well. Teachers mark students' work regularly and give general advice about how they can improve. However, this is only a satisfactory level of support for their learning, since teachers' comments are not consistently linked to A-level grades.
117. French in the sixth form benefits from the same very good leadership and good management as in Years 7 to 11. The department has established a link with the University of Northumbria, providing access to a range of up-to-date communications equipment. This gives Year 12 and 13 students a good opportunity to use authentic material to improve their linguistic skills and cultural knowledge. The department also uses funding for gifted and talented students well to enable students to improve their skills by attending foreign language days at local universities.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good, providing high quality learning opportunities for students.
- Teaching is very good and often excellent, enhancing students' independent learning skills.
- Very good use of ICT promotes very good learning.
- Accommodation is excellent and very good resources enhance the range of learning activities possible.

- The range of ability of students on entry to the course is too wide and many are unable to complete the course successfully.

### **Commentary**

118. Results at A-level have declined since 2002 due to the increasing number of students recruited to the course and the broadening ability profile. In 2003, results were below average. In 2004, results were as expected for most students although three students failed their A level course. Achievement was satisfactory. In 2004, two thirds of students gained AS grades providing a firm base for those wishing to continue to further study. All AS further mathematics candidates were successful.
119. In work seen, Year 13 standards of attainment are above those expected in a typical A-level group. There is an improvement in the number of able students continuing from AS to the A level course. The range of mathematical competence of Year 12 students is wide and some from GCSE intermediate courses find difficulty in mastering algebraic requirements in their early lessons. Students cover their programmes of study well and by Year 13 they are confident in taking responsibility for their own learning. Work presented is mathematically rigorous, showing good understanding of mathematical method. Students are successful in producing their own notes as part of their independent learning. These are of high quality, which supports revision and learning. Students from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve very well in lessons, supported by very mature group relationships that enable open dialogue on ways to improve. Students following the further mathematics AS courses make very rapid progress during their twilight lessons.
120. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and experience provide lessons that are insightful and very well structured. This enables very good learning by students. The use of interactive whiteboards, by teachers and students, enhances the quality of lessons and students are adept at research using the Internet. Teachers know their students well and provide appropriate challenge and pace in lessons. They care about the success of their students and give freely of their time to provide support for them. Very mature learning relationships develop students' confidence and self-worth.
121. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of developments required for new courses. The curriculum leader leads a very skilled team of teachers, all of whom can offer a wide variety of learning opportunities to students. There is a very effective assessment system by which students are monitored. There is a constant dialogue between teachers and students, which informs students how they are able to improve and progress toward their target grades. Excellent accommodation and very good support materials are provided to enhance learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

Students' mathematical skills are above average and contribute well to their studies in other subjects. Teachers of mathematics and physics work together to improve learning and avoid conflicting styles of teaching when using mathematical skills. During geography and psychology lessons, students are able to apply sophisticated statistical methods to data analysis. In 'control systems' lessons, students use mathematical strategies well in their electronic calculations.

### **SCIENCE**

The science department offers both AS and A-level biology, chemistry and physics. The focus of the inspection was on biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In the physics lessons observed, teaching was good. Attainment of the present AS and A-level groups is close to the expected national level. Students have made satisfactory progress from their GCSE examinations.

## Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are average and the achievement of students is good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and good understanding of the syllabus requirements.
- Teachers' professional and business-like relationships with students provide for a high level of challenge and expectation.
- Lesson plans describe teaching activities, but not the learning that needs to take place.
- Opportunities to develop independent learning strategies are limited.

