

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL**

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124861

Headteacher: Mr P Rossi

Lead inspector: N A Pett

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 268920

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	13 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	562
School address:	Beeton's Way Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
Postcode:	IP32 6RH
Telephone number:	(01284) 753512
Fax number:	(01284) 701927
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Mahoney
Date of previous inspection:	12 <sup>th</sup> October 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is a 13 – 18 co-educational comprehensive voluntary aided Catholic school, holding specialist status for mathematics and computing. It serves the Deanery of Bury St Edmunds, attracting pupils from a wide geographical area as a result of parental preference for a Catholic education. About a quarter of the pupils are not members of the Catholic Church. A total of 562 pupils and students are on roll, making it much smaller in size to other secondary schools nationally. The sixth form is smaller than average, and attracts a high proportion of pupils from Year 11, with a minority coming from other schools. There is little mobility amongst the school population. Pupils and students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, although a large proportion experience social and economic advantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. About seven per cent of the pupils come from minority ethnic heritage and very few pupils require support for English as an additional language. Approximately ten per cent of the pupils in the main school are identified with special educational needs, which is below average. The main categories are for specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and moderate learning difficulties. The number holding statements to address their specific needs is below average. Attainment on entry to the main school, and to the sixth form, is above average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17331	N Pett	Lead inspector	
14756	J Lovell	Lay inspector	
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language
23528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
27825	J Versey	Team inspector	Science; Physics
20215	J Mellor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
1578	M Sinclair	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; Sociology
31688	B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design
18755	R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education
4605	M Lormor	Team inspector	Music
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History
17530	M Cureton	Team inspector	Geography; Drama
12721	D Riddle	Team inspector	Design and technology; Work-related learning
28002	S Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Citizenship
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	Health and social care

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good, effective school with very good characteristics.** The very good ethos supports pupils and students very well so that they develop into mature and responsible young people. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Pupils and students achieve well overall, and results in public examination are well above average. Clear direction and leadership is given by the headteacher, and the school is well managed. It is giving good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average, and achievement is good.
- It is an orderly community with a very good learning ethos in which pupils' and students' mature attitudes and behaviour enhance their very good learning.
- Teaching is good, and work set meets the needs of the majority of pupils.
- Assessment is good, although there is some inconsistency.
- E-learning is being effectively developed.
- Pastoral care is good and pupils and students are very well known, although the management of some aspects of health and safety needs improving.
- There is a good partnership with other schools and the community.
- Leadership and management are good but the procedures for monitoring and evaluation need improving.
- The provision for design and technology, physical education, citizenship, and for personal, social and health education needs improving.
- Statutory requirements are not met for information and communication technology and school publications.
- Parents support their children and the school well.

Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Results in external examinations have improved markedly. The overall good quality of teaching has been sustained, and the use of assessment has improved. Pupils are now more autonomous learners, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. Unsatisfactory progress has been made in relation to information and communication technology (ICT), although the recently acquired mathematics and computing specialist school status is already showing the potential to remedy this weakness. Governors are now well involved in setting the direction for the school, although they still do not fulfil all of their statutory duties.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2003	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	A	B	A	

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained at the end of Year 9.*

**Pupils and students achieve well and attain well above average results in their tests and examinations.** These results place the school in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. Attainment on entry in Year 9 is above the national average, especially in language and literacy skills, which are well above average. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in English, mathematics and science, and the unvalidated results for 2004 show a similar picture. The 2004 GCSE examinations results show that, against their prior attainment, pupils' results were well above average for the average points score. Girls perform better than boys. Results at GCE in the sixth form were well above average. The value added to

pupils' performance was very good. Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 are above average overall, being well above average in English, mathematics and science. Only in ICT are standards below average by the end of Year 11. Standards in the sixth form are above average, and a significant number of students attain very good results and enter higher education. Pupils who are gifted and talented also achieve well overall, as do the minority of pupils with special educational needs, and the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language.

**Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, as is their response to opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.** They take responsibility for their work and are confident learners. Attendance is well above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The overall quality of education is good. Teaching is consistently good**, with examples of very good teaching in a significant proportion of lessons. Learning is very good, being supported by pupils' and students' very positive attitudes, although work set does not always meet the differing needs of some pupils. Effective use is being made of specialist school status in developing e-learning. Assessment procedures are good overall but there is variation in practice. The range of courses in the curriculum is satisfactory as there are weaknesses in the provision for ICT and design and technology, and the programmes for citizenship, and for personal, health and social education are not consistently well taught. There is effective careers advice and good links with further and higher education institutions. Extra-curricular activities and opportunities to enrich the curriculum are satisfactory. The quality of individual care is very good, and the overall support and guidance is good. The management for health and safety has some shortcomings. Most parents and carers contribute effectively to the life of the school and are very supportive of their children's education. Links with other schools and the community are good. Resources are good but accommodation has limitations.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management are good overall, with examples of very good practice.** The headteacher has initiated good improvement since the last inspection. The senior staff team provide effective support, and the procedures for performance management are good. The leadership amongst subject leaders and pastoral staff is generally good, with examples of very good practice. Their management is only satisfactory overall because they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluation, although there is good practice. This undermines the process of self-evaluation and effective strategic development planning. The governors have developed their role well, and understand many of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They do not fulfil some of their statutory duties for the curriculum and school publications, and the management of some aspects of health and safety needs attention.

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

Parents consider that this is a good school and are very supportive of the work that it does. They are very pleased with academic standards, and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible young people. Pupils and students are proud of their school and consider that it provides them with a good range of opportunities. They recognise the support that they are given in their work by staff.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- extend the involvement of all key staff in the monitoring and evaluation process;
- ensure that the procedures for assessment are consistently applied and used to address instances where work does not meet the needs of a minority of pupils;
- extend the provision in design and technology and in physical education to widen the curriculum;

- ensure the consistency with which personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught; and
- improve the management of health and safety;

**and for the sixth form:**

- improve the timetabling to eliminate timetable clashes; and
- improve the quality of accommodation and access to ICT for private study;

**and, to meet statutory requirements for:**

- ICT;
- details in statutory school publications for special educational needs provision.

### THE SIXTH FORM AT ST BENEDICT’S SCHOOL

The sixth form is smaller in size than that found nationally and through its partnership provides a curriculum of GCE, AS and A2, and vocational courses.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective sixth form which is well led and is cost-effective.** Access is open to a wide range of academic and vocational courses which generally meets students’ needs well. The good quality of teaching enables students to learn well. Standards and examination results are above average overall, and examination results show that many students achieve very well.

**The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The students have very positive attitudes towards their education.
- The provision is very well augmented through the partnership with another school sixth form.
- Results in public examinations are well above average and most students achieve well, with examples of very good achievement and attainment.
- Timetabling clashes prevent some students from attending all lessons in their subjects.
- There are good structures to support students’ guidance.
- Accommodation for personal study and access to ICT is unsatisfactory.

### 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, modern foreign languages and communication	<b>Provision in English is good.</b> Students achieve well and standards are above average. The quality of teaching and learning is good. <b>Provision in French is very good.</b> Students achieve very well, and standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good.
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good.
Science	<b>Provision in physics is very good.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well through effective teaching.
Information and communication technology	<b>Provision in ICT is good.</b> Students achieve very well and standards are above average. The quality of teaching and learning is good.
Humanities	<b>Provision in history is good.</b> Standards are well above average and achievement is good, as is the quality of teaching and learning. <b>Provision in geography is good.</b> Students’ achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are all good. Standards are above average. <b>Provision in sociology is very good.</b> Achievement is very good and standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are also very good.

Visual and performing arts  
and media

**Provision in art is good.** Standards are well above average, and students achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

Health and social care

**Provision in health and social care is good.** Students achieve well, although standards are below average. Teaching and learning are good.

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

### **The following subjects were sampled:**

Business studies, chemistry, design and technology, music and Spanish.

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

Induction procedures are good. Students are well supported through the monitoring of their academic and personal development. They are encouraged to participate in self-assessment and most are well aware of how well they are doing. Good systems exist to support their revision programmes, which students value. Guidance for further and higher education is very effective, although it is only satisfactory for alternative career pathways. Effective provision exists to support students who are experiencing problems. There is a sound programme for personal and academic development. The accommodation and resources to support pupils in their private study sessions are unsatisfactory.

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

**Leadership and management are good.** The head of sixth form is well supported by a tutor team and the two deputy headteachers. They work effectively in monitoring students' progress and welfare. The partnership with another school is well used to provide the wide range of courses and opportunities on offer, although some timetable clashes lead to the disruption of learning for a minority of students.

