

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Carlisle, Cumbria

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112399

Headteacher: Mr J O'Neill

Lead inspector: Mr R F Spinks

Dates of inspection: 15th - 19th November 2004

Inspection number: 268862

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Other secondary school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	631
School address:	Lismore Place Carlisle Cumbria
Postcode:	CA1 1NA
Telephone number:	(01228) 607 470
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Caven
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This smaller than average secondary school has 631 students on roll. The students come from the local area and there is the full range of advantage and disadvantage but social and economic background is broadly below average. Twenty two per cent of students are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. There are 119 students on the register for special educational needs which is above average for similar schools. Four per cent of students have statements of special educational needs, which is below average. The main special needs are social, emotional and behavioural and autism. There are fewer than average students from ethnic minority backgrounds and none at an early stage of English acquisition. The number of students who leave or enter the school other than at the usual point in autumn is broadly average. On entry to the school, students are attaining broadly average standards, as indicated by their attainment in the national assessments for 11-year-olds. The school is situated on a single site. The school has been awarded the school Achievement Award and Sportsmark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2783	Mr R Spinks	Lead inspector	Mathematics (post-16)
15522	Mr B Morgan	Lay inspector	
2784	Dr P Crumpton	Team inspector	English
4706	Ms A Welsh-Kuligowicz	Team inspector	Mathematics
23396	Mr N Daws	Team inspector	Science Physics (post-16)
15127	Mr W Goodall	Team inspector	Art and design
27351	Mr M Stanton	Team inspector	Citizenship Design and technology
2796	Mrs S Bardwell	Team inspector	History Geography (post-16)
20619	Mrs J Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business education Health and social care
4493	Mr P Hall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
23920	Mr S Lockwood	Team inspector	Geography
31637	Mr K Havercroft	Team inspector	Music
10915	Ms G Henderson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Newman Catholic School is failing to provide an adequate education for its students. Too many students do not achieve the standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Students in the sixth form do well and achieve above average results. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory for students up to the age of 16, although it is good in the sixth form. Managers and governors have failed to secure improvements since the last inspection and only since the arrival of a new headteacher have improvements happened. **Value for money provided by the school is unsatisfactory.**

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are too low by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory for too many students in Years 7 to 11.
- The management of the school and the leadership of many subjects are failing to promote improved progress and standards.
- There has been insufficient progress since the last inspection.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11.
- Attendance levels are unsatisfactory.
- Provision for post 16 students is good.
- Standards in the sixth form are above average and students achieve well.
- Students have positive attitudes to school and generally behaviour has improved over the last year to be at least satisfactory.
- There are good links with parents and the local Catholic communities.

Managers and governors have failed to secure improvements since the last inspection and only since the arrival of a new headteacher have improvements happened. **Overall, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.**

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and too many make little progress so that standards at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average and those of schools with similar entry attainment. Progress remains unsatisfactory and students achieve results in GCSE examinations well below national and similar school averages. Standards have declined over the last four

years. Only in a few subjects do students achieve results which reflect their earlier attainment.

Students who enter the sixth form achieve well and results in GCE examinations are above average.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. The picture in the sixth form is much better, where students' attendance, attitudes and behaviour are excellent and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of education is unsatisfactory. **The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11.** Although teachers have good knowledge of their subjects, they do not plan and deliver lessons to ensure that all students learn effectively. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in about 13 per cent of lessons that inspectors observed. **Teaching is good in the sixth form** where small groups and lessons targeted at promoting student progress result in good learning and achievement.

The curriculum is broadly satisfactory. Statutory requirements for delivery of the National Curriculum are not fully met as citizenship programmes are not in place for all students. The range of subject choice for students in Years 10 and 11 has only recently expanded to include more vocationally orientated subjects. Students are cared for and receive appropriate advice and guidance. Students welcome the opportunities to be consulted and have their views considered, for example, the recent changes in school uniform. Links with parents are good. They appreciate the annual progress reports on students' progress and attainment as well as the three consultation opportunities each year. They are well informed about school activities and generally support them well. Links with the community are satisfactory overall. There are some good links with local Catholic communities with shared resources and activities. Links with other schools are not effective enough and do not ensure smooth curricular transition from primary schools. Links at sixth form level do not always ensure that students have access to the courses they wish to do.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher has identified and begun to address the serious issues facing the school but other managers have not addressed the issues identified by the last inspection. Subject managers have not monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of the teaching and learning in their subjects and then rigorously promoted improvement. Governors now have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but they have not challenged the school to improve sufficiently since the last inspection and **overall governance is unsatisfactory.**

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are supportive of the school and most are happy with the education provided, although inspectors would not support these views. Parents recognise the recent improvements made by the school. Students are generally happy in school and the majority enjoy their experiences. They are pleased with the recent improvements, especially the lunch arrangements and uniform, as they were consulted as to their views on

both. However, some, by their failure to attend, are not enthused and involved in their learning, which holds back their progress.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE;
- improve the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 with better planning, delivery and assessment;
- increase the amount and quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school by subject managers, reinforced by senior managers, in order to raise standards;
- assess students' attainment against the standards they have demonstrated previously in order to ensure they make the necessary progress;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure the governors' annual report to parents contains all essential elements; and
- deliver the statutory programme for citizenship to all students.

THE SIXTH FORM AT NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

This sixth form of 74 students is the only Catholic one in the area. About one third of students have stayed on from Year 11 in 2004. A wide range of A and AS level GCE and vocational courses is offered, with some re-takes of GCSE subjects.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Results in A and AS level GCE examinations have been consistently high. Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. There is close monitoring of individual work, and a high level of challenge. Support, advice and guidance are good, there is a good range of academic, vocational and enrichment courses, but the sixth form does not play a significant role in the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Finances are now monitored closely, and the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Above average standards in examinations in both Years 12 and 13.
- Close pastoral and academic support. Students have access to expert and up-to-date advice. The teachers know them well.
- Students have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The sixth formers do not play a strong role in the school.

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	Provision in English is satisfactory . Students reach average standards

communication	through good teaching and relationships.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Students attain above average standards. Achievement and teaching are consistently good.
Science	Provision in physics is satisfactory . Students achieve well. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and good attitudes to learning from students leads to above average attainment.
Humanities	Provision in geography is very good . Students achieve very well, and their standards are above average because the teaching is very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is excellent . Standards are above average and students achieve very well through excellent teaching.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is very good . This is a new course and teaching and learning are very good with students achieving well.

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

Arrangements for the induction of students into the sixth form are thorough and students are well supported when they enter Year 12. Effective systems ensure that students have access to the advice, support and guidance they need. Students do not have regular timetabled opportunities to meet their tutors, but meet them by arrangement for one-to-one discussions so that support is readily available. Careers advice is readily available and the sixth form area contains a good range of prospectuses for higher education and other relevant information. Students are given extensive advice when applying to university or for jobs. The new one-year course is very well led and students are well supported. There are few organised opportunities for sixth form students to contribute to the school community. Retention rates in the sixth form are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the sixth form are both **good**. The head of sixth form provides a clear sense of purpose and direction for students and staff. He takes on most of the role personally and knows the students very well. Pastoral management is good and the monitoring of students' progress is thorough. A wide range of subjects is offered at GCE A and AS level, and, recently, in vocational courses. This means that some group sizes are very small. There are arrangements with other local sixth forms to share subjects, but these are not extensive and some students have problems with their timetables. The day-to-day management and administration of the sixth form are good. The school expects students to work maturely and independently. Teaching needs to be more rigorously evaluated, so that the ways in which students learn most effectively can be better identified. Sixth form finances have not been managed well in the past, but steps have been taken to balance the sixth form budget. The very good results and modest funding mean that overall the school sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Very few questionnaires were returned. The sixth form students interviewed were very supportive of what the school does for them, enjoyed their studies and felt they were given a lot of useful information and advice. The Year 13 students were more critical of the school in the questionnaire, including teaching and choice of courses, but those spoken to during the inspection were very positive. The school seeks their views and acts on them, although not all students are actively involved in the general life of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Too many students fail to realise their potential as shown by their attainment at the end of Year 6 in their primary schools, which indicates that standards should be close to the national average. **Standards in the sixth form are good.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, standards in National Tests in Year 9 were well below the national average in 2003.
- Standards in English are close to the average at the end of Year 9.
- Overall, standards in GCSE are well below national averages and well below those of similar schools and fell in 2003.
- Standards in GCSE in mathematics and design and technology are close to the national average.
- Teachers' ongoing assessment of standards of attainment is not accurate enough to promote the achievement required.
- Standards have declined since the last inspection.

Commentary

1. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, the proportion of students reaching the expected standard was just below the national average in English and below average in science and well below the average in mathematics. The proportion attaining the highest standards was close to the average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Overall, in the three core subjects, standards were below average. However, based on the standards these students attained at the end of Year 6 in National Tests, standards in English were below what they should have been, and in mathematics and science, they were well below. Results have not improved sufficiently over the last four years and results in 2004 were similar to those of 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.3 (31.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.7 (31.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.5 (31.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 104 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and A*-G was well below the national average and well below the average based on prior attainment at the end of Year 9. The proportion of students obtaining one or more GCSE passes at grades A*-G was well below the national average and prior attainment average. This represents a decline in standards since the last inspection as GCSE results have declined over the last four years. These

results show an even further decline in achievement at GCSE, when the school's results at the end of Year 9 are below average. Results were similar in 2004.

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	31 (33)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	76 (82)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88 (86)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.5 (28.9)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 109 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The standards in English at the end of Year 9 which are closer to the average, indicate that generally students reflect their prior attainment as shown by results at the end of Year 6 and achieve satisfactorily. In mathematics and science, achievement is unsatisfactory.
4. At GCSE, the close to average standards in mathematics and design and technology show that students are capable of attaining average standards at GCSE. It also represents particularly good progress in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
5. Teachers have insufficiently linked their ongoing assessment of students' attainment to the nationally required standards and this has resulted in complacency with regard to students' achievement. There has been no whole-school drive to improve standards against students' attainment levels from the time they enter the school. If English in Year 9 and mathematics and design and technology in GCSE can gain near average results, then this should be the case for most subjects.
6. The school sets targets for students' attainment which are lower than they should be. The targets set are not being met.
7. Standards of literacy and numeracy are about average and most students have sufficient skills to access the full curriculum. However, few subjects identify and develop literacy or numeracy skills as part of their subject curriculum. The development of information and communication technology skills is too limited and standards are broadly below those normally found as these skills are not being developed and extended in most subjects of the curriculum.
8. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Most special educational needs students achieve as much as they can, and some make good progress in relation to their capability. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Where students fail to make adequate progress, this is often due to poor accommodation and limited resources in ICT.
9. Overall, students whose home language is not English do well. They respond well to the support they received and frequently their achievement is better than other students. This is particularly so for the few students in Years 10 and 11.

10. Until recently, managers at all levels and the governors have not recognised the unacceptable levels of underachievement and attainment since the last inspection, which identified standards slightly below average at the end of Year 9 and below average standards in GCSE. Standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE have declined since the last inspection.