### Commentary

122. GCE A-level and AS level examination results have remained on or just above average over the past three years. In 2004 there was a significant decrease in the number of students attaining the higher grades at AS level, due to a lower ability group. Generally, students with good grades at GCSE attain results in line with teachers' expectation. Target grades for AS and A2 for 2005 are skewed towards the higher grades reflecting the slightly higher than average attainment on entry to the Year 12 course and those continuing the subject in Year 13. Standards of work seen are those expected nationally and show good achievement.
123. Teaching is good overall and so students learn well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they keep up-to-date. They show enthusiasm for biology in their teaching, relating theories to students' knowledge. They model scientific concepts to ensure good understanding. Teachers set out the objectives clearly, conduct lessons at a good pace and have high expectations. Students are actively involved throughout the lessons, concentrating well and readily engaging in discussions with the teachers. Teachers have very good knowledge of individual students' abilities. They do not always use this knowledge to plan lessons so that the learning needs of all students are taken into account so that students of all abilities can work at their capacity. Not enough opportunities are made for students to develop independent learning skills both in and out of lessons.
124. All students respond very well to good teaching and the well-structured course. In one lesson the teacher effectively probed students' existing knowledge and understanding of DNA replication. He then used a range of teaching styles including visual aids, questioning techniques that involved all the students, discussion, deconstruction and modelling to develop their understanding. Their responses were discussed in detail and any difficulties were resolved with the help of other students and the teacher. This resulted in all the students developing a clear understanding of a complex scientific concept. Students work well in lessons. They enjoy the subject. Relationships with each other and their teachers are very good and students feel well supported. They readily discuss learning difficulties both during and outside lessons with their teachers, who are approachable and responsive.
125. The subject is well led and there is a commitment to improvement. Management is good. Good use is made of assessment data to monitor and evaluate students' work. Limitations are placed on practical work by the lack of availability of ICT to support learning. This is largely due to the state of readiness of the existing equipment. Technical staff work hard to support the practical requirements of the curriculum and are valued members of the team. The positive position reported at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained, with results generally still in line or slightly higher.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results and the number of students studying the subject are not as good as they should be.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge but there are too few opportunities for students to work and learn independently.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good. They are interested and work productively in lessons.
- Teachers use ICT well to engage students in whole class teaching.

### Commentary

126. Results in AS and A2 examinations in 2003 were average. The proportion of students achieving A and B grades at AS and A2 was below average in 2003. The number of students starting the AS course has increased recently but over half the students have either ceased their study of chemistry or left the school by the end of Year 12. In Year 13, students' achievement is satisfactory based on their GCSE results. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are in line with national expectations and students' predicted grades.
127. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and show enthusiasm for chemistry in their teaching. They explain complex concepts and ideas accurately and clearly. Lessons are well planned and ICT is used effectively to engage students in whole class teaching. Students enjoy the subject and have positive attitudes to learning. Students make good progress in learning when teaching methods are interesting and engaging. In some lessons there are too few opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively. As a consequence, some students are not sufficiently challenged.
128. Target-setting and monitoring of students' progress in Year 12 and Year 13 are good. Students in Year 13 know their target grades and understand what they need to do to improve. Marking of assignments and day-to-day work is helpful in identifying areas for improvement. Students meet regularly with their subject tutor to review their learning and progress. Students' learning is enriched by weekly after-school support and tutorial sessions.
129. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum leader is committed to achieving improvement. He monitors the performance of students to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This is used to develop strategies to improve learning and raise standards in Year 12 and Year 13.
130. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The department has a team of enthusiastic subject specialists, high quality specialist teaching rooms and very good resources to support teaching and learning. Students participate in a very good range of activities that enhance and enrich their learning. This includes industrial placements and opportunities for study at local universities.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent leadership leads to excellent curriculum planning, meeting the needs of all students.
- The expert knowledge of teachers and their very good use of modern teaching aids are improving standards.
- Excellent learning support for hearing impaired students allows them to make very good progress.

### **Commentary**

131. Standards have improved after exceptionally good 2002 results and a decline in 2003. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards seen are now in line with what is expected nationally and achievement is good. There is a good range of sixth form courses meeting a wide range of needs. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to excel through master classes and twilight activities in an effort to improve higher grades.
132. Teaching and learning are both very good. Teachers are experts in their fields and inspire students to make very good progress. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging in all lessons leading to excellent relationships and motivated students. Teachers have embraced the use of new technologies and modern teaching strategies to improve standards. Assessment of students' work is very good. There is regular monitoring of students' progress, which informs teachers of the steps needed to improve learning. Lessons are very well planned and innovative, identifying a variety of work schemes for various ability groups. Support for students with hearing impairments is particularly strong. Students aim confidently for high standards because they are aware of their progress and the level they are working at. Many of them learn independently and gain skills beyond expectations.
133. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a highly effective team spirit inspired by the curriculum leader who has a clear vision for the future resulting in excellent planning and an excellent range of courses. She leads by example, improving standards and increasing learning opportunities for students. Self-evaluation is rigorous, leading to very good staff development. Teams of teachers are well deployed to use their strengths.
134. Accommodation and resources are both very good. Teachers make excellent use of the new teaching technologies and the classrooms are well equipped. Technicians are highly competent and highly valued. Clubs and after-school activities are well supported by sixth form students.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

Although network problems prevented inspection of the full range of ICT resources in the school, very good facilities are available in most departments. Most teachers are adept in the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning. There is good use of ICT in mathematics, English, geography, modern foreign languages and health and social care. Students are competent and can use a wide range of software. They also make very good use of resources available on the Internet.