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

The students have generally positive views about the sixth form provision. They are proud of their school, and consider that they are well taught and that their form tutors and subject teachers are readily available to help them when they are in difficulties. A small minority express the view that the subjects offered need to be extended to meet their needs and aspirations. Most students feel that they are treated as adults and that their opinions are listened to. Most consider that they are given responsibility for their life and work. They enjoy the roles that they have as mentors for younger pupils. Their main criticism is that they do not have adequate access to space and for ICT for private study sessions, with which inspectors agree.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is good overall, leading to generally well above average standards.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils, with examples of very good achievement.
- Standards are well above average by Year 11 in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards are below average in ICT.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils mainly join the school from their middle school education at the age of 13 when they are at the beginning of Year 9. Their standards on entry are above the national average overall in relation to the levels expected for their ages in the large majority of National Curriculum subjects. This is particularly so in English and mathematics. It is only in information and communication technology (ICT) where their standards are below average. Results at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3) in 2003, the last year for which there are national comparative figures, were well above average based on average points scores in English, mathematics and science, and for all three subjects overall. At the higher levels, results were well above the national average in all three subjects. In relation to similar schools based on free school meals, results were well above average in English and science and very high in mathematics. Girls performed better than boys in English and mathematics, but with little difference in their performance in science. The trend for improvement has been above that found nationally. When compared with pupils' prior attainment in national tests at the age of 11, results were very much better than expected showing that pupils have achieved very well over the three-year period. Results for 2004 show that attainment is similar in the tests, although no comparison can be made with national figures until they are published. Challenging statutory targets, set for the end of Year 9, were broadly met in English, mathematics and science but not in ICT.

#### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.6 (36.3)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	40.2 (40.8)	n/a (35.4)
science	36.6 (37.4)	n/a (33.6)

*Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. At GCSE, the overall results in 2004 were well above average in comparison to all schools nationally for the percentage gaining five A\*-C and for the percentage gaining five A\*-G grades, and for the average points scores. The average points score was well above average in relation to all schools and very high in comparison with similar schools. The targets set for 2004 results were exceeded, even though results were not as good as in 2003. Girls performed better than boys. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain as well as other pupils of similar capability. The trend for improvement has been above that found nationally. In relation to pupils' prior attainment at the age of 11 and 14, results were very high, showing very good added value. There has been a significant improvement in results since the last inspection for the percentage of pupils gaining five A\*-C grades; it has risen from 57 per cent to 77 per cent. Overall, the national analysis of performance places the

2003 National Curriculum test results and 2004 GCSE results in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally.

**Standards in Key Stage 4 at the end of Year 11 in 2004**

GCSE/GNVQ	School results	National results
5 or more A*-C grades (%)	77 (81)	52 (52)
5 or more A*-G grades (%)	99 (98)	89 (88))
1 or more A*-G grades (%)	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	53.1 (52.1)	41.4 (40.6)
Capped average point score per pupil	44.7 (44.2)	34.9 (34.7)

**GCSE & Equivalent Qualifications**

	School results	National results
5 or more A*-C grades (%)	77	52
5 or more A*-G grades (%)	99	89
1 or more A*-G grades (%)	99	96
Average point score per pupil	414.0	340.3
Capped average point score per pupil	346.4	282.8

*There were 142 pupils in the year group, 79 boys and 63 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Standards by the end of Year 9 reflect previous test results well, and also show pupils' overall good achievement. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. Standards in ICT are below average for the pupils' ages, reflecting the fact that the pupils do not cover all the statutory requirements. Standards are also well above average in history, and above average in geography and music. In French and Spanish, standards are average, as they are in art and design, physical education, drama and citizenship. Significant weakness is still present in design and technology, where pupils do not have adequate experience in resistant materials, with standards which are below the national average, although standards are above average overall across the courses taught.
- By the end of Year 11, standards are higher overall. Pupils gain very well from their very positive attitudes, behaviour and attendance which, along with the good quality of teaching and learning, contributes markedly to their overall good achievement. A significant number of pupils achieve very well. Equally, pupils' well above average language and literacy skills enable them to understand their work well. Where numeracy is required, most pupils have more than adequate skills to meet demands. Standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and modern foreign languages. Above average standards are found in geography and music. Standards in GCSE physical education are well above average but in core physical education, standards are average. Where provision is not secure, standards are adversely affected. In design and technology, standards are well above average in food, above average in textiles, and average in resistant materials, reflecting the shortcomings in the provision for this aspect. Standards in citizenship are average. It is only in ICT where standards are below the national average. This reflects the fact that teaching and learning have not been effectively organised, and subjects have not made consistent use of computing across the curriculum. The onset of specialist school status for mathematics and computing has the potential to address this issue, as have the very effective developments in e-learning.
- Girls achieve better than boys overall, although boys achieve well and attain standards above the national average overall. The pupils from minority ethnic heritage achieve as well as other pupils. Only a very small minority require support for English as an additional language, which is effective. Likewise, the minority of pupils with special educational needs are achieving well.

Pupils who are identified as more capable are achieving well, although there is inconsistency in the way that they are given extension activities in some lessons. In a minority of lessons, pupils' overall achievement is hampered when work set is insufficiently challenging or teacher expectations are not high enough. This also reflects the fact that assessment procedures are inconsistently used. Where they are used well, for example in mathematics, history and science, pupils' achievement is really enhanced as they know how to improve their work. Monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of teaching and learning are inconsistently used and thus undermines the overall provision for the consistent raising of standards.

## Sixth form

Students achieve well and develop their learning skills very effectively.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well for their capability.
- Standards are above average.

## Commentary

- Standards on entry to the sixth form are above the national average overall. Students have to be successful in the GCSE subject by normally attaining a grade B to pursue further study for GCE AS and A2 courses, but not for VCE courses. Where students do not reach the required grade, they may still begin the course, reflecting on the overall care extended by the school to guide students effectively. The teaching of some subjects is shared through a partnership with another local sixth form.
- Results in GCE A-level examinations in 2004 were well above the national average in comparison with all schools and average points scores. The number of students in the cohort was 52 and, in some subjects, the number of entries was very small, making comparisons with the national results unreliable. However, both male and female students attained very well. Results have been well maintained since the last inspection and have recovered from a slight fall in 2003. Results in the AS examinations taken by a minority of students were also good and the large majority of students stay on to complete their A2 studies.

### **Standards in GCE A/AS and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.4 (93.0)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	50.2 (41.3)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	347.3 (297.2)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 52 pupils in the year group, 26 boys and 26 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- For the current Year 13, standards are above average overall. There is little significant difference between the achievement and attainment of male and female students. In the subjects inspected at depth, standards are well above average in history, physics and sociology. In other subjects, standards are above average, except in health and social care, where they are below average. This reflects the students' overall capability. Students in Year 12 are achieving equally well following on from their significant success at GCSE. As in the main school, students overall capability in language and literacy, and numeracy, supports their subject learning and achievement. Students display a clear sense of maturity in their work, and generally adapt well to the challenges. However, not all teachers develop students' skills in independent learning to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Standards in cross-curricular ICT are average overall. The application of skills is hampered by access to

computers in subjects across the curriculum, and the limited access students have to computers in their private study time.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and are a significant strength of the school. Attendance levels are very good and punctuality is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and towards their work.
- The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good.
- Pupils are confident and willingly undertake responsibility.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Levels of attendance are very good and punctuality is good.
- The very good moral and social development.

### **Commentary**

9. The good attitudes and behaviour found at the time of the last inspection have improved further and are a significant strength of the school. The school has very high expectations of pupils' personal development and conduct, establishing a strong sense of identity with the ethos of the school. Pupils are proud of their school.
10. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, and their interest in their work and the activities provided by the school, combine to create a very orderly and calm community with a strong learning ethos in which pupils achieve well and attain well above average standards. Pupils' learning is supported very well by their very good levels of attendance. Most pupils have very good self-esteem. Their very good levels of concentration enable them to persevere very well in undertaking challenging work, and many have the capability to work independently, although this is not always used sufficiently in lessons. The very good relationships between pupils benefit collaborative working. Both boys and girls mix well together, and they are inclusive to the small number of pupils from ethnic minority heritage. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their work when working in small groups or having individual tuition, despite focusing on the areas of learning they find most difficult. They behave very well in these sessions. Pupils generally enjoy very good relationships with their teachers and other adults.
11. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning and most organise themselves very effectively. Pupils are proud of their school and want to contribute to the school community. Those serving on the school council are now able to take greater responsibility for determining their own priorities and increasing their contribution to the life and work of the school.
12. Behaviour in and around the school is very good, with only isolated instances of silly or immature behaviour displayed by a very small minority of pupils. Instances of bullying or harassment are very rare and pupils frequently display consideration for other pupils, supporting them extremely well and sensitively. A very good example was seen in the support for physically disabled pupils. In the past year there have been 21 fixed-period exclusions and one permanent exclusion, involving eight boys and three girls. This level of exclusions is broadly similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. Summary details of exclusions are shown in the table below.