THE SIXTH FORM

11. Students in the sixth form attain standards that are above the national averages both for attaining pass grades (A-E) and those attaining the highest grades A and B. This represents good achievement by students as the school does not restrict access to GCE courses to those with the higher GCSE grades. Almost all students who start courses complete them and gain qualifications. Standards in mathematics, geography and design and technology at both AS and A2 levels are above average. The good or better teaching in these subjects, along with very positive students, results in above average attainment.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.9 (91.9)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.2 (29.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	286.4 (283.8)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Overall, students' attitudes to learning and to the school are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and excellent in the sixth form. Behaviour observed both in lessons and around the school is, overall, satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Behaviour in the sixth form is excellent. Attendance is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11 with high levels of unauthorised absence. In the sixth form, attendance is excellent. Punctuality is unsatisfactory at the beginning of sessions and lessons. In Years 7 to 11, students' personal development is satisfactory, in the sixth form, it is very good. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11.
- Punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are excellent.
- The spiritual development of students is unsatisfactory.
- Overall, students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory.

Commentary

12. Many parents say that their children enjoy school life and that the school works hard on their behalf. They also say that the school works hard to be fair. Many also say that behaviour is good. Evidence from inspection, however, shows that whilst in Years 7 to 11 behaviour in lessons is overall satisfactory, in a significant minority of lessons, it is unsatisfactory. Examples of such lessons were seen in all year groups. Such

behaviour was typically seen where lessons were not sufficiently well focused on students' needs and where teaching did not engage students in the topic. Frequently, lessons were disrupted, the pace of the lesson slowed while the teacher sought to deal with the disruption, and learning for the whole group suffered.

13. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection and both parents and students indicated that if it occurred, the school dealt with such matters quickly and effectively.
14. Students with special educational needs are fully included in the school/community and Individual Education Plans identify targets for personal and social development. Students are involved in setting their own targets and teaching assistants monitor their progress on a day-to-day basis.
15. Provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Insufficient opportunities are provided for students to develop feelings of self-worth. In lessons, students are rarely offered sufficient opportunity to reflect upon their learning, nor to develop wider understanding. Collective worship meets requirements but does not have sufficient impact on students' spiritual development.
16. The provision for students' moral education is satisfactory. Students are taught the difference between right and wrong. Whilst many recognise that their attitudes and behaviour have an impact on others, particularly in lessons, the significant number of lessons seen where unsatisfactory behaviour was a feature indicates that too many students have as yet developed a respect for others. Opportunities for students to take responsibility are too few. The system of houses does not contribute sufficiently to this aspect of school life. Older students are not, for example, expected to support younger students on their arrival in school. Some examples were seen, for example, where members of the sixth form supported younger students with their reading; where this occurred, both gained much from it but, overall, these were too few. Indeed, in both Year 7 and the sixth form, students have their own house system and in effect are separated from the rest of the school. Thus, there are too few opportunities for social interaction and for older students to set positive examples.
17. Social education is satisfactory. At break and lunchtimes, the behaviour seen was satisfactory. Students have appreciated the recently improved dining arrangements and use the facilities sensibly. However, significant numbers of students from Years 10 and 11 as well as the sixth form still leave the site at lunchtime. The length of the lunch period also restricts opportunities for extra-curricular opportunities. The school's programme of citizenship is as yet making insufficient impact on this aspect of students' development. The school has a Parliament where representatives can contribute their views on matters about school life. Whilst this has not yet met during the current school year, evidence shows that students were actively involved in considering planned developments and improvements such as school uniform and dining arrangements. Overall, however, too few opportunities for students' social development are available.
18. Overall, the provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Students have opportunities to appreciate their own culture, for example, through work in history, where a Year 9 lesson on aspects of life on the western front in World War 1 were being examined. Students responded well and were engaged by the teacher, particularly in discussing both the factual record and exploring some of the moral issues raised. Overall, however, such opportunities were rarely planned for in the lessons seen. Students have insufficient opportunities to learn about other cultures

with most subjects of the curriculum missing opportunities to include such matters in their planning for learning.

19. Overall, there has been no improvement in this aspect of the school's life since the previous inspection.

Attendance

20. Levels of attendance in the last reporting year are unsatisfactory, being well below those normally seen, with unauthorised absence being much higher than usually seen. The school has recognised these facts and recently has committed significant resources to its system for monitoring and promoting high levels of attendance. The ongoing development of its policy, linked closely to its approach to inclusion issues, has seen both the introduction of an advanced computer recording system and support staff to act as mentors to students and relieve teaching staff of routine administrative tasks in this area. Unfortunately, there have been significant difficulties experienced with the computer system. However, the school has worked very hard indeed to deal with this and to create accurate data and to develop positive approaches to encouraging high levels of attendance. The picture now seen is one where whilst levels are still below those expected in Years 8 to 11, improvements are being achieved. The school uses the information created to make contact with parents on the first day of absence. Parents and students are very aware of the school's approach and are responding positively to it. Punctuality, both at the start of sessions and lessons, is unsatisfactory. Evidence from inspection shows that school management issues contribute to this problem. Firstly, the published time-table allows no time for staff and students to move from lesson to lesson, over what can be, given the site layout quite long distances. Too often, this means that the start of lessons are delayed or, as more usually seen, interrupted by students arriving late. The result is that the teacher is not able to make a crisp, positive start to the lesson, and the interruption leads to the pace of learning for the other students slowing unnecessarily. Secondly, the school allows students in Years 10 and 11 to leave the site at lunchtime, with their parents' consent. Many students do this. Currently, no mechanism exists to ensure that only those with such permission leave the site. The school does not know, therefore, who is on the site at this time and whether parents' wishes are being met. This should be reviewed as a matter of urgency. Frequently, this arrangement also gives rise to students arriving back on site late for the start of the afternoon session.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	3.9
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

21. The level of exclusions in the last reporting year was higher than normally seen. More recent records show that the level is falling. The recently appointed headteacher has established clear criteria for the use of such sanctions as part of the school's approach to student behaviour. Parents and students say they are clear about this approach, and students comment that they feel that the school treats them fairly when dealing

with such matters. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal fairly with these issues.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	627	80	5
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

THE SIXTH FORM

22. In the sixth form, behaviour was excellent with students wholly engaged in the activities and responding very well to the good teaching provided. They contribute positively to the whole school when given the opportunity, such as in paired reading activities with Year 7 students or as sports coaches. However, there are too few occasions where the sixth form students are able to contribute to the development of younger students.
23. A number of students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme. The school is fortunate to have a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist teacher to lead in this area. Students from the sixth form were seen beginning the planning of their gold award expedition. They responded very well to the challenge and to the enthusiasm of the teacher.
24. Attendance in the sixth form is excellent and they arrive punctually for their lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching, learning and assessment are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant proportion of students make limited progress and underachieve.
- The overall quality of teaching has declined since the last inspection, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment is not used consistently to help students to improve.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good.

Commentary

The following table lists the inspectors' evaluation of teaching during the inspection. The quality of learning matched this very closely.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (5%)	24 (18%)	46 (35%)	40 (30%)	14 (11%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

25. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 has declined from the position at the time of the previous inspection in 1999, although the teaching in the sixth form has improved and is now good. There has been a recent focus on professional development to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This has had a positive effect in many subjects, but its impact has been inconsistent and a significant proportion of teaching remains unsatisfactory.
26. The proportion of lessons characterised by good and better teaching has stayed about the same as in the last inspection, at just over half the lessons observed. There are more examples of excellent teaching, but the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has increased from 11 per cent to 13 per cent in the main school. The situation in Years 7, 8 and 9 is similar to that reported in the last inspection, but the teaching in Years 10 and 11, which was satisfactory then, is now also unsatisfactory.
27. In the main school, teaching in one fifth of the lessons seen was very good or excellent. The proportion of such lessons was notably higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. There is some excellent teaching in design and technology and English, and some very good teaching in science, physical education, art and design, French and Spanish. The main strengths of the better teaching include:
 - good classroom management, with effective strategies for learning, and stimulating starter activities that motivate students to learn;
 - good planning, with precise learning objectives for the lesson which are explained and followed up;
 - high expectations and challenge for the whole range of attainment in the class, providing suitable opportunities for all students to succeed;
 - good use of assessment, so that teachers know students' learning needs, and monitor each individual's progress;
 - good knowledge of the subject;
 - effective use of homework to reinforce and extend what has been done in class; and
 - positive relationships between teachers and students.

28. Some of the learning approaches recommended by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are beginning to have a positive effect, though not evenly across all subjects. These approaches include clear learning objectives, lively starter activities to remind students of what they have already learned and a greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy in different subjects. Such approaches are also being used by some teachers in Years 10 to 13. Several teachers are not clear about the use of learning objectives, and the lessons are less focused as a result.
29. In lessons where the teaching is unsatisfactory, students do not learn enough or make adequate progress. The main reasons for this are:
- work that is not targeted at the right level for the class or individuals, because the information from assessment has not been analysed well, hinders learning;
 - too many teachers have insufficient understanding of national expectations and standards for different year groups and courses;
 - students who are confused or unclear what to do to improve because lessons are not focused;
 - a lack of challenge and a slow pace in some lessons limits learning;
 - the high levels of absence of some students limit their learning; and
 - teaching assistants not being used well in some classes to support students' learning.
30. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 14 lessons in Years 7 to 11. Only one poor lesson was seen.
31. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Especially when:
- Support staff have a clear understanding of the needs of individual students and in most lessons provide good support that promotes effective learning.
 - Positive relationships with support staff ensure that the students with special educational needs sustain attention and are well motivated.
 - Teaching assistants are used effectively, allowing students to make good progress and acquire new skills, taking responsibility for their own learning.
32. In some lessons, however, teachers have insufficient knowledge about the students' needs and are unable to plan and set suitable activities. In these cases, progress is limited.
33. The quality of the marking of students' work is mostly satisfactory, with pockets of good practice, and teachers support students' class-work with regular comment and advice. The best marking does provide students with a clear view of how to progress further but there are also plenty of cases where teachers respond mainly with comments on effort and attitude. Many teachers do not emphasise with sufficient precision the next steps that students should take in order to improve their work further.
34. Assessment is unsatisfactory. The main weakness is that students are not given adequate guidance about how to improve their work. There is no consistent practice of assessment across the school. Although a policy has just been drawn up, it has not yet been put into practice in all subjects and many are still working on their own systems. Improving assessment to support learning has been a priority. There have been two recent training days for staff and an assessment co-ordinator has been appointed to develop consistency in assessment across the school. Data is passed on to departments for analysis and target setting. Some use it well, but not all middle managers have the skills to use it effectively and the situation is not yet monitored centrally and followed up. The individual learning requirements of students with special educational needs are identified in terms of personal and social development,

and these are monitored on a regular basis by the teaching assistants. However there is no systematic analysis of assessment data to track these students' academic progress accurately.

35. The ways in which students' current progress is quantified and tracked are unsatisfactory. Most teachers do not have clear information about the level that each of their students is working at in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE or GNVQ grade that they are expected to reach in Years 10 and 11. Predicted levels and grades are not being defined with accuracy. In many subjects, students are not given enough information and advice about how improve from their current level. Reports and progress statements tend to contain written targets that are more related to attitude and commitment than to skills, knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, the specific learning needs of students who were capable at working at different levels were not fully addressed. Students following GCSE and GNVQ courses generally had a much clearer understanding of the grade they could reach and how to get there.

The sixth form

Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**.