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their expertise well to produce good learning.
- Very detailed marking helps students to see clearly how to improve their work.
- Teachers use a variety of teaching methods which support students' learning well.
- The under-achievement in past years of a significant proportion of students has not been analysed enough.
- The number and range of books in the resource centre are unsatisfactory for independent learning.

#### Commentary

135. The standard of work in both Years 12 and 13 is average. AS and A-level results in 2003 were below average. At A-level, however, the proportion gaining an A or B grade was average. In 2004 AS results were higher than those of 2003 whereas A-level results were lower. There was some under-achievement, some of which was, however, the result of factors outside the control of the department. Some students did not meet coursework requirements or missed the examination. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with that expected nationally for students in the first weeks of the course. A few reach the highest standards and achieve well. Most students achieve satisfactorily in lessons, dealing competently with content and skills far more demanding than those in their GCSE course. Teachers work well with them to guide them into this new work.
136. Students in Years 12 and 13 use such sources as maps, political cartoons and the writings of historians and eyewitnesses competently for information on which to base judgements. The highest attainers make valid deductions and assess successfully the reliability and usefulness of historical sources. The lower attainers tend to take sources at face value. Their written work lacks depth of analysis and detail to support their arguments.
137. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers are very confident with their subject and communicate well to deepen students' understanding. Marking of students' work is detailed and very helpful to students. Teachers use a suitable range of activities that both challenge and motivate students. Teachers try to ensure that all students contribute to class discussions, but they sometimes do not expect or demand lengthy or developed answers from students, especially the highest attainers. Many students have a very positive attitude to their work. A minority of students, however, whose attitudes show less commitment, do not achieve as well as they should. They fail to complete homework on time, or hand in work that is incomplete.
138. The leadership of the department is good and management is satisfactory. As a result, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Although the examination results have been reviewed, there has not been enough detailed evaluation and discussion of the reasons for some of the under-achievement in the past. Consequently, the department is not clear how it might systematically improve its results. The number and range of books in the resources centre do not provide students with sufficient good quality resources for independent learning, a major requirement of advanced level study.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards were average in 2003 but improved considerably in 2004, with the quality of coursework a particular strength.
- Teachers plan lessons that use their excellent subject knowledge in ways that assist learning and encourage critical understanding.
- Students appreciate the range of teaching styles used and the individual help that is always available to them.
- Computers are well used, both to support teaching and by students to prepare and present their coursework.

### Commentary

139. Standards achieved in 2003 were average but improved significantly in 2004, when 70 per cent of the students attained the higher A/B grades. Similar high standards of work were seen during the inspection. Key strengths are the high quality of individual fieldwork and the ability of students to provide reasoned conclusions in their written answers. Students who face particular challenges to their learning are very well supported. They make the same good progress as their peers. Male students achieve as well as females and both achieve well.
140. Teaching is very good. Specialist subject and syllabus knowledge of the teachers informs lesson and course planning so that individual lessons are structured to take learning forward. Regular checks ensure that students are ready for the next sequence of learning. Teachers skilfully present information and tasks in a way that promotes reflection and discussion. They provide opportunities for students to engage in sustained reading with encouragement to reflect on issues that are more complex. Some students fail to take advantage of invitations to talk about key issues. For a few this is a barrier. They lack verbal competence to use rigorous 'out loud thinking' needed to unravel multiple concepts. Written work is good. Regular encouragement to provide reasons and detailed teacher assessments of essays mean that students produce longer answers that are well structured with conclusions that match the evidence. There is a tendency for some students to accept viewpoints without fully testing their foundation and teachers report that students do not read widely enough. The resources centre provides limited access to advanced texts. Teachers' assessments are very detailed and mirror exam board criteria. Accordingly, students understand their grades and are able to identify areas for improvement. This capacity for self-review helps students to achieve top grades
141. Fieldwork is generally very good. Students undertake local studies and know how to display and interpret the data they collect. A particularly good feature is the detailed use of the Internet. Students acknowledge website sources in their bibliographies and are meticulous about not inserting unmodified text. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The curriculum leader has an enthusiasm and vision for geography that is shared by colleagues. Systematic course development and reviews of teaching and learning are helping to drive standards up. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards were below the national average in 2003 but improved in 2004. Current work indicates that the improvement continues.
- Some students are unable to explain what they need to do differently in order to improve their grades.
- Enthusiastic specialist teachers successfully introduce students to the subject and provide challenging extension work in Year 13.
- Students enjoy their course, recognise the reasons for the previous difficulties and value the quality of personal support now consistently available.
- The department has made great strides in developing on the school's website a high quality source of revision and support.