**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	499	19	1
White – Irish	11	0	0
White – any other White background	22	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	9	0	0
Information not obtained	0	0	0

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

13. Attendance is very good and, although it had been stable over the period since the last inspection, in 2003/4, attendance showed a very marked improvement and is well above the national median, with unauthorised absence below the national average.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.3
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

14. The development of pupils’ personal qualities is well supported through the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Detailed judgements on the spiritual life of the school will be reported on by the Section 23 inspectors in their report. However, in subjects across the curriculum, there are examples where pupils discuss ethical and moral issues. This supports them in forming values and beliefs, as, for example, in science, history, geography and citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The provision for pupils’ moral development is very good. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations set for them. They understand the difference between right and wrong. They demonstrate very responsible attitudes in, for example, taking responsibility for organising activities for other pupils and acting as learning mentors to younger pupils. This response is also very beneficial in their social development, and opportunities to collaborate in their work, to mix as well as they do in their free time and in school activities, enable them to display a mature level of understanding. The large majority of pupils have a sense of fairness for living in a community. Overall, cultural provision is satisfactory. Pupils fully understand the catholicity of the school and of their immediate heritage but insufficient is done to ensure that they understand the cultural diversity of modern society.

## **Sixth form**

Students' attitudes are positive. They behave well and their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Opportunities for their personal development as senior members of the school are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students behave well and provide good role models for younger pupils.
- Students enjoy very good relationships with each other and staff.

### **Commentary**

15. Overall, both male and female students display positive attitudes towards school life. They understand the issues of being an integral part of the school and the responsibilities this brings with it. They also realise that being linked with another sixth form brings the responsibilities for attendance and punctuality when moving between the sites, albeit they are very close. Overall attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, and the weaknesses in monitoring attendance are being addressed. This is crucial to be sure where students are at any given time with regard to their care.
16. The students said that they enjoy their time in the sixth form and find the teaching mostly challenging and demanding. They show very good interest in their work and are courteous to staff and socialise well with each other. They generally provide good role models for younger pupils, but there is a casual attitude of a significant minority towards keeping their sixth form accommodation tidy. In lessons, students remain on task very well and contribute ideas with confidence and maturity. They enjoy very good relationships with each other and staff and show good independence especially, in the organisation of their work and activities - such as during a day at Hengrave house where students considered the impact of war on communities. Not all teaching encourages independent learning, to prepare students for the next stage of their education. Students are involved in leadership in school sporting activities, fund raising and many support younger pupils through a range of support activities. In their response to the questionnaire most felt that they were consulted in regard to school issues; inspectors concur with this judgement.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

**The quality of education is good.** Teaching is good and learning is very good. The curriculum is satisfactory. The quality of care is good. Links with other schools, parents and the community are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is good and learning is very good. Assessment procedures are good, showing an improving trend since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good practice.
- Pupils' learning is very good, being very well supported by their very good attitudes.
- The differing needs of a minority of pupils are not always well met.
- Assessment is good but there are examples of inconsistent practice.

## Commentary

17. The quality of teaching is good and this quality has been well maintained since the last report. During the inspection, it was very good in Years 9 to 11 in just over a quarter of lessons, and at least good in about two-thirds. In nearly a third it was satisfactory and in a very small minority it was unsatisfactory.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 90 lessons in Years 9 to 11**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (3.3%)	21 (23.3%)	35 (39%)	28 (31%)	3 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

18. There is little difference between the quality of teaching in Years 9 to 11. Very good teaching was often seen in mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and in art and design. In other subjects, the quality of teaching is good, except in ICT, physical education, citizenship and PSHE where it is satisfactory. In design and technology, teaching is good in food technology and textiles but satisfactory in resistant materials. The overall quality of learning is very good, contributing very well to pupils' achievement and standards. Their very good attitudes mean that they work hard and take responsibility for their learning.
19. In the best lessons, teachers plan very effectively and use their subject expertise very well to support pupils' achievement. The quality of teachers' explanations and the questioning of pupils ensure that pupils gain a full understanding of the work being undertaken. Good use is made of the Key Stage 3 Strategy where lessons have effective introductions and conclusions. Questions can be extremely challenging, extending pupils' thinking skills and their recall of their previous knowledge, thus consolidating their learning. Lessons in mathematics, science, history and modern foreign languages display these successful qualities. This approach is also beneficial in developing pupils' already above average literacy skills further. It makes very good demands on their speaking and listening powers, but also demands that they use the correct specialist vocabulary. Likewise, pupils are expected to use their reading and writing skills equally well in the work that they produce. In these lessons, the variety of tasks also develops pupils' skills in numeracy.
20. The involvement of pupils in the best lessons engages their interest so that they work hard and successfully complete the work. Teachers also make effective use of collaboration, getting pupils to work in pairs or in groups to share their ideas as they apply differing hypotheses to the problems that they have to solve. These very good lessons are taught with pace and high expectations, and pupils respond very well, making very good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. It is also in these lessons where ICT is effectively used to support pupils' learning, either through the use of interactive whiteboards and projectors, or specific research topics; for example, in geography, art and design and music.
21. Where teaching and learning are good, some of these strategies are in use, but not to the same degree of demand or consistency. Thus, pupils' achievement is lowered. The learning styles do not cater well enough for the needs of different groups of pupils. Too often, opportunities to use ICT are missed. These lessons are too teacher directed and do not engage the pupils consistently. Lessons are very directed towards examination preparation. Where teaching and learning are satisfactory, the work set is not always challenging enough or it may be too challenging. There is too much reliance on the use of textbooks. The differing needs of pupils are not well enough met in these lessons and there are examples where pupils do make sufficient progress. This is equally applicable to classes which are set by, or are of mixed capability. Again, pupils are too dependent on the teacher, and the pace of these lessons is too slow. This occurs in citizenship and PSHE lessons, as well as in some lessons in science, history, physical education and in design and technology. Lessons do not begin with any recourse to previous work or in setting out the learning objectives for that session. At

the end of the lesson there is inadequate checking to ascertain what learning has taken place, and thus planning for the future is insecure. In these lessons, and in the minority in which teaching was unsatisfactory, it is only because of the pupils' good attitudes that behaviour does not deteriorate. Class management is generally good, being well supported by the positive attitudes and good behaviour of the pupils, and the very good relationships which exist with staff. Time and resources are well used overall. Homework is set on a regular basis, and generally marked well.

22. The minority of pupils with special educational needs are given effective support so that they generally learn and achieve as well as their peers. Individual education plans are of good quality, although targets are not always related to the work done in subject area, and teachers do not always plan well enough to meet individual needs. Where teaching support is made available, it is very good because they are well trained and experienced, and they have a close working relationship with subject teachers. However, in some lessons where support is not available, teachers do not always address needs adequately. Setting by capability is used well so that teachers can address specific support in smaller groups or to promote the achievement of those who are more capable. Whilst there are examples of effective extension work, teaching strategies and resources are not consistently adapted to meet the needs of higher attainers. They are identified by prior attainment and departments are refining this approach. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported and they too achieve well.
23. The quality of assessment is good overall, but there is inconsistency across subjects. Assessment practice is very good in mathematics, science, geography, history, drama, and GCSE physical education. In these subjects, assessment is thorough, accurate and feeds back well to support improvement in pupil learning. Assessment is satisfactory in art and design, ICT and unsatisfactory in citizenship, and in core physical education. There is very effective analysis of pupil data on entry, and this is built on systematically to give a record of pupils' progress. The identification of pupils' specific special needs is very good and special educational needs staff plan detailed programmes which address their needs closely. The good assessment policy promotes best practice from research and from the National Strategies and gives clear guidelines for marking. In the best practice, marking is very good. Pupils are very aware of their current levels and their target grades and this is generally very motivating for them. Target grades are based on average overall performance; some departments are now effectively setting targets grades built from performance in the same subject. Pupils who underachieve can be picked up early for intervention and support. At a whole-school level there is good analysis of the data produced; and this feeds back well into development planning. For example, gender progress analysis has helped the school to pinpoint where different teaching methods might boost pupil performance. Monitoring of assessment practice takes place through data analysis, pupil discussion and work scrutiny, but not yet through observing how teachers specifically use questioning and feedback within lessons. The school has embarked on an assessment-for-learning project, encouraging the sharing of good practice across the school.

## **Sixth form**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overall quality of teaching is good and learning is very good with some very good practice.
- Assessment is good.