36. The quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in two-fifths of the lessons seen and good or better in nearly three quarters of them. Teaching was satisfactory in the remainder. The strength of the teaching of sixth form students is a vital factor in the good results that they achieve. Many of the strengths of teaching and learning in the main school are also found in the sixth form. These include:
- good subject knowledge from specialist teachers;
 - close monitoring of individual work and linking it to the examination requirements;
 - a high level of challenge and expectation;
 - good planning and expert teaching to the lesson and assessment objectives; and
 - well motivated and enthusiastic students.
37. In the few less successful lessons, the factors that prevented them being judged as good were:
- activities not being suitable for the wide range of ability in some classes; and
 - some students not being able to attend their classes because of timetable clashes.
38. Students' essays, assignments and tests are marked well and students are frequently given a detailed commentary on their performance, together with advice on how to improve. These are linked very directly to the assessment criteria of the examinations.

THE CURRICULUM

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**. Statutory requirements are being met, with the exception of citizenship, and the curriculum is satisfactorily broad. Extra-curricular activities make a valuable contribution to students' learning and accommodation and resources are sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is equality of opportunity for all students.
- Teaching and support staff match the needs of the curriculum.
- Careers education and guidance contribute positively in preparing students for life beyond school.

- Provision for vocational education is limited.
- There is no provision for drama.
- The statutory programme for citizenship is not fully delivered.
- Participation in sport is well promoted.
- Options choice in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is narrow.

Commentary

39. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced. It includes the National Curriculum subjects, PSHE (including citizenship) and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, all students study English, mathematics, science, religious education, physical education, one technology subject and PSHE. This range of compulsory subjects strictly limits the number of options that students may choose. The statutory programme is not delivered fully within the PSHE course.
40. The curriculum provides equality of access for its students. It is more effective in providing courses that are appropriate for students of all abilities than it was at the time of the last inspection. Although the school is not meeting the requirements for disability, there is satisfactory provision for students with special educational needs. These students are well supported by teaching assistants and many teachers adapt the curriculum well to enable students to overcome barriers to learning. An additional teaching group in Years 7 to 9 has been created for students who do not have special educational needs but have organisational problems. The school perceives a raising of standards for these students but it has not yet monitored the extent to which teachers are coping with the wide range of ability or the impact it is having on student aspirations.
41. Although there has been some improvement in ICT facilities, difficulties of access are preventing provision for ICT from effectively enhancing students' learning across the subjects of the curriculum. This was a deficiency identified in the last inspection report.
42. The school has a designated member of staff for PSHE. The programme includes sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drugs misuse. However, the school has elected to deliver citizenship through the PSHE programme and, in consequence, the full citizenship programme is not available to students. The allocation of time has not sufficiently improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be insufficient. There is also insufficient PSHE in school assemblies.
43. There has been an expansion in the provision of extra-curricular activities since the last inspection. It includes a good range of sporting activities, music, computers, chess club, etc. Activities observed during the inspection were well attended. The school arranges a good number of educational visits, for example, to Carlisle Castle and Guildhall in history, a field trip to France and a study day in northern England in geography. These activities provide good support for learning outside the school day. This was particularly evident during the inspection in the Film Animation Club where students from Year 7 and 8 were actively engaged in collaborative learning and problem-solving. This provision is becoming widely known beyond the school.
44. As it was at the time of the last inspection, the school is providing good quality careers education and guidance. All students from Year 9 have the provision and there are close links with the Connexions service, which provides guidance materials as well as up-to-date reference information. Connexions' Personal Advisers work in the school's

drop-in centre and attend parents' evenings. The school uses the National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance, and there are links with business and industry. There is a careers development plan and stated aims include preparing students for their working lives. However, weaknesses in achievement and attainment mean that many students are not prepared sufficiently for the next stage of education or for employment.

45. The school acknowledges the need for a full work-related curriculum but there is no explicit reference to the world of work in its Mission Statement.
46. All Year 11 pupils have access to work experience. This is soundly planned for as part of careers education. Students feedback their experience and are assessed on their presentation skills. Students engage in learning about work in careers education and were observed learning for work in a Year 9 citizenship lesson where students learnt much about interview techniques and how to prepare for interviews.
47. However, work-related learning has barely started. There is no clear policy and activities are neither co-ordinated nor monitored. Staff have not yet received training. The school is not using the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's non-statutory framework. Overall, the provision for work-related learning is unsatisfactory.
48. The school has adequate resources to meet the demands of the curriculum. It is well staffed and teachers are well qualified. They teach mainly in their specialist subjects, and there is a good mix of experienced and more newly qualified staff. Generally, learning resources are satisfactory.
49. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall and the school's claim to have a good and improving learning environment is justified. Accommodation is pleasant and well maintained. However, the school identifies limited accommodation as a significant barrier to raising students' achievement and there are deficiencies in mathematics, business studies, physical education and music.
50. The school has no provision for drama. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection.

The sixth form

51. In the sixth form, the school provides a selection of A2 and AS courses, a GNVQ in Health and Social Care and courses for GCSE and VCE. All students take religious education. The governors have reviewed the curriculum and approved a move towards providing more vocational education. However, currently this is limited so that the curriculum in the sixth form lacks balance for some students.
52. The school is widening its sixth form provision by sending a small number of students on courses in two neighbouring schools. However, these arrangements are very informal and a lack of co-ordination in timetabling is preventing students from reaping the full benefit from the provision. The school is now providing the recommended length of school day and has re-organised its timetable. However, not all the problems have been solved; for example, a lack of time is affecting standards in A2 art and design, and not all students can attend GCSE re-sit lessons in English every week.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Overall, the arrangements to ensure students care and welfare are satisfactory. Arrangements for Health and Safety in lessons are good; however, in relation to arrangements at lunchtime, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11, and in some aspects of site security they are unsatisfactory. The school's system for seeking and acting on student views is good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- All students have access to well-informed careers advice.
- Students, particularly in the sixth form, receive well-informed support and advice.
- Aspects of the school's arrangements for health and safety require attention.
- The school's arrangements for citizenship education do not contribute sufficiently to students' development.

Commentary

53. Parents say that they feel that the school treats their children fairly. They also cite their support for the school's recent work in relation to promoting improved attendance and behaviour. Students express some concerns about fairness and the extent to which their views are listened to by the school. The continuing unsatisfactory levels of behaviour in some lessons, the school organisation issues relating to timetabling which is affecting punctuality to lessons and the levels of unsatisfactory teaching which is not targeted sufficiently to students' needs contribute to relationships in school being judged as satisfactory. The school has made appropriate arrangements to meet its responsibilities in relation to child protection matters.
54. The school offers, with support from external specialists, good careers advice at all appropriate stages. This, when linked to good quality advice and guidance in other aspects of personal development, means that students are assisted to make informed decisions about their futures.
55. Students with special educational needs are well supported. Their needs are clearly identified in terms of personal and social development and Individual Education Plans include targets that are available for all teachers. Teaching assistants monitor progress towards these targets and older pupils are encouraged to play an active part in identifying their own targets. The positive relationships that have been established with the teaching assistants promote the confidence and self-esteem of students with special educational needs.
56. The school has recently given considerable attention to its arrangements for health and safety. This was informed by a recently commissioned external audit from officers of the Local Education Authority. The recommendations are being currently actively followed up. Evidence from inspection shows that practices and procedures in relation to the subjects of the curriculum are well managed; routines such as first aid, fire safety and assessment of risks in relation to educational visits all receive proper attention. Inspection evidence has identified two areas of concern. Firstly the system for monitoring the lunchtime arrangements for students in Years 10 and 11, many of whom leave the site. Currently, the school does not know who leaves the site, nor whether those leaving have permission to do so from their parents. Secondly, during

school sessions, a number of external doors are open to the public. Whilst the site layout is such that control of entry to some classrooms is difficult, the current position is unsatisfactory. The situation is further exacerbated by the absence of external gates to the site. These two matters require urgent review and attention.

THE SIXTH FORM

57. Arrangements for the induction of students into the sixth form are thorough and students are well supported when they enter Year 12. Effective systems ensure that students have access to the advice, support and guidance they need. Students do not have regular timetabled opportunities to meet their tutors, but meet them by arrangement for one-to-one discussions so that support is readily available. Careers advice is readily available and the sixth form area contains a good range of prospectuses for higher education and other relevant information. Students are given extensive advice when applying to university or for jobs. The new one year course is very well led and students are well supported. There are few organised opportunities for sixth form students to contribute to the school community.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

Overall, the partnership between the school and parents is good. Relationships with other schools and colleges overall are unsatisfactory. Links with the wider community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- Parents contribute much to supporting students' learning.
- The supportive work of the parent teacher association.
- Links with contributory primary schools are overall unsatisfactory.
- The school acts as a focus for the Catholic community.

Commentary

58. The majority of parents say that the students enjoy their time in school. The school is held in high regard by many parents. The school's written communication with parents is appreciated by them, particularly the newsletters. However, evidence from inspection shows that improvements are required as, for example, in the Governors' annual report to parents, in order to meet statutory requirements. The school is, however, aware of these and is taking steps to deal with them. Written reports to parents are satisfactory. On occasion, the quality of information provided is limited and does not always make clear enough what it is the student now knows, understands and can do, compared with the last report. However, when taken in conjunction with the planned meetings offered to parents with staff on a regular basis, the information provided is judged satisfactory.
59. Parents of students with special educational needs are fully involved in the process of reviews on progress required by statute. They receive good quality advice about the next stages of learning and development.
60. The school benefits from the work of its Parent Teacher Association. This raises significant funds which are committed following close consultation with school staff. The Association also sees its role as one of supporting students' social development

and acting as a focus for the wider community. Recently, the Association has funded the purchase of canoes and equipment which are used by school groups locally.

61. Links with local contributory primary schools are overall unsatisfactory. The school makes contact with prospective students prior to their admission and these arrangements work well. However, the school does not sufficiently recognise and value the quality of information about students' prior attainment, for example, as identified in national and other testing. Consequently it makes insufficient effective use of the information provided by the primary schools when planning for the students' next stages of learning. The result is that too often lessons are not sufficiently targeted to students needs and time is wasted. In addition, too little understanding exists by staff in the school of primary school approaches to curriculum matters and little collaboration takes place jointly with them. These factors, when linked to the unsatisfactory use of assessment and the lack of understanding of National Curriculum levels of achievement highlighted elsewhere, contribute significantly to the unsatisfactory standards achieved in the school.

The sixth form

62. Links with other schools have been made on an informal basis to enhance the range of courses available to students post 16; however, whilst these initiatives are to be welcomed they, as yet, have not greatly extended the range of opportunities available. Similarly, the range of extra-curricular opportunities available in areas other than sport seen in the school have not yet benefited from such contacts.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership, management and governance are unsatisfactory. Governors and managers have failed to address the further decline in standards since the last inspection when standards, particularly at GCSE, were below average. The school does manage its budget effectively but **fails to give value for money.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Managers at all levels have failed to address the compelling data on low attainment and underachievement.
- Senior managers have failed to identify and address the weaknesses in teaching and learning until very recently.
- Governors, until very recently, have not realised that the school is underperforming.
- The recently appointed headteacher has addressed the issues of behaviour and disaffection and now students are more positive and behaviour is at least satisfactory.
- Governors and managers failed to address the key issues identified by the previous inspection until last year.