### Commentary

142. Standards achieved in 2003 were below average for pass grades and the proportion of students obtaining higher A/B grades was well below average. Achievement was unsatisfactory. Results, including the proportion of higher grades, improved in 2004 in spite of a serious disruption to teaching. Achievement of these students was satisfactory. Over time, males and females perform similarly. Students who receive additional support perform as well as others. A period of staffing instability placed undue pressure on the remaining member of staff, who worked very hard to maintain standards. When the head of department joined the staff recently, good specialist teaching became available to all students.
143. Teaching and learning are good. Careful planning of lessons effectively introduces the concepts of this new subject to Year 12 students. Sophisticated computer projected materials support briskly paced lessons. A strength of the teaching is the regular use of practical activities that increase understanding, for example, of the dimensions of pressure to conform and memory mechanisms. The range of teaching styles contributes to rapid learning and students are enthusiastic about their course. They applaud the commitment of their teachers, enjoy their different teaching approaches and value the detailed tutorial advice given. This satisfaction results in good teacher/student rapport and increases levels of motivation, although teachers have not yet succeeded in encouraging all students to read widely. This combines with occasional lack of confidence during discussions and some students do not fully benefit from opportunities to test and extend their understanding of complex theories. Many cannot explain what they might do to improve their work.
144. The school's web site and departmental revision and advice booklets provide students with good support. Teachers, and occasionally students, add PowerPoint presentations that provide opportunities for revision and record key points from lessons that may have been missed. Coursework is a strength and students design elegant research studies making good use of appropriate statistical techniques to evaluate their evidence. Students carefully design their research projects to comply with high ethical standards.
145. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Problems arising from a staffing vacuum have been resolved and students now have justified confidence in their course. Recent and planned improvements have not yet had a measurable effect on standards, but indications are that psychology is an improving subject.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Current standards are well above average and project work shows good development of students' own ideas.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students have positive and mature attitudes with very good independent learning skills.
- ICT provision is insufficient.

#### **Commentary**

146. 2003 A-level results were well above average with the majority of students gaining the higher grades. Results in 2004 were similar to those in 2003. Textiles, graphics and systems and control were seen during the inspection. Standards of work are well above those expected nationally and represent very good achievement. This is a result of very good planning and very good teaching. Achievement is very good as subject knowledge and highly experienced teachers carefully present course content. Well-focused lessons enable students to understand the assessment criteria and the requirements of the examination specification very well. Students know their weaknesses and their strengths and are well guided by enthusiastic teaching and non-teaching staff. Students are very articulate and designing is strongly individual. All enjoy the choices and freedoms that these courses offer. Research skills are strongly developed and show links to real life problems through the extensive links that the subject has with local and regional industry.

147. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are mature and very positive. They work hard and enjoy the mature way teaching staff treat them. Carefully prepared resources, clearly stated aims and objectives and well communicated subject knowledge result in very effective learning. Teachers create many opportunities for very personal responses to problems and students enjoy these freedoms and respond very well. Students have very good independent learning skills and many show highly developed presentation skills. Challenging questions are asked in lessons and the classroom atmosphere created by the teachers gives the students the confidence to respond well to these challenges. The department's ICT provision for these courses is inadequate.

147. The department and subject are very well led and managed. The course team has a wide range of expertise and experience and students benefit from the range of expertise, opinion and interests. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in relation to improved standards and achievement.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards and achievement have improved because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to challenge students.
- Students appreciate teachers' expertise and have very good attitudes towards their work.
- There is strong teamwork and a shared will to improve.
- Assessment of students' work is very good and provides students with a clear view of their progress.
- Students do not use drawing to select and record particular information, nor do they read enough to develop a personal view of art and design.

## **Commentary**

148. Examination results in 2003 were below average but have improved since the previous inspection. The 2004 results were similar to 2003 due partly to the poor attendance of some students. Nearly all students who begin courses in the sixth form continue to the final examinations. Work seen is above national expectations and improving. Research is increasingly central to students' work. The cumulative effect of not maintaining a sketchbook from Year 7 onwards limits students' investigations and some work takes on a precious rather than experimental quality. They increasingly use mixed media to link their work to that of famous artists, film and literature, to produce high quality paintings and sculptures. More able students can discuss these links, reinforcing their views with information gained from their research. Most do not read enough to develop sufficiently informed personal views. Most students take advantage of opportunities to attend life-drawing classes and rapidly improve their drawing skills. Students' very good attitudes and relationships with their teachers and their positive responses to challenging work lead to good achievement.
149. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very high expectations and a genuine interest in their students, who quickly respond to their teachers' love for their subject. Year 12 students made visible progress in a lesson devoted to drawing in short sharp bursts, requiring a more urgent, analytical approach. Assessment of students' work is very good. Students' individual seminars with their teachers provide a clear view of current standards and progress, maintain pace and set clear targets for future learning.
150. The department is well led and managed. The curriculum leader recognises that the strong teamwork between students and teachers is central to the subject's success. He has developed plans to ensure that students gain maximum benefit from the teachers' experiences and specialisms. The department's progress is monitored carefully and there is significant desire and capacity to improve yet further. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved and achievement is now good.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Sport and physical education**