### **Commentary**

14. Inspection evidence shows that teaching is good with some very good practice. This was seen in mathematics, sociology, art and design, physics and French. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The table below must be treated with significant caution in relation to

percentages because of the small sample. Some lessons are taught in a partnership school and no judgements are reached about this teaching.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	13 (35%)	19 (51%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

25. All of the characteristics, referred to above in relation to the best lessons, are equally present in sixth form lessons. Teachers bring their significant subject expertise to bear and set out to challenge the students very well. For example, students are encouraged very effectively to develop cogent arguments, drawing on their wide knowledge, understanding and skills. This was seen to very good effect in sociology, English and history. In science lessons, the full range of strategies is used well, including ICT, numeracy and literacy. However, access to ICT is also an issue and sometimes limits teaching styles. Students bring significant levels of maturity to their lessons, supporting their achievement and leading to their very good learning. They take advantage of each other's knowledge as they combine well to discuss aspects of their work; they collaborate exceptionally well, and not only in class. In private study, they enhance their learning as they discuss lessons and prepare work for the future.
26. Assessment is well used and supported very well by teachers' marking. At best, marking is very good with some outstanding comments, which make students think and help them to improve. They understand what they have to do and respond well to targets. The most consistent use of assessment occurs in sociology, physics, and in health and social care.

### **The curriculum**

The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. Statutory curriculum requirements are not met for ICT. There are satisfactory opportunities for enrichment outside of lessons. Staffing, resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum has limitations in ICT, design and technology and physical education.
- The co-ordination of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of most of the pupils in the school, but there are few opportunities for vocational studies.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

### **Commentary**

27. The curriculum in Year 9 has satisfactory breadth and balance. Statutory curriculum requirements are not met in ICT because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake data logging and control. In design and technology, there is insufficient coverage of computer-aided design and computer aided manufacture. There are restrictions in the breadth of activities in physical education due to the lack of space so that, for example, there are limited opportunities for dance. In Years 10 and 11, there is a sound combination of core subjects and range of option choices. All pupils take a GCSE in applied ICT, but this is a double award subject which is being taught in half its allocated time, which places some limitations on pupils' achievement and standards. The curriculum offered is generally well suited to the needs of most of the pupils but access to vocational-orientated courses is very limited, although further opportunities are being researched. There has been some modification and development of the curriculum enabling a small number of pupils to have access to workplace learning, with some Year 11 pupils having extended work experience.

They have access to college courses which are relevant to their work experience placement, as well as attending school on a reduced timetable so that they can take a number of GCSE examinations. Overall, the provision of programmes in the 14 -19 age range continuum is satisfactory.

28. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory as there are inconsistencies in its use and application. This reflects the previous problems that the school has experienced for staffing, but it is also because there is inadequate co-ordination of the provision. The management of cross-curricular literacy is satisfactory but it is unsatisfactory for numeracy. There is better consistency in the attention given to developing pupils' literacy skills than for their numeracy skills. This reflects the fact that monitoring and evaluation procedures are not consistently established at whole-school and subject levels.
29. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils and is beginning to refine its identification procedure. As yet, there are few additional activities to broaden and deepen these pupils' learning, although their lessons are challenging so that they achieve higher grades in their examinations. The activities developed include taking linguists to a county workshop, participation in public speaking competitions and a mock trial. The top mathematics GCSE set take GCSE statistics, which they study in their own time. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Pupils have full access to the curriculum, although the provision suffers where teachers do not plan sufficiently to make the curriculum accessible to these pupils. There is very little withdrawal, but where it is used over a period of time, care is taken to ensure that the work done is similar to that done in the class lessons.
30. Pupils study personal, social and health education alongside citizenship and careers in designated lessons. This is enhanced by provision for sex and relationships education, which is taught in religious education lessons, which the school reports enables an appropriate religious perspective to be given. This programme is helping to ensure that the pupils' personal development is good. A limited range of enrichment activities supports this. There are lunchtime clubs which support learning well in a range of subjects, but there are few opportunities after school to broaden experiences. Transport issues are cited by the school and many pupils travel by bus. There is some good provision in English and drama where 'Theatre in Education' provides preparation for the study of a Shakespeare play in Year 9 and another, Romeo and Juliet, in Year 11. Additional theatre visits extend such experiences. There are school trips in French and pupils attend the Maths Challenge. Provision and take-up for extra curricular physical education is satisfactory. Pupils participate both in inter-school team competition, for example in soccer and netball, and also in individual activities where they represent the area county. Pupils also have opportunities for work experience.
31. Staffing is satisfactory. In most subject areas there are well-qualified teachers who have relevant experience to teach the curriculum. In physical education, however, there is no one with the expertise to teach dance. In those lessons where teaching assistants were observed they operated effectively in providing good support for pupils with special educational needs. The art department has the services of a part-time technician who also provides learning support. There are few problems in appointing and retaining staff and any that do occur are dealt with promptly.
32. Resources are good. Resources for ICT have improved considerably since the last inspection, although there are still issues in design and technology and music. Textbook resources are satisfactory. Many of the books in the library are out-of-date in terms of meeting the requirements of the current curriculum. Good use is made of visiting theatre in education companies in school and regular visits to theatres are organised.
33. Accommodation is satisfactory. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection, with the building of a new drama studio which is suitable for practical activities. There have been improvements to the staff room, changing rooms have been refurbished and a toilet for the disabled created. Extra ramping has been built to provide wheelchair access to the building. Although there is a new ICT room, pupils still complain about difficulty in gaining

access apart from timetabled lessons. Outdoor facilities for physical education are good, but the small gymnasium restricts the curriculum that can be offered. In design and technology, workshops are in need of refurbishment. Laboratories in science provide a positive learning environment, but due to insufficient laboratory space, some lessons have to be taught in non-specialist rooms.

### **Sixth form**

The overall quality of the curriculum is good. Staffing, resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum 'partnership' provides a wide range of courses.
- Accommodation for private study is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

34. The curriculum available is good and is very well enhanced through the links with other providers. There is a comprehensive range of AS and A2 courses which are the dominant offer. Vocational courses are available but these are more limited. Occasionally, timetable clashes lead to students being unable to attend all of the sessions on offer in their subjects. The programme for personal development is provided through tutor time and provides a satisfactory range of opportunities. In most subject areas there are appropriately qualified teachers with relevant subject expertise. In subjects such as English, history and science, staffing is very good and teachers are well qualified to meet the demands of the post-16 curriculum.
35. Accommodation is satisfactory overall as students are taught in the same rooms as for the main school. However, study space is inadequate. Students have access to a small study room, which is inadequate. Although resources are satisfactory, students, on several occasions raised the issue about lack of access to ICT, particularly for private study during their 'free' periods. Year 13 students expressed the view that, although they are expected to make use of ICT in their homework they have difficulty in gaining access during the school day. Inspectors concur with their views.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils are cared for very well on an individual level. Induction is very good. Support and guidance based on monitoring are good. The involvement of pupils in seeking and acting on their views is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pastoral care of pupils is very good.
- Teachers and support staff are consistent in their expectations.
- The induction of pupils is very good.
- Good use of outside agencies.
- Management and co-ordination of health and safety matters have weaknesses.

### **Commentary**

36. The school's good provision for pupils' wellbeing is based on a strong system of support for their individual needs. There is very effective organisation, which includes clear partnership between members of the senior management team and heads of year. The head of year and form tutor have pivotal roles for most pupils. A part-time counsellor and two local chaplains provide additional support. Although the pupil questionnaire indicated some concerns,

discussions with pupils indicated that they feel confident in discussing schoolwork and personal issues with either their pastoral staff or subject teachers. Many say that they take their concerns to their parents.

37. The school is good at involving pupils through seeking their views. Tutor groups and the school council provide effective forums where pupils' views are aired and taken seriously. Pupils report that the school listens to and acts upon their suggestions, which have included improvements to and additional provision in extra-curricular sport. The school also consults pupils on whole-school policies. However, pupils feel that feedback from the school is not consistently provided. The respect accorded to pupils' views contributes to the school's ethos as a community in which everyone has a valuable part to play.
38. Very good arrangements ensure that pupils' transition into the school is smooth, and parents and pupils are appreciative of this. Heads of year visit the feeder schools to talk with Year 8 pupils and parents, and there are good 'buddy' links with existing Year 9 pupils. Tutors do not move on from Year 9 with their group. This enables them to use their experience of the induction programme with each new in take.
39. The transfer from Year 9 to Year 10 is well managed so that pupils can access appropriate courses. There is good contact between pastoral teams and subject teachers so that monitoring of personal and academic development is cohesive. The school has very good systems for tracking and guiding the academic and personal progress of individual pupils. There is very good personal support for pupils with identified special educational needs. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly with pupils and they are involved in setting their own targets. Pupils and students with statements are invited to their own annual review and, if they do not want to attend, their views are sought. Access to the whole-school assessment system allows the pupils' academic progress to be monitored. However, it is not always easy to draw the available information together to find the progress made towards a pupil's specific areas of need. The school has effective liaison arrangements with outside agencies and social service departments in the three local authorities from which pupils come.
40. The continuity of care through Years 10 and 11 is very good because year team staff move with the pupils at the end of Year 10. Careers advice is good. Careers education is integrated into the personal, social and health education course. The development of some vocational courses has been beneficial and shows good approaches to overall care. There are appropriate options meetings where opportunities are available to discuss the courses and eventual careers available. Accommodation for specific careers guidance has improved in recent years and there is an office for private interviews and an area within the library for the display and provision of resources. Careers guidance software is available on networked computers throughout the school. The leadership of careers is committed and enthusiastic and has good vision to develop and improve the programme further, utilising the limited resources and training that have been provided very effectively.
41. Arrangements for child protection are based on the local area protection committee policy. The co-ordinator and her designated deputy have undertaken appropriate training, but there is no reference to child protection in the staff or supply staff handbook. There is an appropriate policy for the use of intervention to control or restrain pupils who are in danger of harming themselves or others. Appropriate records are maintained. The provision for first aid throughout the school day is good. Arrangements for first aid after school are unsatisfactory because there are no designated first aiders on site.
42. The management and co-ordination of health and safety have weaknesses. Some training in risk assessments has recently been undertaken by a member of staff and the health and safety policy reviewed. External support, for completing hazard identification, is employed but the recommendations have not all been implemented and the current status is not rigorously monitored. Whilst health and safety is generally promoted well in lessons, there are occasions when insufficient emphasis is placed on wearing appropriate safety clothing and, for example,