COMMENTARY

63. The standards achieved by students have been unsatisfactory since the last inspection. The managers in the past have not evaluated attainment data to identify the serious weaknesses present in the school. They have not paid sufficient attention to the attainment data available on students as they enter the school nor on the standardised test results the school uses during students' first term in the school. This data has not been used to predict the standards that might be expected of students

and then through continuous assessment ensured they remained on track to achieve them.

64. The quality of teaching was barely satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and the key issue of improving the quality of teaching has not been addressed until this year. Managers, both senior managers and those with subject responsibility, have not monitored teaching to assure the quality, nor has the school embarked upon training programmes to improve the effectiveness of teachers. Only recently has staff training included work on behaviour management and lesson planning.
65. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads an effective team of support assistants who meet the needs of students with special educational needs well. However, there are no clear links with subject departments to support teachers in planning effectively to meet needs of students with special educational needs. Subject teachers do not use a systematic approach to either tracking the progress of students with special educational needs or to monitoring the effectiveness of support strategies, particularly where students are withdrawn from class.
66. The governors have always been very supportive of the school but were not made sufficiently aware of the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection. They remained unaware of the real issues facing the school until recently. They are now aware of the difficulties the school faces and are accepting the challenge that this presents. They have begun to monitor the work of the school more closely and question the actions managers take. They are beginning to hold managers to account for their work and have identified what is needed in their annual report to parents in order to meet statutory requirements.
67. The recently appointed headteacher (four terms) identified the need to improve student behaviour and attitudes to the school and to learning. He has led this development effectively and inspection evidence shows that the disruptive behaviour identified in the last inspection is now a very rare occurrence. Students are much more positive and there is a positive atmosphere for learning in classrooms. However, actions to improve teachers' planning and lesson delivery have not yet improved the quality of teaching sufficiently. The headteacher has embarked upon a programme of lesson monitoring which has had some impact and there is evidence to suggest that students' progress has improved this term.
68. The school effectively uses information and communication technology to support its administrative and financial processes and procedures which are generally satisfactory. The governors receive detailed and appropriate financial information which enables them to manage the budget effectively.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,377,274
Total expenditure	2,355,979
Expenditure per pupil	3,647

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	35,441
Balance carried forward to the next year	56,737

69. The senior managers and governors did not address the key issues identified in the previous inspection. In particular, that the school should improve standards by improving the quality of teaching and that teaching in all departments should be monitored. Indeed, the latter monitoring of teaching is still not yet established. Senior managers have also failed to ensure that the national citizenship programme is fully delivered to all students.

The sixth form

70. The management of the post 16 provision is good. Standards have remained above average and all managers seek to use prior attainment information to set targets for student attainment. This enables student achievement to be monitored effectively and promotes good progress.

71. The quality of provision is generally good, although there is little formal monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision.

72. Managers have sought to ensure the cost effectiveness of post 16 provision over the last year and the subsidy from main school funding is now small. Cost effectiveness is now satisfactory.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The number of A* and A grades in GCSE English (2003) is above the national average for boys and girls.
- Management of the department is not contributing sufficiently to improvement.
- Assessment is not contributing fully to students' attainment and progress.
- GCSE results (2003) for boys and girls are significantly better than their average across other subjects.
- Subject knowledge is significantly contributing to the quality of teaching and to students' achievements.
- Good relationships between teachers and students are enabling effective learning.
- Homework is consolidating, applying and extending students' knowledge.
- There is no provision for drama.

Commentary

73. At the end of Year 9, students' results in the latest validated National Curriculum tests (2003) were in line with the national average. This represents an improvement in standards since the school was last inspected. Girls' results were higher than boys'. Compared with those in similar schools, test results were well above average when related to the number of students eligible for free school meals, but below average when students' prior attainment is taken into account. On this evidence, students are not making sufficient progress and this remained so in 2004.
74. Standards have significantly improved in Years 10 and 11 since the last inspection. In the latest validated GCSE examinations (2003) in English, the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C was similar to the national average, with the number of grades A* and A being above average. Girls' results were significantly better than boys', and girls achieved better than their average across their other subjects. In English literature, the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C was below average, although students' average points score was in line with the national average. The number of students achieving grade A was above average. All students entered achieved grades A*-G. Girls' results were better than boys'. Results in 2004 were similar to 2003.
75. Students' attainment in lessons observed during the inspection, in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, was in line with what is expected nationally of students in these age ranges. This is consistent with students' performances in national tests and examinations. With the exception of students in higher ability sets, students'

achievement in lessons equated with what is expected nationally. There is evidence that they could achieve more highly with an improved quality of teaching. Students with English as an additional language (EAL) were generally achieving at least as well as other students and a small number of them were achieving highly. Overall, there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

76. In all years, most students are competent speakers and listeners. They are able to respond to teachers' questions, express opinions and share ideas. They are able to collaborate effectively to extend their learning.
77. Students are using a wide range of writing forms: narrative, persuasive, diaries, poems etc. They are using 'brainstorming', note-taking and drafting techniques. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students are able to structure their writing and reach good standards of presentation. In Years 10 and 11, many students have extended their vocabulary and improved their fluency. Students in higher-ability groups, including some with EAL, are able to write at length with good standards of technical accuracy. Less competent writers in all years have difficulty in organising their writing and with spelling and organisation.
78. In Years 7 to 11, the majority of students are competent readers. By the end of Year 9, students are able to discuss plot and character in literary texts, and students with special educational needs can understand simple narrative structure. Students are developing their understanding of the characteristics of non-fiction texts. In Years 10 and 11, students are able to respond to characterisation, relationships and themes in literature. Students in higher ability groups are able to understand literary concepts such as interior monologue and dramatic irony, and are using specialist terms such as alliteration, assonance etc. They are developing their understanding of Standard English and the concept of appropriateness in language.
79. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory, as it was when the school was last inspected. Teaching by some members of the department was of high quality. It was characterised by very good subject knowledge and very effective planning and preparation. Teachers have high expectations of students and skilfully managed their behaviour. Students responded well, settling quickly to tasks and sustaining their concentration. Generally, there are good relationships between teachers and students. The quality of homework is good, with tasks applying, consolidating and extending students' learning.
80. When teaching was less successful, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure and learning objectives are not sharply focused on what students are intended to learn. In these instances, students are not sufficiently motivated and work at a leisurely pace, and teachers have more difficulty managing students' behaviour. These deficiencies result in students under-achieving.
81. The department places a strong emphasis on end-of-unit tasks and end-of-year tests to identify students' progress. However, teachers' ongoing assessment is not making a sufficient contribution to the quality of teaching and to students' achievement. It is insufficiently linked to learning objectives and not sufficiently taken into account in subsequent planning to meet students' needs.
82. As it was at the time of the last inspection, the department is well led. The Head of Department's expertise and enthusiasm makes him a good role model. He is inspiring and influencing staff and students. English teachers are working well together and

there is a good team spirit. Management of the department is unsatisfactory. Currently, there is not enough use of available data and insufficient monitoring of teaching. Drama is not sufficiently included in the English curriculum.

83. There has been an improvement in standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 since the last inspection. Accommodation is better and there has been some improvement in the matching of work to students' needs. However, there has been no improvement in drama provision and access to ICT remains unsatisfactory. The issues identified in the last report have not been fully addressed and, overall, there has been insufficient improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. The school acknowledges that this is an area for development and it has designated a literacy co-ordinator. However, there has been no whole-school initiative to improve students' literacy skills. In consequence, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is not yet having a significant impact on teaching and learning.
85. Literacy is promoted well in design and technology, where there is extensive use of key technical terminology, extended writing, and reading for understanding. Key words are used in mathematics, and in geography, there is some use of writing frames. In history, literacy targets are identified but teachers' lack of expertise is preventing them from helping students to improve.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong and very effective subject leadership and management.
- Good skilled teaching, expecting higher standards from learners and engaging them.
- Effective assessment which involves learners and influences what teachers and students do next.
- Not enough emphasis is put on active speaking practice by students in the early stages.
- Student attitudes to the subject are positive.
- ICT is not used enough to help effective learning and teaching in the subject.

Commentary

86. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9, despite the time allocated for the subject being less than is usually found nationally. Standards could be higher as students in Year 9 have gaps in their knowledge because of the weaker teaching they received in the past. Standards are average in reading and writing skills in French and Spanish but remain lower in speaking and listening. Standards in Year 7 and 8 are higher than those of the recent past as a result of the improvements in quality of teaching and learning. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory.
87. There have been improvements in the standards students attain in GCSE since the last inspection. With a smaller than average number of students entered for the examinations in French, the standards attained were close to the national average in 2003, and this represents good achievement when compared to their standards in other subjects and their starting point in Year 7.
88. In Spanish, results were better, with above average numbers of students gaining grades A*-C. Girls and boys achieve similarly, which is in contrast to the national picture.
89. There were no students following language courses in the sixth form.
90. Current standards in Year 11 are average. Students in Years 10 and 11 also have gaps in their knowledge, and standards are not as high as they could be; that too is being rectified in response to better teaching. Although students too often lack confidence when speaking languages, inspection evidence shows that these students

have made good progress this year and are now achieving satisfactorily compared with their standards at the beginning of their GCSE course.

91. Teaching and learning are good overall. The main strengths, which are having most impact on the better standards of achievement, include:
- identifying good learning objectives for lessons, communicating these to learners and using them to focus lesson planning;
 - high expectations and challenging activities for students;
 - managing classes very effectively, using positive feedback, humour and praise to create and sustain very productive relationships;
 - using an approach to assessment which effectively spots students' misunderstanding and puts it right, and which identifies the learning which is happening and builds on it;
 - using a variety of activities and range of materials to support learning;
 - ensuring work meets the particular needs of different groups and individuals;
 - maintaining a generally good pace, suited to needs of classes and individuals;
 - making good use of learning support assistants where they are available; and
 - having, as specialist staff, very good subject knowledge.
92. There are weaknesses in teaching as teachers do not use French/Spanish as the usual language of most classroom interaction. Students do not have enough intensive and sustained oral practice in the language studied. In addition, homework is not used effectively enough.
93. Assessment in modern foreign languages is good, and impacts positively on the improving standards. It also contributes to students' good attitudes and commitment to the subject. The approach to target setting is good, in that targets relate to immediate curriculum and learning within the subject so students understand them. Most students understand what represents good progress and the criteria which teachers use to judge their work. This all makes a difference, and students are developing the capacity to evaluate their own work effectively. The way teachers track students' progress against targets and expectations is sound and reliable in promoting progress. Marking is inconsistent at the moment, although an agreed policy has been developed.
94. Students in all years show positive attitudes to their work, as often shown by their enjoyment of the subject in response to good teaching. These are important factors in raising standards.
95. Leadership of the subject is very good. A new subject leader, appointed 18 months ago, has done very well in turning round a declining subject area. Planning is thorough and effective. This is backed up by a comprehensive range of detailed and helpful policies for the subject. There is a clear direction articulated for modern foreign languages, and good short-term setting of priorities for action.
96. Management of the subject is very good, too. Self-evaluation is effective: students' work is analysed regularly, and progress and learning are monitored. The quality of teaching is monitored well both by formal observation and in more informal ways, for example, moderating assessments, planning materials and lessons together, swapping materials, ideas and techniques, and discussing new ways of working. A recent analysis of subject strengths and weakness is thorough and perceptive. Routines and procedures are clear and understood: day-to-day administration of the department's affairs is effective.