Provision in sport and physical education is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good and lead to good achievement.
- There are few opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills.
- The new curriculum leader is bringing new ideas to what was already good provision.

## **Commentary**

151. The 2003 A2 results were average and so was the number of students gaining the higher grades. Standards of work seen are above national expectations. Students' achievement is good because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers challenge and stimulate students through the use of different teaching styles and materials and these encourage them to learn independently. In a Year 13 A2 lesson, probing questioning techniques encouraged students to reflect on tasks and draw on what they already knew. The standard of written work is above average. Students successfully analyse the effects of different training principles and support their judgements when making evaluations.
152. Until the move into the new building there were no facilities for recreational sport and many students who wish to use the new, indoor facilities during the day are unable to do so because of the limitations of staffing and timetabling. Similar constraints also affect some teaching in the AS group because practical lessons have to be conducted in teaching rooms that are not fit for purpose.

153. There are few prospects for students to develop their leadership skills. The BTEC course incorporates a unit of sports coaching in primary schools, but similar opportunities are not widely available.
154. Leadership is good and reflected in the knowledgeable approach to national initiatives such as the 14-19 flexible curriculum. There is a clear vision for future development from a new curriculum leader. Staff are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Management is very good. Detailed analysis of performance data analysis informs future planning and there is an established, rigorous self-review process. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS**

155. The following vocational subjects were sampled: BTEC 1st Diploma in public service, AVCE in travel and tourism, intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism. Health and social care was inspected in depth. Provision in vocational courses post-16 is very good. Standards are above average. Many students start their post-16 courses with lower than average standards of prior achievement and examination results are consistently above the school's expectations. Teaching and learning overall in the vocational courses are very good. Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and a range of lesson activities is used very well to motivate students and establish a firm knowledge base. Learning is enhanced through visits and placements in each vocational sector, which enable students to apply their knowledge confidently in new contexts. Students' attitudes have a positive impact on their learning.
156. Leadership and management of the vocational courses are excellent. The systems for ensuring quality are excellent. The arrangements for assessment, monitoring and reviewing progress enable students to improve further. The school is able to provide a wide range of vocational and occupational courses because of the breadth of specialist knowledge of teaching staff. Self-review is detailed and reflective and priorities for improvement are well developed.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve consistently above levels expected nationally.
- The subject leader is an excellent role model for staff and students.
- Highly qualified specialist teachers use their very good knowledge to help students learn.
- Students' positive attitudes enable them to develop independent learning skills.
- Monitoring, assessment and reviews of work ensure students can improve.
- There is a lack of planned opportunity to share good practice.

#### **Commentary**

157. Standards are above average. The 2003 AVCE results were well above average and above average in the intermediate GNVQ. The unconfirmed results for AVCE in 2004 were in line with predictions. The intermediate GNVQ results were below the nationally expected standard.
158. Achievement is very good. Students enter the health and social care course with lower than average GCSE qualifications and achieve well above expectations. The most able AVCE students in Year 13 analyse their research very well, draw valid conclusions and develop an understanding through applying their knowledge in different contexts. Lower achievers are more reliant on published sources and their conclusions are less well focused. Students make oral presentations to their peers early in the course and this builds their confidence. Intermediate students require more teacher support, but they develop a good understanding of the physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs of adolescents. All students benefit from work placements in care settings in order to experience the diverse work of health and social care.

159. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching staff have gained wide and very good subject knowledge through their experiences of working in the care sector and this is used very well to bring the subject to life. Teachers are committed to high standards and students have very good attitudes. Students' progress is regularly reviewed. Teachers know the capabilities of all their students and they target extra support and guidance so that students know how to improve. In a very small number of lessons, learning is too teacher-directed and there are not enough opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning.
160. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. The subject leader is dedicated to the success of all students and she provides an excellent role model to staff and students. There are excellent arrangements for monitoring and tracking student progress and for ensuring quality of assessment. There are not enough formal arrangements to share good practice in teaching across the whole department. The subject has not been inspected previously.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	1	1
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	2	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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