ensuring that hair is tied back whilst working with certain equipment. Risk assessments are administered but are not rigorously monitored.

## **Sixth form**

The support and guidance is good. Induction is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements are very good.
- Students are well supported and guided.
- Students do not consider that their opinions are consistently listened to.

### **Commentary**

43. The overall induction into the sixth form is very good. It links well to the guidance in Year 11 for course choices but there are effective procedures for the transfer to different study skills. Their progress is effectively monitored through assessment and personal development, and relationships with the head of sixth are good. They are well supported by a clear sense of humour and an awareness of students' developing autonomy.
44. The links through the partnership provide a good range of courses. However, where there is a shortcoming in care is in the monitoring of attendance, especially when students are being taught outside of the school. Students are provided with good impartial support and guidance to enable them to make informed choices about future study and careers opportunities. Careers guidance and careers interviews are available to all students in the sixth form and seek to raise aspirations and provide them with good advice to enable them to make informed choices. However, the students' questionnaire, and in discussion with them, indicated that their views were not sufficiently sought or acted upon. For example, the provision of private study facilities and access to ICT, was an area that they cited.
45. Arrangements for health and safety, child protection and first aid are consistent across the school and reflect the strengths and weaknesses noted in the report for the whole school.

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

The partnership between school and home and with the community and other schools is good. Management arrangements for the shared provision for the sixth form curriculum are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parental support is very good.
- Links with other schools and colleges are good.
- Community links are good.

### **Commentary**

46. The 'positive' partnership between school and home that was identified at the time of the last inspection is good but is still not being exploited to its full potential to help the school to fulfil its mission statement. Overall, parents are very positive about the school and are very supportive of its activities across the full 13-18 age range. They recognise that the school has helped pupils and students to develop into mature and responsible young adults who can exercise independence and are reflective in their actions, displaying consideration for others. A minority express some reservations about the information which they receive about pupils' progress and the extent to which they are consulted and their views taken into account. The school usually manages to resolve any concerns of parents informally and this was the case throughout last year. There is an appropriate complaints procedure.

47. Pastoral and teaching staff are readily accessible to parents and seek to involve parents' support in the event of any concerns. Consultation evenings to discuss pupils' progress are very well supported by parents. In addition, they receive an annual academic report which provides a narrative setting out coverage of the curriculum and a suggested area for improvement. These are satisfactory overall although the quality is inconsistent. Parents are provided with good curriculum/coursework and option choice information and, although there are no regular whole-school newsletters, other information provided to parents is of variable quality but generally good. Most information provided to parents is also available on the school's website.
48. The school does not, however, seek to involve all parents in expressing their views on issues affecting the school community and the improvements which are planned and taking place. Some parents have volunteered to join groups on race equality, referrals and sex education, and parents were invited to complete a survey on school reports, but there is no effective dialogue involving all parents and their views are not used to contribute to the school improvement planning process.
49. There are good links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. The parents of pupils with statements attend their child's statement review. Individual education plans are sent home so that parents are aware of their child's targets and can support them at home.
50. There are very good links with feeder schools so that each new pupil's entry into school is planned for, and in some aspects the induction steps planned are outstanding. Effective links occur for a minority of pupils in an extended college-based curriculum. The partnership with another school for the sixth form curriculum is well managed. Links with the community are good and are well used for enhancing the curriculum in terms of work experience. Pupils are also involved in activities relating to the religious foundation of the school and in charitable activities in the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher gives the school effective direction. Governance is good, although statutory requirements are not met for ICT, health and safety, and information for special educational needs in their annual report.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The effective leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff.
- Governance is good.
- Specialist School Status is being very well managed.
- The school gives good value for money.

### **Commentary**

51. The headteacher has a clear vision and sense of purpose, which is effectively shared with the staff. This has enabled the school to achieve specialist status, recognition of its management strengths through its Investor in People assessment, and recognition through DfES achievement awards in 2001 and 2003. The headteacher is well supported by his senior managers. The overall influence of these key staff, in setting and expecting high standards of performance and behaviour is reflected well in the school's very positive ethos, good standards of teaching and the good levels of achievement. The leadership of other key staff is good overall with some heads of subjects and pastoral staff providing significant strength in their leadership and management. There are, however, inconsistencies in monitoring and self-evaluation which impact on the ability to identify patterns and take appropriate action. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are mainly an aspect of performance management carried out by senior staff, which is well organised. There is not a cohesive

approach whereby heads of subjects have a specific programme for monitoring, or where the consistency of policies and procedures is applied. This leads to the inconsistency seen in this inspection in, for example, the quality of teaching and learning, assessment and use of ICT. Practice is well developed in some subjects, such as science and mathematics.

52. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Results in external examinations have risen significantly. The overall good quality of teaching has been sustained, and the procedures for assessment have improved. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. A significant curriculum development has been the recently attained specialist status in mathematics and computing. This is being very well managed and has the potential to impact effectively across the school, especially to remedy the weakness in ICT provision, which was an issue at the last inspection. For example, the developments in e-learning and access to the school website and Intranet have the capability to support pupils' learning very well. The special educational needs department is well managed and led. The recently appointed co-ordinator is very knowledgeable about specific difficulties and designs individual programs very competently. She has already recognised areas which need to be improved and is implementing her plans. As part of this, staff are developing specific areas of interest further including counselling, behavioural difficulties, dyscalculia and dyslexia. The professional development of staff is good and is effectively linked to whole school needs and performance management. Induction of new staff is satisfactory. Links exist for initial teacher training. Administrative staff are efficient and provide good support. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis.
53. Governance is good. Governors have a clear understanding of their role in the governing of the school and are very supportive. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have been well involved in setting the direction for the school, which is an improvement since the last inspection, not least in the recent award of specialist school status. The governing body maintains a strategic overview and brings a good range of experience and expertise to discussions. However, statutory responsibilities are not met for the provision for ICT, the management of health and safety and ensuring that their annual report has a detailed section on pupils with special educational needs.
54. Budgeting and financial planning are sound and support the school's educational priorities and areas for development. Financial information is readily available and reports are regularly provided to the headteacher and presented to meetings of the governing body. Procedures to ensure that the school compares its performance and achieves best value from its resources are satisfactory. There is a good analysis of results as the school compares its performance with other schools, nationally and locally. The last audit, completed in November 2004, brought to the attention of governors the absence of a Best Value Statement and this, together with other identified issues, is being addressed. An inventory was not in place. The school improvement plan does not directly link to budget planning but procedures are robust and there is a clear strategy, closely linked to available resources, which drives the improvement plan. The plan is strategic, although the criteria set to measure activities are not always sufficiently clear. The school carefully accounts for the additional funds and grants which it receives and they are used appropriately for the purposes designated. Funds held on contingency are satisfactory, and the school gives good value for money.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,962,687
Total expenditure	2,073,589
Expenditure per pupil	3,883

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	226,599
Balance carried forward to next year	115,697

## Sixth form

The leadership and management are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the sixth form is good as part of a 14-19 learning continuum.
- Arrangements with the neighbouring school are well managed and effective.
- The academic, vocational, social and personal needs of students are well managed.