97. Accommodation is good with two specialist dedicated rooms, but one still needs carpeting to bring it up to the right standard acoustically. The rooms are splendidly enhanced by subject- related display, including lots of work by students and a lot of posters, cards and other devices to help students directly in their learning. Staffing expertise matches curriculum needs very well. Good foreign visits now take place and extra revision classes are offered: both these innovations contribute to raising the profile of modern foreign languages and to raising standards. Resources are satisfactory but there is limited access to ICT facilities in specialist rooms.
98. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the current subject department demonstrates a clear capacity to sustain this.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The team of enthusiastic, specialist teachers is committed to developing students' mathematical skills and raising attainment.
- Students behave well and have good attitudes towards learning.
- Effective planning ensures lessons are well structured with appropriate activities.
- Students' results in national tests taken in Year 9 are well below national average.
- Inadequate accommodation arrangements and limited resources, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are hindering attempts to raise standards. There is insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Some of the grouping arrangements in Years 7 to 9 are limiting students' progress, particularly the more able.

Commentary

99. In 2003, students' results in national tests taken in Year 9 were below the national average. Results were well below when compared with similar schools based on prior attainment. Current standards in Year 9 are average and students are achieving satisfactorily.
100. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly average, as they were in 2004. Achievement in lessons and the standards seen in students' work confirm that students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress. Evidence from lessons and students' work confirm that achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and that current standards in Year 11 are average. Work is referenced to GCSE levels and this is shared with students so they have a clear understanding of the level they are working at. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 are challenged through topics at the higher level. Teachers are not building sufficiently on what students already know when they enter the school in Year 7. Teachers are not tracking students' progress accurately enough and using this information to ensure students make sufficient progress in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs make good progress as they are well supported by caring, effective teachers who expect them to achieve.
101. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall and has a number of strengths that support students' learning. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan effectively; they ensure students know the purpose of the lesson. They explain new concepts clearly and confidently and use well-chosen examples to develop students'

understanding. Well-structured lessons build up learning, starting with brisk mental and oral activities that develop students' numeric skills. Key words are highlighted in most lessons. Relationships with students are good. In most lessons, students are motivated by enthusiastic teachers and they are well behaved and attentive. Homework is used effectively to consolidate learning in lessons. Teaching is less effective where there is a wide range of ability within the group and work for the more able students lacks challenge. The mixed ability groupings in Years 7 to 9 make this a particular issue. Teachers do not always use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and consequently there are too few opportunities for paired and group work. The ends of lessons are often rushed and not used to check what has been learnt. ICT is rarely used by teachers to help students understand new ideas, mainly due to the difficulties in access to computers. Work is regularly marked but students are not always informed of what they need to do to improve.

102. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a strong team and a shared commitment to raise standards. There are regular meetings where teachers share good practice and discuss students' progress. The departmental development plan identifies raising standards, particularly in national tests taken in Year 9, as the main priority and the need to purchase suitable textbooks for Years 7 to 9. There are detailed schemes of work and a common approach to lesson planning. Good induction procedures exist for new teachers. Examination of students' work and occasional lesson observations provide some monitoring of teaching and learning. Procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through the school is underdeveloped. Students undertake regular assessments which are used to monitor their progress. Students do not have appropriate individual attainment targets for national examinations in Years 9 and 11, based on their prior attainment. Individual and year progress targets are not set and regularly monitored. Student data from the primary school is not used to set students when they arrive in Year 7. The insufficient number of specialist rooms means that teachers frequently change rooms. This combined with limited resources, works against their attempts to raise standards.
103. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. Improvement in standards has been identified as the main priority. Whilst access to ICT equipment is limited, some teachers have, through their own endeavours, organised opportunities for students to use ICT to support their learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

104. The management of this cross-curricular area is unsatisfactory. The recently appointed numeracy co-ordinator has undertaken a review of where and how mathematics is used in other subjects. The development of a policy, which outlines what numerically can be expected of students in each year group, is planned. Links with other departments are being established. In most subjects, numeracy has not been sufficiently identified in schemes of work and planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards overall are too low in Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11.
- Teaching and assessment overall are unsatisfactory.

- Schemes of work do not provide sufficient guidance to effectively support teaching.
- Students' key skills are not satisfactorily developed through their science learning.
- There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection in standards and departmental planning.
- Students are learning well in the GCSE courses environmental science and human biology, which are a successful curriculum innovation.

Commentary

105. Students' overall attainment in science at age 11, on entry to the school, is in line with the national average. However, 2003 results from national tests indicate that at the end of Year 9 the proportion of students achieving the national expectation in science was well below the average of schools nationally and poor in comparison with similar schools. Students' average points score in science was low and represents overall student underachievement equivalent to two terms' learning. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving higher grades in GCSE double award science was well below the national average. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls at the end of either stage. Standards in 2004 were similar. Standards observed in lessons at the end of Year 9 were overall lower than the national expectation and for Year 11, below average. Low standards in the subject were identified in the previous report and they continue to be too low.
106. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. Students make insufficient progress. There are weaknesses in students' knowledge and understanding and investigative skills are under-developed.
107. Overall, teaching is unsatisfactory. The departmental scheme of work lacks detailed guidance and this was a weakness identified in the last report. Insufficient use is made of guidance provided by national strategies and examination boards and there are no explicit links made to lesson plans. Overall, the planning of lessons is a weakness. One consequence is that learning objectives often do not guide learning as they do not communicate clearly to students what they are expected to learn during the lesson and how they can demonstrate their achievement. Many teachers do not have sufficient understanding of the quality of work required of students at specific National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Thus, tasks are often inaccessible to many students or fail to stretch others and the effectiveness of target setting is undermined. The quality and frequency of marking is variable across teachers and so written feedback to students does not consistently support learning. This weakness was identified in the last inspection report.
108. An improvement since the last report is that all teachers now have good knowledge of their subject. This, coupled with enthusiastic presentations, helps to ensure an effective working relationship with students. However, in the larger classes, some students lose concentration when they are unclear as to the task they have been given or have been required to sit and listen for a long period. Overall, learning is unsatisfactory. Teaching assistants are well deployed and work well alongside teachers to effectively encourage and provide practical support to students on the register of special educational needs. Consequently, these students make good progress. Teachers of the GCSE courses human biology and environmental science, which were introduced last year, have devised stimulating programmes and learning materials which boost the motivation and the progress of students in these classes. Effective use is made in some lessons of National Key Stage 3 Strategy techniques. These include sharing of carefully worded lesson objectives which guide learning, starter activities such as domino cards which seize students' attention, and

assessment activities which promote learning such as the interactive use of student whiteboards and student self-marking of internal tests. However, the implementation of new teaching styles needs better co-ordination to ensure significant improvement in learning across all classes.

109. Many investigations are insufficiently challenging for students. Thus, whilst students handle apparatus with care and follow the instructions of teachers, they do not design experiments, make hypotheses, or decide which observations or measurements to make, or how to present their findings. Consequently, students do not engage with tasks in a spirit of enquiry and creativity.
110. Poor attendance and punctuality hampers many students' progress. Learning is further weakened by insufficient support to ensure that students maintain a complete and orderly record of work to effectively support revision, and the development of skills needed more generally, to be an organised learner. Students on the register of special educational needs and low-attaining students are effectively supported in class with well-designed worksheets matched to individuals' learning need and exercises which encourage them to express clearly in writing their understanding of science concepts. For example, Year 8 students were closely supported by their teacher and learning assistant in recognising key science words by underlining the correct spelling of words from three homophones; also, during a demonstration and class discussion of the measurement of blood pressure with Year 11 students, key phrases and words were written by the teacher on the board, and these were effectively used by the students to write a clear account of the process. However, the literacy skills of middle and higher-attaining students are not promoted effectively and there are insufficient opportunities for all students to learn science through speaking and listening. Teacher questioning does not prompt students sufficiently to explain, reason or to reflect on their science understanding and so students do not adequately develop their thinking skills. Students' numeracy skills are not developed systematically and so they are disadvantaged in national tests and examinations, as the higher levels and grades in particular demand competence in data analysis and numerical approaches to problem solving. Students' ICT skills are not developed sufficiently overall; however, there is good practice in environmental science.
111. Students are inspired and engaged by teachers' Powerpoint presentations which dramatically portray the workings of the human heart and the invasion of cells by a virus. Preserved specimens in jars illustrate features of invertebrates and invoke awe and wonder. However, insufficient use generally is made of social, moral, spiritual and cultural contexts to make science learning interesting and memorable. Citizenship is a strength of provision in environmental science, where students investigate the effects of oil spills on wildlife, make models of sewage treatment plants, and role play being government representatives advising the World Health Organisation on strategies to reduce the effects of acid rain. However citizenship is not harnessed in other courses to motivate students and make learning accessible.
112. Overall, leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
113. There is a strong team spirit in the department and teachers and technicians communicate and work well with each other. Technical support is very effective and is provided by committed and hard-working staff. Strong departmental relationships were identified in the last report. However, the management of the department is weak with respect to ensuring effective planning of lessons, the monitoring of

teaching, and in the use of data to analyse and effectively track student progress. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

114. The modern and well looked after laboratories, and the learning resources on the walls, including examples of students' work, provide a stimulating environment conducive for learning. Individual student workbooks provide helpful support for revision. Equipment is well maintained and made easily accessible to students and so supports well their practical work. However, poor availability of computers is hampering the promotion of students' ICT skills in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results in 2003 were below average.
- Students in Years 7-9 make good progress because of the good teaching.
- Tasks are not planned to meet the needs of all students.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- The good accommodation and ICT resources have a positive impact on learning.

Commentary

115. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. A significant number of students attain standards above the school's targets. GNVQ results in 2003 were below average, and in 2004 results fell further, partly due to misinterpretation of the GNVQ assessment criteria. Current standards in Year 11 are better, being closer to those expected for the courses being followed.
116. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Students' positive attitudes and good teacher support ensure students are fully engaged and this enhances achievement. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve satisfactorily. In some lessons, concentration starts to wane because there are not enough different activities to maintain interest.
117. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. The very good knowledge of teachers, and the well-planned lessons based on the national ICT strategy, effectively introduce new skills and extend learning. Students know what they are to learn and in most lessons this is reviewed and consolidated well. There are not enough differentiated tasks to ensure that students with special educational needs build their confidence through experiencing success.
118. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. The newly introduced options of computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) or GNVQ use on-line or textbook resources for self-supported study. ICT is less popular with girls and few take ICT as an option. Teachers monitor individual students and provide effective guidance for acquiring new skills. When students work independently for long periods, the lesson pace slows and there is not enough progress. In some lessons, a good range of activities, for example, demonstration followed by student practice and teacher support, ensures that students are fully engaged and make good progress. GNVQ students are encouraged to use assessment criteria to present coursework. However, teachers and students do not have a good enough understanding of the

standards required for GNVQ courses. Procedures are not yet developed for a formal and individual review of coursework to help raise achievement and Year 11 students have not had the benefit of assessment because no unit is complete.

119. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The development plan does not focus well enough on raising standards. ICT teachers have other subject responsibilities and there are no formal meetings to share good practice. There is not enough formal information for new teachers because of the lack of specific policies to raise achievement in ICT, and schemes of work for GNVQ and CLAIT are in outline only. The internet policy is agreed by students and staff and the safety of students is monitored well. The school has made a significant investment in hardware and software to provide an effective working environment, this is well supported by a well qualified and experienced technician, and has a positive impact on standards. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection because of the improved curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

120. The use of ICT for teaching and learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is no co-ordinator or ICT development group. Few teachers completed the national ICT training, and there has been no audit of the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects. Design and technology benefits from two clusters of computers and these are used well in all the different areas. Most subjects, including special educational needs, have out-of-date computers that do not enhance teaching and learning. Access to ICT rooms is restricted because specialist rooms are heavily used by discrete ICT. The learning resource centre (LRC) has been refurbished with up-to-date computers and this is used well by health and social care and English lessons. ICT rooms and the LRC are used well by students outside lessons for completing and presenting coursework and research for different subjects. Video animation is a popular after-school club that offers all students an innovative opportunity to use ICT.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national average.
- Teachers have a good command of their subject and sustain students' interest.
- Teachers do not use assessment to inform their planning and teaching strategies so students do not achieve as well as they could.
- The support provided by teaching assistants helps students with special educational needs to make good progress.
- The work of the department is not monitored rigorously enough to promote improvement.
- The quality of provision has declined since the last inspection.

Commentary

121. Results at GCSE are well below the national average. Students do not perform as well in history as they do in the other subjects they take. The work seen during the inspection was below average. Students' factual understanding is sound and they can use historical sources to follow an enquiry but their skills in analysing and evaluating information are below average. Students' achievement on GCSE courses is unsatisfactory.
122. The department's teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average and the school's assessments in other subjects. However, the work seen in the inspection was below the national expectations. This discrepancy is because teacher assessment in history is not based on secure evidence or measured accurately against national standards. Students' oral work is satisfactory but their written work is below what might be expected. Students have a good grasp of historical facts and can effectively use a range of sources to gain information. Their understanding of historical interpretation is weak and standards of organisation and communication are below average. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory.
123. Students do not achieve as well as they could because they do not consistently make enough gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons. As a result, students do not make sufficient progress over time. This is because teachers do not use their assessment of students' attainment to plan lessons and address weaknesses.
124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, ranging from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good command of their subject and use this to engage students' interest. This is exemplified by teachers' enthusiastic and stimulating explanations which enable students to listen attentively and so gain insight into the past. Students' interest is further sustained by a number of field trips and visits. For example, a talk from the curator of the local regimental museum helped bring the events of the First World War to life, as students were able to handle artefacts and learn about the experiences of Carlisle soldiers. Despite gains in knowledge, students have difficulty in organising and communicating what they have learnt, especially in writing. Many do not have the skills to work independently from the teacher or to collaborate effectively with others. This is because teachers do not focus enough on these aspects of learning. Where students are given clear guidance about how to tackle tasks, such as that provided in a Year 10 simulation exercise on road building, students make much better progress. In most lessons, students settle down quickly to their work as teachers use effective starter activities to introduce the aims of the lesson. However, the range of teaching strategies then used does not sufficiently meet students' different needs. This often leads to a decline in some students' concentration and application as the lesson progresses. Tasks, resources and learning styles are not amended to ensure all students make progress. Exceptionally, students with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported by teaching assistants who work constructively with teachers to ensure these students have full access to the curriculum.
125. Students' work is marked regularly and their marks are recorded carefully but students do not receive enough guidance about how they might improve. The marks and grades awarded are explained to the students but because these do not relate to national requirements, students do not know what is expected of them or how well they are doing. Students have some opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt

through good use of plenary sessions by teachers. They are not encouraged to judge their own work and make comparisons with what their teachers think.

126. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There are no teaching plans to support the GCSE scheme and show how students' learning is managed. The Year 7 to 9 plans are not used appropriately to guide learning. The department does not evaluate itself with sufficient rigour to identify its strengths and weaknesses.
127. Assessment data is not analysed to monitor performance patterns, trends and the achievement of different groups of students such as boys and girls. There has been little professional development for staff. As a result, the department has not focused enough on improvement and, until recently, was not asked or enabled to do so by the school's senior management.
128. The quality of provision has declined since the last inspection. There are still too few opportunities for students to use ICT in history. The quality of teaching and learning is not as good as it was and standards have fallen. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The engagement of students is good. This is due to the adoption of a range of starters and opportunities for students to pause and reflect on their learning and students' attitude toward their learning, which is good and results in good behaviour in geography lessons.
- Good use of enquiry techniques and 'thinking' activities improves the achievements of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Students are supported well and encouraged to do their best.
- Recent GCSE examination results have been below average; however, standards are now improving.
- Day-to-day marking is unsatisfactory.
- ICT used to enhance teaching and learning is undeveloped across the geography curriculum.

Commentary

129. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with expectations.
130. GCSE results for 16-year-olds in 2003 were below the national standard but have showed significant improvement in 2004. Boys did particularly well when compared to the performance of girls.
131. Currently, the achievement of students at the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory and standards are average. Students in all year groups have a sound grasp of key vocabulary and, as a consequence, have a developing knowledge of geographical terminology. Students in Year 7 have a developing understanding of the cause and effects of river flooding, ably supported by a presentation from an invited speaker from the Environment Agency. They make satisfactory progress in Year 8, extending their knowledge of population distribution across the United Kingdom. In Year 9, students develop a sound understanding of earthquakes and volcanoes in different parts of the

world. Students who choose geography in Years 10 and 11 are currently achieving well. They have a good knowledge of urban zones and progress well in their understanding of the need to balance growth on urban fringes with the development of 'brown field' sites within city boundaries in Year 10, whilst students in Year 11 engage well in thinking about fair trade while investigating banana production in Ecuador. Students with special educational needs make expected progress whilst too few gifted and talented students are being stretched to reach their full potential. Geography makes a useful contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy skills; however, insufficient progress has been made for the provision of ICT to support geography teaching and learning.

132. Teaching is good, overall, and students learn well. Lessons are carefully planned to provide an interesting range of activities that effectively interest students and help them understand the steps in their learning. Teachers manage their classes well and establish a good working atmosphere in which students are well behaved, try hard and enjoy their learning. Starters and plenaries that are well established, well prepared and timed are particularly effective in helping students know and understand what they are learning. This is a strength of the department. Where teaching is less than good, subject knowledge is weak, not enough is expected of students, learning is too slow and, as a consequence, not enough is achieved. Teachers' marking of students' work does not identify what students should do to improve.
133. Leadership and management of geography are both good. The department collaborates well to provide a relevant and coherent curriculum. Teachers incorporate new ideas into teaching and planning. The curriculum is enhanced by residential fieldwork and through invited guest speakers to broaden students' learning experiences. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection; standards of achievement are rising and the department has the drive and capacity to improve further, given support from senior management.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are above average.
- Students' achievement is very good overall and excellent for those following the GCSE course in graphics.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall with some excellent practice seen.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good because a mutually supportive team ethos has developed.
- Teacher assessment is very good because it helps students to improve their work.
- Workshop accommodation is too cramped and the food room is no longer suitable for 21st century teaching.

Commentary

134. Teacher assessment, corroborated by inspection evidence, shows that at the end of Year 9 standards were above national average in 2003. At GCSE in 2003, results were above the national average and well above average in graphics, systems and control and resistant materials.

135. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 because standards on entry in Year 7 are about average and by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. The girls do as well as the boys. The higher-attaining students achieve higher standards because they can express their ideas through very good annotated sketches and make finished products that are of high quality. The progress made by lower-attaining students is good because of the well-targeted support they receive from their teachers and learning support assistants.
136. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, standards in the range of design and technology GCSE courses offered in 2003 were above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards continue to be above average, as indicated in the 2004 results. There are some stunning pieces of students' coursework, for example, in graphics, where architectural models are made to exacting standards. Students perform better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects, especially in graphics, systems and control and resistant materials.
137. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good, with many lessons being excellent. In the most effective lessons, teachers' preparation and classroom management are excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a passion for their subject, which is used very effectively to motivate their students. They use skilful, well-targeted question and answer sessions, keeping the pace of the lesson brisk and no time is wasted. Students' learning is supported very well with high quality work sheets and excellent teaching of design skills. Peer assessment is used as a powerful tool to help students understand their own level of attainment. In addition, students also receive constructive comment on their work from their teachers and therefore understand what they need to do to improve.
138. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the department has developed a mutually supportive team approach, which contributes very well to the department's successful development. The department is currently providing some very good training for a trainee teacher. Being a lead teacher for the area, the head of department provides an excellent role model for his colleagues. He is well aware of areas in need of improvement and has systems in place to further raise students' attainment. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and the department continues to build on its strengths, now offering AS, A2 and GCSE Engineering (Double Award), which is better suited to some students' needs. Highly effective use of ICT, including CAD/CAM, has a very positive impact on teaching and learning.
139. A textiles room has recently been refurbished to a high standard, but for students following food studies courses, the accommodation does not provide enough hygienic food processing areas. The workshop accommodation is too cramped. A committed technician team provides support that has a positive impact on standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in 2003 Year 9 teacher assessments and the GCSE and A level examinations were well below national averages. They were similar in 2004.
- Standards have improved greatly over the past year, and are now in line with the national expectation by Years 9 and 11, but below them in Year 13.
- Well-planned and taught lessons enable all groups of students to learn well.
- The new head of department is evaluating the subject well and establishing strategies to raise standards.

Commentary

140. Standards seen in art and design are in line with the national expectations. They are better than those reported at the time of the last inspection because of recent improvements. The assessments undertaken by teachers in 2003 indicate that standards by the end of Year 9 were well below the national average, and remained at a similar level in 2004. Students have had little experience of art and design before entering Year 7. Many are well below the level expected.
141. Work seen in class and in folders shows that students are steadily improving in Years 7, 8 and 9, and their achievement is satisfactory. They have developed their basic skills very well over the past year, but previous work was very weak. They are progressing from this very low level, but have a lot to catch up in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding. All have sketchbooks and work in them is improving as they gain in experience. Some students are developing their use well, inserting resources and developing ideas thoughtfully. There is now an emphasis on improving basic skills to enable students to raise their standards.
142. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were well below the national averages and were at a similar level in 2004. Girls generally did better than the boys, many of whom performed much lower than predicted. An analysis of data indicates that students still did better in art and design than in their other subjects. The overall results are lower than those reported at the time of the last inspection. Standards of work in the present GCSE classes and in students' folders are better, and most are in line with national averages, but the lack of time for art and design in previous years has clearly had a negative effect on standards and achievement. Much of the work is based on design, with extensive research and development sheets before the finished piece. Homework is completed well; students are realising the value of putting time and effort into their research, and their drawing skills have improved as a result.
143. The quality of the teaching and learning is good. There is some good direct teaching of skills and techniques within a closely controlled framework of projects. When this happens, students clearly make progress. Attitudes to art and design are positive and the pace and challenge of the well-planned lessons keeps students involved. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory, as it was in the last inspection. Overall resources are very poor. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support individual students with specific needs. Assessment is satisfactory. Marking and the monitoring of progress are good, with helpful comments on work in progress, but targets, results and trends are not analysed so that teaching can be more focused on improvement.
144. Leadership and management of the department are good. The recently appointed head of department, who has been in post for just over a year, has evaluated the situation well and is making appropriate plans to move the subject forward. Routines

are being established and there is a clear focus on improving standards. Teaching assistants are used well and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

145. Accommodation is satisfactory, although there is only one useable sink, but resources for art and design are poor. There are few books, artefacts or illustrations, although more are being bought; the pottery area is not being used. Students' cultural development is good; there are a number of projects involving the study of other cultures, and the department organises visits and exhibitions that help students' personal development.
146. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Leadership, management and teaching are much better, and standards in Year 11, documentation and assessment have improved. In the sixth form, the timetable is unsatisfactory, four of the five Year 12 students can only attend one lesson, and their learning is seriously constrained.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning and assessment are unsatisfactory as learning objectives have not been clearly identified.
- There is an insufficient focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding and students do not know what they need to do in order to make progress.
- The Head of Music is an able musician; students benefit from his high level of skills, including accompanying skills.
- Classroom management is good and includes arrangements for good support for students with special educational needs.
- There are insufficient opportunities for extra-curricular music-making for most students.