### Commentary

55. The headteacher has a strategic overview of the sixth form, along with governors, and provides it with good leadership as part of a 14-19 continuum. He ensures that links with the neighbouring school are effective and harmonious in the provision of a wide range of post-16 courses.
56. The day-to-day running of the sixth form, meeting the academic, vocational, social and personal needs of students, is well managed by the head of sixth form. He is supported by members of the senior management team and, together, there is an effective partnership. Comprehensive records are maintained and there are very good strategies to support students in their academic development. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. As in the main school, subject staff do not have a regular programme and neither is the head of sixth form involved in this work. Thus, there are again inconsistencies in practice.
57. The overall provision has been effectively enhanced since the last inspection by the links through partnership for post-16 courses. Through this students have access to courses which generally meet their needs. Overall, the sixth form provision is cost-effective and adequate.

## WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-organised work experience programme enhances learning about and at work.
- The good programme for careers education enhances learning for work.
- There is insufficient monitoring of departments contribution to work-related learning.

### Commentary

58. The leadership and management of work-related learning (WRL) are satisfactory. The school is successfully following national guidance and statutory requirements are being met. The contribution of subjects to this course is not monitored sufficiently and thus opportunities are missed. The way that pupils demonstrate skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace is well monitored.
59. Learning about work and through work is effected by a well-developed programme of work experience for all pupils in Year 10, which has a good impact on pupils' personal development. There are good links between work experience and some subjects, for example English, PSHE, citizenship and modern foreign languages. Work experience makes a positive contribution to pupils' achievement in these subjects. Those pupils following the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award Scheme benefit from an additional work placement.
60. Learning for and about work is well established through a good careers education and guidance programme. The citizenship and tutorial programmes provide satisfactory support to

this element of WRL. A satisfactory range of visitors and off-site visits supplements pupils' learning about work. This programme, through its citizenship links, helps pupils to gain an understanding of wider employment issues covering aspects such as the role of trade unions and the changing nature of the labour market. In Year 11, pupils are prepared for their transition to work or into the sixth form. Careers related units develop pupils' skills of decision-making, completing personal statements and interview techniques. The support for pupils who wish to transfer to post-16 education is good.

61. Elements of the vocational ICT course make a good contribution to pupils' learning for work, for example, where they learn about business simulations. Other optional subjects which make a positive input include design and technology, geography and music.

## **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 **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The differing needs of pupils are not always well met.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Monitoring and evaluation is underdeveloped.

##### **Commentary**

62. Year 9 National Curriculum provisional test results in 2004 were higher than those of 2003, when they were well above average and above those of similar schools. Girls do much better than boys in the tests, and the gap is wider than that found nationally. In relation to their test results at the age of 11, results were much better than expected, although they were below those in science and mathematics. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average in English and above those of similar schools. The 2004 results dropped from the very high levels of 2003. Boys did less well than girls and the gap was wider than that seen nationally. GCSE results in English literature were above average in 2004, and were lower than those of 2003. The Year 9 tests and GCSE English examination results represent good achievement for those year groups and the literature results represent satisfactory achievement.
63. For current pupils, standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average and pupils are achieving well. Higher attaining pupils have a very good level of understanding of different kinds of literature and their writing is usually accurate, detailed and interesting. Middle attaining pupils paragraph and punctuate correctly; their writing is less detailed and interesting. Lower attainers show a straightforward understanding of the literature that they study. Their writing tends to be short, with more spelling and grammatical mistakes. In Year 11, standards are also well above average and these pupils, too, are achieving well. The highest attaining acquire a very detailed understanding of literary themes and show a sophisticated understanding of writers' intentions. For example, in an essay on 'An Inspector Calls', pupils were exploring how far the characters were responsible for their own actions and the consequent effects on others. The themes were explored confidently and pupils argued their points clearly and convincingly. Middle attaining pupils also become knowledgeable about themes and characters in literature. They tend, however, to describe events more than analysing how a writer achieves his effects. Lowest attaining pupils write short pieces, often using clumsy expressions and making spelling mistakes. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. There is good individual support for some targeted pupils in lessons and teachers know their needs well. Standards in speaking and listening are well above average across the school. Pupils speak confidently and can adopt an appropriate manner and tone in different situations.
64. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subject well; they explain ideas and ask questions effectively. A particular strength is the emphasis placed on preparing pupils for tests and examinations. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and these contribute significantly to the good learning in lessons. In a minority of lessons, there are times when the pace flags and learning drops, and boys are less engaged than girls. Teachers tend to plan a fairly limited range of tasks and activities. For example, only one lesson observed featured any

role-play, and none used computers to stimulate interest. Teachers assess work well. They write helpful, developmental points and appreciate good work. Pupils know their expected grades and have a reasonably clear idea of what they need to do to improve. The department is making a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Some interesting work was seen exploring sin in 'Macbeth' and in another essay, a pupil cleverly analysed the themes of existence and reality in 'The Truman Show'.

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. During the long-term absence of the head of department, the deputy has been doing a good job in managing the subject and some useful innovations have been introduced, such as regular department meetings, and a closer focus on how well pupils are doing. There are, however, no detailed schemes of work which would support a new teacher coming into the department. There are no systems in place for tracking pupils' attainment and identifying underachievement or for rigorously monitoring teaching and learning, except under the arrangements for performance management conducted by senior staff. This limits the opportunity to share good practice amongst subject staff. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

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

66. Literacy levels are well above average across the school. Most departments promote reading and writing through emphasising key words, correcting mistakes and stressing appropriate writing styles for different purposes. For example, in drama lessons, pupils write evaluations of their work, and in geography, their essays are well structured and developed. Science teachers emphasise technical vocabulary and in history, pupils write from the point of view of a historical character – such as a particularly moving account by a pupil writing a letter as a soldier from the western front. Many subjects also provide good opportunities to discuss issues. There is a very good focus on oral work in science, and pupils discuss well in groups in English. Some dyslexic pupils get good help from the special educational needs department and some use laptops in lessons to aid their writing. Overall co-ordination is satisfactory as there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation to measure the consistency with which subjects address pupils' needs.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Both French and Spanish were inspected.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Results in assessments at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are above national averages.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- ICT is not used in lessons to practise and consolidate learning.
- Many pupils do not continue to study French in Year 10.
- Schemes of work do not consistently reflect current practice and include reference to cross-curricular themes.

### **Commentary**

67. In 2004, teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 for French were well above the national average. Girls outperformed boys but boys and girls had improved by the same amount from the previous year. Standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection were average in French and above average in the second foreign language, Spanish, which is offered to the higher attainers. Pupils perform well in tests because they are conscientious and learn their work well. In French, higher attaining pupils can research vocabulary to describe character and relationships, although they do not always pronounce words accurately. Average attaining

pupils can talk in pairs about their weekend activities. Lower attainers answer questions in French about the morning routines of a French family by watching a video recording. In Spanish, pupils were observed creating sentences to describe their evening routines, which they did well.

68. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average in French, and well above average in Spanish, for A\* to C grades. There was an above average proportion of A\* to B grades in both languages. Boys did not perform as well as girls, but their performance was above the national average in French and Spanish. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 were well above the national average overall. In Year 10, pupils can use a range of resources to produce oral presentations and extended pieces of writing in French on topics such as the local area. They had created attractive brochures about their ideal town using ICT. In a Spanish lesson, they used words and phrases creatively to describe the positive and negative aspects of life in towns, and had written at length about their school. In Year 11, pupils ask each other questions in French on topics such as free time activities and they reply from memory with a series of sentences using past, present and future tenses, opinions and reasons. They assess each other's work using checklists.
69. Most pupils in Year 9 achieve well in both French and Spanish, and standards are in line with the national average. They enter the school with a wide vocabulary in French and a secure knowledge of the present tense. During Year 9, they extend their skills and communicate successfully in the past and future tenses. However, the achievement of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is unsatisfactory when work is not focused on individual needs. Higher attaining pupils who study the two languages use the experience of French to make rapid progress in Spanish. They deduce structures and develop their range of communication quickly. In Years 10 and 11, when pupils have chosen to study languages and classes are smaller, achievement in Spanish and French is very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes and work hard. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well but there is no consistent provision in lessons to extend their skills. Overall, boys and girls were achieving equally well, as do the small number of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language.
70. Teaching in both French and Spanish is good, with examples of very good practice. In Year 9, it is good overall and in Years 10 and 11, it is mostly very good. Teachers are competent in the languages they teach and can sustain use of the appropriate foreign language during the lessons. They plan thoroughly and resources are well matched to the aims of the lessons. Pupils are informed about what they are going to learn at the start of the lessons, though they do not always have the opportunity to review their learning at the end. The very good lessons are characterised by the challenge and variety of the tasks, the brisk pace and the enthusiasm and determination of the staff. Pupils respond well to their teachers and learning is good in Year 9 in French and Spanish, and very good in Years 10 and 11. They listen to instructions, and use time productively. Their own use of the foreign language for classroom communication does not often include routine requests. Homework is set regularly and exercise books are marked frequently, concentrating on extended pieces of writing. Pupils know the standard of their work across the skills and how to improve because teachers comment on their work and help them to set targets. They are encouraged to use computers for homework, especially for display work and research, but pupils do not frequently use ICT in lessons. The recent installation of a data projector in one of the classrooms has enabled clearer presentation of material, but its full use is not yet exploited.
71. The department is well led and managed. Teachers work together as a team to create and share materials. Data is used to analyse the performance of pupils and to inform planning, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is only satisfactory. There is good vision for the future, but schemes of work are inconsistent. Where there has been recent updating, the pattern of progress is clearer. Overall, there is a lack of specific reference to cross-curricular aspects such as citizenship, work-related learning and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, where the department makes a good contribution. In French, the scheme of work indicates how ICT is to be further developed in innovative ways. Learning is enhanced

by the French exchange visit for pupils from all years and a visit to Spain for Year 10 pupils. There are opportunities for Year 11 pupils to attend revision clubs at lunch times, and there was a recent visit from a French theatre group for Year 9. Two language assistants provide support for speaking practice. Despite this provision, there has been a limited uptake of French in Year 10 during the last two years, with Spanish proving to be more popular.

72. Since the last inspection, progress has been good. Standards have improved in French and National Curriculum levels are now used for assessment.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Analysis and use of assessment data are thorough and constructive.
- ICT is underused as a resource for learning.
- Leadership is very good and management good.
- Monitoring and evaluation of existing policies and initiatives are not robust enough.
- The co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

73. When pupils enter the school their standards are above the national average. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were very high compared to both the national average and the average for schools in a similar context. In relation to their performance at the age of 11, results were very high and better than in English and science. The pupils' achievement overall is very good compared to their prior attainment on entry to the school. As in previous years the girls performed better than boys. Since the last report there has been an improving trend in pupil performance greater than the national trend. Current standards of work are overall well above average and pupils are achieving very well, reflected in the fact that patterns in pupils' work at all levels of attainment are both detailed and extensive.
74. Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 were well above the national average with girls performing significantly better than boys. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was significantly better than the national average. The pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment by the same cohort in Year 9 was very good. Current standards for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and they are achieving very well. In 2004, standards in the GCSE statistics examination were very high with a significant proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. All pupils entered for the examination achieved grades higher than the minimum D pass grade.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers demonstrate very good command of the subject; they are aware of the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers plan effectively, with clear learning objectives, though teaching strategies for achieving the objectives are not always well thought out and sometimes still rely heavily on the textbook, a point made at the last inspection. The teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of the pupils. Work is intellectually challenging, deepening pupils' understanding. Excellent use is made of the new interactive whiteboard, although ICT is underused by pupils as a resource for learning. The three-part lesson is used well. Pupils benefit from the 'quick fire' mental starters, although the end-of-lesson review to give teachers a clear understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do is often overlooked. Homework is issued regularly to support classwork, though opportunities to extend the more capable are not always well taken. Work is marked up-to-date, with good comments to support pupils' learning.

76. Where the teaching is very good, there are many opportunities for pupils' personal development, such as collaborative work, individual demonstrations at the whiteboard and directed questions, which challenges pupils' thinking and understanding. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good, as are relationships between the teacher and the pupils. The pupils respond very well in lessons and contribute much, making very good use of the technical vocabulary. Recorded work is of a high standard, which aids review and revision. The teachers make effective use of time to maintain rigour. As a result, the pupils are very productive and resourceful, capable of working independently and persevering when difficulties arise. The pupils are successful in acquiring new concepts, standard routines and skills which they can apply to more demanding areas of learning. Displays about the classrooms and adjacent corridors are of a high standard. Overall, there is a strong work ethic within the department. Mathematics is regarded by the pupils as enjoyable and understandable. Where progress is brisk, there is a very good balance of explanation, exposition, application and investigation in the majority of the lessons, coupled with good continuity and progression over the year groups.
77. Leadership is very good and management is good. There is a clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the staff, the pupils and the department as a whole. Teachers are an effective team. The introduction of the interactive whiteboard has been successful in improving the pace of lessons and the rate of learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Assessment procedures are now very well established and thorough. There is very good analysis of data to inform curriculum planning and to respond to individual needs. Pupils are aware of their levels and target grades and know what to do to improve. Monitoring and evaluation of the department are not robust enough to be fully effective. ICT is not integrated into schemes of work.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

78. When pupils enter the school their numeracy skills are above average compared to national expectations. The pupils can calculate, measure, interpret information, estimate outcomes and perform a variety of numerical operations without having to rely on the calculator. The National Numeracy Strategy is consistently applied in Year 9 within the mathematics department. Other departments, notably science, geography, and design and technology, support a broad range of numerical experiences. For example, in science, pupils in Year 10 are required to apply the rules of algebra when calculating the voltage of a circuit using Ohm's Law. The recent award of specialist school status in mathematics and computing has, as one of its core activities, to develop numeracy as a cross-curricular skill. This development has the potential to ensure that there is systematic planning across the curriculum to build on pupils' skills and make teaching more effective. In-service training to raise teachers' awareness of numeracy has taken place, although this has not been adequate for new staff. An audit of provision to monitor and evaluate the work of departments is underway. However, opportunities for co-ordinating and developing the work are unsatisfactory and the key issue to address this provision at the last inspection has not been met. There is no whole-school policy on numeracy, although standards in national test and examinations indicate that pupils' competency in mathematics across the curriculum is overall well above average and is not a barrier to learning.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

- Standards and achievement are very good.
- Assessment, feedback and target setting are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Very effective leadership and management have initiated very good improvement.

## Commentary

79. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. In relation to pupils' performance at the age of 11, results were well above what might be expected, being better than in English but below those in mathematics. Unvalidated data for 2004 shows a slight dip in an otherwise improving trend. At the end of Year 11, the 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average for A\*-C grades, especially for attainment of the highest grades, A\*- B. All pupils gained a pass grade. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 reflect these results.
80. The achievement of pupils is very good overall. They enter the school with above average attainment, and standards are improved so that, by the end of Years 9 and 11, standards are well above the national average. Pupils generally reach or exceed their challenging individual targets. Pupils' writing, oral reasoning and practical skills in the current Years 9 and 11 cohorts are also high, including those of the minority of pupils with special learning needs.
81. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well-qualified, enthusiastic subject specialists. Most lessons are well structured and proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers use a variety of learning styles and ensure that pupils have time for reflection and practical hands-on experience. Much emphasis is placed on preparing pupils for examinations; technical language is emphasised and explained well; and time is spent ensuring that pupils' misconceptions are corrected. Classes are set according to pupils' capability, enabling teachers to generally set work which is appropriate, especially by varying the pace and lesson content for each class. Even the lowest attaining groups are very well challenged, for example, in a Year 9 lesson about the skeleton, pupils learned the structure through a very appropriate visual and hands-on approach, repetition of key words, and good use of analogy. In a higher attaining Year 9 group, pupils working on variation in carrots were given considerable independence in thinking through how to collect and present data. The focus, concentration, pace, co-operation, productive working atmosphere and the very good progress made in both classes demonstrated how well the pupils have been prepared and taught. In the best lessons, questioning is sharp and probing and generally used very well to get pupils thinking and reasoning. In some lessons, thorough exploration of whole-class understanding is limited by lack of use of a wider range of sharp, but comprehensive questioning techniques. However, in a minority of lessons, question and answer sessions are not as successful in ensuring whole-class understanding of their work. In the lessons where there is a greater mix of pupil capability, teachers do not always meet the individual needs of pupils well. Teaching assistants, where present, contribute well to the support of the minority of pupils with special educational needs, helping them to keep up with the pace effectively. ICT is used effectively to support learning, especially through the use of visual images, simulations and research. Data analysis is taught effectively for science enquiry, but data logging is unsatisfactory because of the lack of the relevant equipment. There is effective support for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
82. Assessment is very good. Comprehensive recording and analysis of pupil data are very well embedded in department practice. Marking is consistent, giving very good written feedback to pupils. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, contributing very effectively to their very good achievement. They help fill in their target sheets, making them very aware of what they need to do to improve, and they work hard to meet and exceed their targets. Homework is usually done well, with much care in presentation. In lessons, pupils work very well collaboratively, and they are very confident in speaking out and contributing to class discussion. They use technical language well. The opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are highlighted in the scheme of work, and used well, for example in an excellent lesson on cloning, which was both scientifically and ethically challenging.