Commentary

147. In work seen during the inspection, in a limited range of activities, students aged 14 are achieving standards broadly in line with those expected for their age. Recorded examples of the work of students aged 13 performing their own songs shows good progress has been made in this area, but overall the range of musical activities is limited and so the level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations.
148. Standards in Year 10 and 11 in work seen during the inspection were judged to be average and overall achievement satisfactory. The examination results for the small number of students entered for GCSE show standards which are broadly in line with their achievement in other subjects but lower than national averages.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. When teaching is good, a variety of learning styles are supported and there is good use of praise and a high level of motivation over a range of varied activities. Teaching and learning is less successful when learning tasks are not matched to the individual abilities of the students, when learning objectives are not clearly defined and when students are not clear what they will be learning. Assessment is unsatisfactory as students do not know what they need to do to make good progress and planning does not show clearly how students will build on previous achievements to make good progress.

150. There is effective deployment of learning support assistants, enabling students with special educational needs to make progress which is at least satisfactory.
151. Good quality lessons and ensembles are provided by visiting teachers from the LEA instrumental service but less than five per cent of the school population learn to play an instrument. Some instrumentalists have no formal ensemble opportunity. A choir meets for seasonal events and there is some opportunity for vocal performances with singers from other schools. The Head of Music is a skilled accompanist and provides good support for vocal soloists in concerts in school and in the community. The overall provision of extra-curricular music-making opportunities for most students is unsatisfactory.
152. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Management of the department has not been effective in important issues related to assessment, the understanding of assessment criteria, the marking of work, the clarity of lesson planning and the provision for appropriate computer-based ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is consistently good, with teachers building on prior learning to ensure continuity for students.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers promote confidence and a willingness to work hard, resulting in good behaviour and attitudes in lessons.
- There is no structured monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The professional development requirements for the department are not being systematically identified.

Commentary

153. Standards in physical education are improving. This is because of consistently good teaching which builds on prior learning, good relationships between staff and students and positive attitudes of students.
154. At the start of Year 7, standards are in line with the national expectations. By the end of Year 9, the overall level of attainment is still in line with national expectations but by the end of Year 11, standards are above average. This represents good progress over time. GCSE results over the last two years have been the best in the school and are above the national average. Teachers develop a high level of independence in students who work well on their own and in small groups. Both boys and girls make good progress and both achieve well. Students with special needs have good levels of achievement with attainment in line with national averages. Gifted and talented students also make good progress and a weekly lunchtime club makes a significant

contribution to their progress. Standards of attainment in practical work in Years 10 and 11 for both GCSE and non-GCSE students are well above average.

155. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and often very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned and organised. Prior knowledge is reviewed at the start of the lesson and learning objectives shared, being planned to ensure that all students will succeed. The lesson content is outlined and key words included to focus student learning. Lessons are well paced and varied and appropriate learning strategies are used to engage all students. Students know that teachers have high expectations of them and respond positively. A period of review at the end of the lesson is effective in engaging students in assessing what they have achieved and identifying targets for further progress to be made. Teachers make good use of questioning to check student knowledge and understanding and students are continually challenged to evaluate their performance and how it might be improved. This was evident in a Year 11 badminton GCSE lesson when students analysed their performance and placed targets relevant to their performance. The vast majority of the students are well motivated in the subject and there are very few non-participants.
156. Leadership is satisfactory, with a head of boys and head of girls physical education, whose skills complement each other. They provide good role models and are enthusiastic and committed. All areas identified in the last inspection have been effectively addressed and improvement is very good. There is a very good extra-curricular programme which is well supported by the students. The heads of department have a clear vision for the future. This can only be achieved with the support of senior management, who need to review staffing provision and timetabling if the department is to move forward. National Curriculum requirements are met but there is still an imbalance in provision with a higher proportion of games to other activity areas, which is obviously influenced by the very inadequate indoor facilities. Managers do not monitor teaching and learning sufficiently to improve quality and to systematically identify staff training needs.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies in **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have continued to fall and are far below average.
- More varied teaching methods are starting to raise achievement.
- Marking is used well to help students improve.
- There is no fixed teaching base and not enough access to ICT.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

157. Standards are well below average. In GCSE examinations the number of A*-C grades was well below average in 2003, the number of A*-G grades was slightly better but still below average. Results fell further in 2004, there were no A*-C grades, and although a significant majority achieved an A*-G grade, this is far below expectations. Students underachieve when compared with other subjects in school.

158. Achievement is unsatisfactory. The introduction of more varied teaching methods is starting to involve students more actively in their learning and impact upon achievement. A small minority of the more able students have positive attitudes to their work and this raises achievement, but a significant majority of students are passive and do not participate often enough in lessons.
159. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Learning objectives are shared but there is not always enough time for a thorough review of learning at the end of lessons. Teaching has recently benefited from LEA advisory support and is starting to improve, especially in Year 11, where there is a good range of short activities to motivate students. Year 10 students have not yet developed the study skills to help them make notes effectively on specific areas of research. The more able students are keen to answer questions and engage well in collaborative and independent work; however, a small number of boys and girls do not make enough progress because they do not attend to their teacher. Teachers monitor work and provide individual support to help students learn; however, tasks are not planned to meet the learning needs of students with different abilities and attitudes. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend knowledge. Students' work is marked well and corrected, offering good guidance for improvement.
160. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Evaluation of recent examination results is thorough and reflective and the views of past students have been sought. There is a desire to improve; however, the implementation and identification of the necessary improvements has come too late to stop the decline in results in 2003 and 2004. The head of department has other management responsibilities and there has not been enough opportunity to learn through sharing good practice with other teachers beyond the school. Lessons take place in a number of different classrooms so students do not have ease of access to resources, including ICT. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The scheme of work, although written, has insufficient impact on teaching and learning.
- There is no coherent delivery of the citizenship programme.
- There are reporting arrangements in place.
- Leadership and management of the subject are not yet effective.
- There are some incidental links to citizenship in a few subjects and activities.

Commentary

Standards in citizenship are unsatisfactory.

161. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 follow a programme that is integrated into tutor lessons once every two weeks. These lessons are also used for personal and health education and careers guidance so not enough time is set aside to teach the citizenship element. Achievement is unsatisfactory as students cannot cover the whole programme.
162. Since no audit of provision has been done recently, there is no way of knowing how citizenship fits into the curriculum planning of other subjects in Years 10 and 11, and there is no discrete teaching of citizenship and achievement is unsatisfactory.
163. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. They are not yet developed enough because overall provision is unclear. Students' performance is reported annually to parents, although the information is general and based on insufficient programme coverage.
164. There are some incidental links made to citizenship in English, history and physical education and there is curriculum planning for citizenship within design and technology. Many students are involved in extra-curricular activities where they can demonstrate competency in the strands of citizenship.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six 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 A level courses 2003

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	3	100	98.6	0	50.2	60	87.5
Biology	7	85.7	96.4	28.6	39.2	62.9	78.6
Media studies	14	100	99.4	50	37.8	87.8	82.1
Chemistry	5	100	97.6	50	49	88	84.9
Business studies	1	100	98.7	0	36.8	60	80.1
Dance	1	100	98.5	100	44.9	120	83.9
Design and technology	5	100	74.9	40	35	84	77.9
English language	1	100	99.4	100	36.3	100	80.9
English literature	17	100	99.5	29.4	46.5	84.7	86.5
French	2	100	98.8	100	51.5	100	87.6
ICT	1	100	95.6	100	24.6	100	69.5
Geography	18	100	98.7	44.4	44.5	86.7	84
History	4	100	99	25	44.6	80	84.6
General studies	24	100	94.7	16.7	31	67.5	73.1
Mathematics	7	100	96.7	42.9	55.6	80	88.8
Psychology	9	93.8	97.3	43.8	41.5	88.9	80.3

Physics	3	66.7	96.7	33.3	44.6	46.7	81.7
Religious education	1	100	98.8	100	46.7	120	85.6
Sports studies	1	100	98	0	30.9	60	75.2
Sociology	4	100	98.2	50	44.3	85	83.6

Level 3 GCE AS level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	100	80.1	0	23.7	30	29.9
Biology	1	100	65.2	0	11.1	40	20.6
Chemistry	3	100	72.7	0	13.9	23.3	24.1
Communication studies	6	100	86.4	66.7	23.8	48.3	32
English literature	3	100	85.9	66.7	19.1	46.7	30.2
General studies	19	100	73.9	21.1	17.8	37.9	25.7
Geography	3	100	74.3	0	19.8	30	26.5
History	1	100	80.7	0	19.5	40	28.6
Information technology	1	100	67	100	10.9	50	21.4
Mathematics	3	100	61.9	0	17.1	20	22.1
Other sciences	4	100	71.4	25	15.8	32.5	24.3
Other social studies	1	100	69.7	0	16.7	40	24.1
Physics	5	60	68.6	0	14.4	12	22.7
Sports/PE studies	2	50	73.2	0	11.4	10	23.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students entered for A2 examinations (2003) achieved grades A-E.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is contributing significantly to teaching and learning.
- Teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour are making a significant contribution to standards and progress.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students are enhancing the learning environment.
- Students' positive attitudes and application to work are having a significant impact on learning.
- More planned provision needs to be made for students to work independently.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

COMMENTARY

165. During the inspection, three one-hour lessons were observed, one in Year 12 and two in Year 13. Students' written work was scrutinised, and discussions held with teachers and students. In addition, a range of documentation was studied.
166. Students' attainment in the latest A2 examinations to have validated results (2003) is broadly in line with the national average. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when results were below average. It is also a significant improvement on the previous year's results, even though there were almost twice as many students entered for the examinations in 2003.
167. All students entered for the examination achieved grades A-E. It is not possible to validly compare the results of boys and girls because only a small number of boys were entered for the examination. AS level results in 2003 were above average but only a very small number of students were entered.
168. Generally, students' achievement is satisfactory with almost all students attaining standards that could reasonably be expected. Work seen during the inspection reflected the overall pattern of examination results and standards are average. Students are making sound progress and achieving satisfactorily.
169. Because of the very small number of students currently studying for the A2 examination (three girls and one boy), it is not possible to validly compare the attainment and achievement of boys and girls. Students who are re-sitting the GCSE examination in English were achieving satisfactorily in the one lesson observed during the inspection.
170. In discussion and in their writing, students studying for A2 examination demonstrated an understanding of characterisation and relationships in a literary text, and were able to discuss the interaction of these. Students were able to cite evidence from the text in support of their views and were capable of efficient note taking and annotation of texts. Students indicated a grasp of literary concepts such as dramatic monologue, third-person narration, iambic pentameter, assonance and mostly were able to use specialist terms. GCSE students were understanding the concept of register and appropriate language, and developing a grasp of social attitudes to language.
171. The written work of A2 students seen during the inspection indicated the ability to write at length, with work well organised and effectively structured. Writing was generally fluent, showing the use of complex sentences and width of vocabulary, and a good degree of technical accuracy.
172. The quality of teaching is good. Students speak very positively about the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of work and behaviour. Teachers' relationships with students are good. Teachers have established routines to ensure that students get down to work quickly and productively in lessons. These factors combine to create a positive atmosphere for learning, and impact directly on students' good attitudes and high levels of concentration. A strong sense of purpose is established at the beginning of lessons and no time is wasted in getting down to work.
173. Students are provided with opportunities to work independently and to develop ideas and understanding through co-operative activity. These opportunities enable them to extend their thinking and learning. However, there is a need for more planned opportunities for students to work independently and engage in student-led

discussions. Lessons seen during the inspection were very teacher-led, with students rarely taking initiatives or raising questions of their own.

174. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
175. Sixth form provision is efficiently co-ordinated. However, the use of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. This limits the extent to which improvements in teaching and learning and the raising of standards can be planned and implemented systematically.
176. There were no significant issues for development identified in the previous inspection report and improvement is satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

177. Standards of literacy are enabling students to meet the demands of their courses. They are sufficiently competent readers to meet the reading requirements in their subjects and they are generally able to effectively organise written work and to write with reasonable standards of technical accuracy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average standards.
- Good teaching promotes good achievement.
- Assessment practice is good and used well to plan lessons.
- Effective monitoring of student progress promotes good learning.
- Teachers identify individual student attainment targets but these are not shared with students.

Commentary

178. Students attain standards that are above average. Results in the 2003 GCE AS and A2 examinations were above the national average and represented good achievement based on the students' attainment in GCSE examinations. Results in 2004 (yet to be validated) show that standards have been sustained. Current students seen during the inspection are achieving well and modular examination results are indicating that standards remain above average.
179. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons very well so that all students learn well and make progress. Teachers know their students well and challenge them individually to ensure they make good progress. Students respond well to this approach and they work hard with great concentration. Relationships are very good, with students helping each other and responding well to the help from teachers.
180. Marking and assessment procedures are good and ensure that teachers and students both have a good understanding of what needs to be learned next to make good progress. Work is marked accurately and the comments made by teachers are particularly helpful to students.
181. Teachers keep detailed records of their assessments and use this information as well as students' previous attainment to monitor the progress individuals make. This enables teachers and students to celebrate success and identify what needs to be done to stay on target to achieve.
182. Teachers do identify examination target grades for students but do not share these in sufficient detail with the students as a way of promoting further progress. Students would welcome this and would then be more involved in setting and achieving their own module targets.

183. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers work effectively together sharing the modular programme to maximise teachers' skills and knowledge. The formal monitoring of the effectiveness of the department is underdeveloped. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

Physics

The provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve good results in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.
- Students respond well to teaching and develop effective independent learning approaches.
- Some work lacks sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students.
- Students are encouraged to learn about wide-ranging applications of physics.
- Some contexts in which the subject is taught do not motivate all students equally.

Commentary

184. In 2003, physics A2 results were above average and students made good progress. Results in 2004 indicate that above average standards have been sustained. Students achieved well at AS in comparison with their prior attainment, and in previous years, students also achieved well at A2. Module test results indicate that currently the five students in their second year of study are making good progress in the subject at A2. This year, no students are studying AS physics.
185. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. An effective working relationship underpins teaching and learning in class. Activities are varied and interesting and the teacher prompts students to express their views and to ask questions. As a result, students maintain concentration and effectively draw on their previous knowledge to develop new understandings. However, the pace and level of numerical challenge are sometimes insufficient to stretch higher-attaining students. Students are well supported by their teacher in class and value their out-of-school contact by email. Students cope well with the responsibility they have to maintain their own file of work, and to meet deadlines for submission of homework.
186. Students are encouraged to take an active interest in the wider world of physics research and applications. In the one lesson seen, students analytically discussed current research into a wide range of physical phenomena ranging from high energy particle physics and the search for the Higgs intermediate vector boson to new theories on friction between tyres and the surface of a wet road.
187. Learning resources are generally used well to develop students' powers of reasoning and explanation in the subject. However, some problem-solving occurs in contexts that relate more to male, rather than female students' prior learning, and so does not motivate all students equally. Nevertheless, all students enjoy the subject and are

encouraged to have appropriately high aspirations for further study in higher education and possible careers.

188. Overall, leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is limited self-evaluation but performance data is reviewed in order to enhance future learning. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; it motivates students and encourages them to succeed.
- Standards are above the national average.
- Students make very good progress and achieve very well.
- Students are very responsible and manage their own learning effectively.
- Leadership and management are very good; the department is committed to improving its provision.

Commentary

189. Results in the A2 and AS level examinations are consistently above the national average. Work seen during the inspection was also above what might be expected nationally. Students have a very good understanding of geographical concepts and demonstrate good research skills. They speak about their work articulately and with confidence. Their writing is well structured and effectively draws upon relevant case studies.
190. Students achieve very well because the teaching they receive is very good. Students are motivated to do well and know they can succeed because they feel both supported and challenged. They understand the examination criteria by which they will be judged and know what they are expected to achieve. They respond positively to the encouragement provided by their teacher. They work hard and are secure in seeking help. Students make very good progress and almost all Year 12 students extend their AS studies to A2, achieving equally good levels of attainment.
191. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is planned very thoroughly. It focuses on making geography exciting and relevant and promotes improvement. Students' work is assessed regularly and constructively. Their difficulties are identified and tackled imaginatively and sensitively. Students are encouraged to reflect on their achievements, judge their own work and each other's, and take responsibility for their

own improvement. As a result, students' confidence is fostered and they acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to do well. Teaching provides a wide range of learning styles so that students' different needs are met. ICT and fieldwork are particularly well used to enhance learning. A variety of tasks and resources make lessons interesting and help students learn to work both independently and collaboratively. A good example of this is the annual study day, where they work alongside students from other schools on geographical enquiries. Teaching uses skilful questioning to challenge students to think deeply about geographical issues in class discussion. They are also encouraged to be creative and take risks through presentations and problem-solving activities.

192. Leadership and management are very good. The department is committed to improvement and ensures teacher subject knowledge is at a premium through extensive professional development and personal research. This approach provides an excellent example for students. The department is reflective and self-critical; it analyses its strengths and weaknesses rigorously and deals with its development areas with drive and determination. Geography's strong tradition of success is very well promoted to students and parents and geography is a consistently popular sixth form choice of study.
193. There has been good progress since the last inspection. ICT is now an integral part of teaching and learning. Students demonstrate good levels of ICT competency and this improves their learning in geography. The range of resources has improved considerably. These are well used to help students become independent learners. The high standards of attainment and very good teaching quality have been sustained.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at AS and A2 level are above average and achievement is very good.
- Teachers' command of their specialist subject is excellent.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the subject.
- Students make highly effective use of ICT including computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM).
- There are highly effective industrial links to support learning.
- Students have not yet attained grades at the highest level.

Commentary

194. In 2003, standards at AS and A2 level were above the national average. The most recent results show that standards remain higher than average. Group sizes are relatively small, particularly in GNVQ manufacturing.
195. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and in conversations confirms that standards are overall above average and achievement is very good since many students start the course with average grades at GCSE. Students have not yet attained A grades at A2 level. In general, students do very well on those parts of the

course that are concerned with their own ability to use research and analysis skills. They confidently use a broad range of ICT systems for imagery, research and development and CAD/CAM. Students can discuss their designs with growing confidence and are able to relate them to the real world of work because the department has formed strong links with a local toy manufacturer.

196. All students show an excellent level of interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When they are working individually on computers in lessons, they help each other and high-level discussions of their design work are common. Students show imagination and flair, for example, in the design and manufacture of tables to complement iconic chair design. Students also lead and manage students from the lower school in entering challenge competitions.
197. The quality of teaching is excellent and was so in all lessons seen. Teachers have excellent command of the subject and transmit their enthusiasm for the subject to their students. They are very good at anticipating aspects that are likely to be misunderstood and plan for this. When students are working individually, teachers make excellent use of their time, discussing work with students and probing further design possibilities. This helps students to develop their higher-level critical evaluation skills.
198. Leadership and management are excellent. Excellent use is made of peer assessment to develop students' self-awareness. A highly effective system for tracking and recording individual students' progress is in use. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

ART AND DESIGN

199. Art and design in the sixth form was not inspected, but was sampled. Indications are that the provision is unsatisfactory. In 2003, the performance of students who took the A level examination was below the national average, with the three students gaining grades C, D and E. In 2004, results were lower; one student gained a grade D, the other three were not classified. There is now one student in Year 13 and five in Year 12. Of these, four can only attend one of the time-tabled lessons because of a clash with another subject. The teacher is using her expertise to challenge and improve the students' work, but the lack of teaching time is depressing standards.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching engages students in a range of stimulating activities.
- The excellent procedures for assessment and target setting build students' confidence.
- The teachers are jointly committed to success.
- Achievement is rising because of students' positive attitudes and self-belief.
- Learning is enhanced by visiting speakers from the health and social care sector.

Commentary

200. The applied GCSE in health and social care is a new subject to the sixth form. Students start the course with lower than average levels of prior attainment and standards of work seen are average.
201. Achievement is good. Students have very positive attitudes to work and are becoming increasingly confident so they achieve better than expected. Students enjoy the their lessons, they are motivated by its relevance to the real world and their future careers.
202. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have a range of subject backgrounds and use these well to enhance learning in this broad vocational area. There is a very good range of activities to engage and interest students, for example, role-play, outside speakers and the use of ICT for presentation and research. Students take their responsibilities seriously when they greet their visitors. Each lesson has a clear focus and accompanying student guide which states the learning objectives and theoretical information; these provide a firm base for learning. Students build on their own experience and use a range of resources to research different health and social care services for different client groups. Students' work is assessed frequently. Feedback is excellent, positive comments celebrate success and this raises students' self-esteem. Teachers use their knowledge of students very well to set individual work targets so that each student can improve; this is a good motivator.
203. Leadership and management are very good. Although there is no designated subject co-ordinator, the three teachers, who are all new to this subject, work very well

together. They meet frequently to share good practice, discuss progress and jointly plan lessons and schemes of work. They have established excellent procedures for assessment. There are strong links with the world of work through the use of visiting speakers to add a real world dimension to the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	5
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	5
Overall standards achieved		5
Pupils' achievement	3	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	1	5
Attitudes	1	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		5
The quality of teaching	3	5
How well pupils learn	3	5
The quality of assessment	3	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	4
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	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5	5
The leadership and management of the school		5
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	3	5
The effectiveness of management	3	5

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