83. Leadership and management are very good. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards of pupil achievement have improved considerably, ICT is now an integral part of teaching and learning, and social and moral aspects of science are very well taught. Accommodation has been improved, but there is still a shortfall of laboratory space. The current subject leader has only been in post for half a term but has inherited a strong department. He already has a clear understanding of the strengths of the department and priorities for development, with the potential to address any issues. Departmental evaluation is very good, and informs priorities in the development plan. The department is organised very efficiently. The very comprehensive scheme of work is accessible on the intranet, providing excellent support for teachers and technicians, as well as being accessible to pupils. There is a strong sense of team work, encouraging sharing of good practice and innovation. In Year 11, single gender grouping is being trialled. This is valued very much by the 'girl-only' group. The department benefits from excellent technical support, which assists teachers in demonstrations, provides excellent support for pupil learning, and contributes well towards departmental health and safety practices.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory curriculum requirements are not met for Year 9.
- Standards in the Year 11 Applied GCSE double option course are below average.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lack rigour.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership for cross-curricular developments is very good.

### **Commentary**

84. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils enter Year 9 with varied experiences and by the end of the year, standards are below average. The 2004 teacher assessments show that targets set were not met, although in most aspects of the programme of study pupils attain levels at least in line with national expectations. The structured curriculum in the discrete ICT lessons helps pupils to learn quickly and well. They have a good understanding of how to use databases, spreadsheets, desktop publishing and evaluate websites. They benefit from the variety of lunchtime clubs, such as website design. The more capable are well catered for. However, data logging and control are not taught and statutory curriculum requirements are not met. These weaknesses in provision undermine pupils' overall achievement and standards.
85. There were no accredited examinations taken by Year 11 pupils in 2004. Years 10 and 11 are now studying the applied GCSE double option course, but in the time normally allocated for a single GCSE, and there is not enough lesson time for the consolidation of learning and an in-depth approach. Standards are below average by the end of Year 11 as the pupils have made insufficient progress in relation to their capability due to the shortfall in the overall provision.
86. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, being good in Year 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9, work is well planned to promote a systematic increase in the pupils' knowledge and pupils are well guided by comments that pinpoint errors. Teachers are careful to establish a good balance between their input and opportunities for pupils to make choices. Teaching and learning are good when effective demonstrations quickly increased pupils' knowledge and precise questioning tested understanding and also challenged the more capable. Teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory over time for Year 11 pupils, but have begun to improve through stability in staffing. Long-term planning has not been effective. There are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and a lack of progression and coherence in the

pupils' work. Coursework has been ill organised. In the best lessons, teaching is characterised by very clear explanations. Pupils benefit from good one-to-one help and those with special educational needs from the focus on practical tasks to reinforce theory. However, there is not enough consistency in teachers' expectations for work and effort. Good relationships and the pupils' positive attitudes are important factors in successful lessons. Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory, as pupils have not understood their attainment levels and what they need to do to improve.

87. Leadership and management are now satisfactory. The head of department has been in post for a year, inheriting a department that was suffering significant staffing problems. There is now a vision for the future and leadership and management skills are being enhanced by the involvement in training. Good progress is being made through a focus on e-learning, including the school website, with shared user space for staff and pupils. There is a readiness to implement change, as indicated by the involvement in an initiative to trial on screen marking of Year 9 work. End-of-year tests and examination results are analysed and appropriate action taken, such as major changes in the assessment of the components of the GCSE units. Although some work sampling and lesson observations are undertaken, the monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The lack of a consistent format for lesson planning makes evaluation difficult. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall although the specialist school status has substantially improved provision in recent months. The potential now exists to remedy shortcomings.

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

88. Overall, there is satisfactory provision, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses, and the developmental stage of provision. The leadership for ICT developments across the school is very good, and management is good, although there is still a significant amount of work to be done to improve the overall provision. The gaining of special school status for mathematics and computing has begun to promote e-learning. Staff have access to all school files from home and e-marking has begun. There is very good use of ICT as a tool to aid learning in art and design, and it is well used in science and in Years 7 to 9 in history. The use of ICT for pupils with special educational needs helps them make significant progress. However, the application of ICT in mathematics and design and technology is unsatisfactory. In geography, difficulties of access to resources place significant limitations on the use of ICT. ICT materials are well prepared in music but network problems result in pupils sharing computers, thereby reducing their effectiveness. Other departments mention similar problems. The school has recently appointed a network manager. All teachers have access to ICT, including laptops, and many departments comment favourably on the quality of the Key Stage 3 training.

## **HUMANITIES**

The main focus for the inspection was geography and history. Religious education is reported on by inspectors appointed by the diocese under Section 23 inspection arrangements.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- The subject is well led and managed with a strong focus on raising standards.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils.
- Assessment is very good and helps pupils to improve.
- ICT is not used effectively enough to support learning.

## Commentary

89. GCSE results were above the national average in 2004 at A\*-C grades and just below for A\*-G grades for the 30 candidates entered. Girls did better than boys. This was the first year that pupils had been prepared for this examination. All pupils taking the short GCSE course in the subject gained levels A\* to C in this examination. Boys and girls did equally well. These results represent a good level of achievement for all groups of pupils. Standards are beginning to rise again after a period of decline.
90. Pupils' achievement is good and by the end of Years 9 and 11, standards are above the national average. In Year 9, pupils rapidly develop a knowledge of the world, both local and global. Skilful questioning by teachers soon enables pupils to ask geographical questions of their own, helping them to understand the range of physical and human processes which produce the distinctive characteristics of different places. In their case study of their home town in Year 10, pupils assimilated several sources of information to come readily to an understanding of the physical and social features which caused its foundation and enabled it to grow. Confident mapping of residential and commercial buildings enabled them to fully understand zoning and they can use it effectively as an analytical tool. By Year 11, pupils explain acid rain and its environmental effects and competently debate its effect on the world's economy. They calculate net receivers and producers of sulphur and suggest how countries might react to their own and global problems. They marshal their facts well to present their case orally and in writing. Pupils perceive the importance of the degradation of the rainforest at local, national and international levels and use a variety of sources to help them describe its effects. Pupils' use of literacy is well promoted in lessons, and this is reflected in high standards of writing.
91. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have a good level of knowledge and explain clearly and carefully. Lessons are well planned to support collaborative and independent learning. Good use is made of visual aids to illustrate points and to motivate pupils' involvement in discussions. Pupils have well developed oral skills and present their work very well, which further helps their learning. Imaginative strategies involving active learning techniques engage pupils and further help them to learn. Assessment is a significant strength, and the very good procedures enable lesson planning to provide the right level of challenge to pupils, so that they do well. Pupils know the amount of progress they are making, and are in no doubt as to how to improve their work. However, a weakness is in the use of ICT by pupils, which is partly brought about by problems of access but also in planning.
92. Leadership and management are good, and have resulted in a good improvement since the last inspection. Although provision declined, standards have been raised to a similar level as those described in the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation are effective and are supported through the very good assessment procedures which now fully inform teaching and learning. Target setting has now been fully implemented. Coursework and research is now good. Developing the use of ICT has still not been achieved, and this criticism remains to be tackled.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall with high expectations of pupils' performance.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- There is sufficient scope for the consistent development of independent learning skills.
- Assessment and marking are very good.
- Subject management is good.

## Commentary

93. In 2004, GCSE results were well above national expectations at grades A\* to C and for those pupils gaining A\*/A grades. This represents good achievement for all pupils, although double the number of boys just missed an A\* to C grade than girls. Standards in the current Year 11 are also well above average. Pupils can write fluently and at length about conditions in Weimar Germany and they have the skills to evaluate and develop reasoned arguments. Achievement is good. Standards in Year 9 are similarly well above national expectations. Pupils have good opportunities on this course to develop individual research projects. Overall achievement is good because of the range of resources used and because of the pupils' high interest.
94. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. This is because of the teachers' extensive subject expertise, the insistence on very high standards of behaviour and the enthusiasm with which the subject is taught. In the best lessons, skilful questioning challenges pupils to carefully reflect upon their answers and an effective learning environment is developed in these lessons. The pupils' very strong attitudes to learning underpin the good learning that takes place. In some lessons, the pupils' progress is too dependent on the teacher and there are limited opportunities for pupils to work effectively on their own or in small groups. In these lessons the pace is not fast enough and there is a very limited range of extension work for individual needs. In all lessons, pupils have very good listening skills and show great respect for each other. Carefully marked homework is a strong feature of the subject. Pupils receive very clear advice about how to improve their work with effective targets. Pupils therefore have a very good understanding of what to do next.
95. Subject leadership is satisfactory, reflecting the fact that the development plan is not sufficiently specific. It does not include issues identified in the self-evaluation review, such as the need to develop further strategies to strengthen pupils' independent learning skills, an outstanding issue from the last inspection. There is a good, recently revised Year 9 scheme of work; other years are incomplete with no agreed date for completion. Management is good because there is comprehensive departmental monitoring of pupils' progress with a good knowledge of those pupils who are underachieving. However an effective framework for taking action has not yet been securely developed. There is satisfactory use of ICT, with good use in Year 9. The curriculum is broad with a good range of modules that successfully develop the pupils' interest. The introduction of the GCSE short course has resulted in increasing numbers in Year 10. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen and improvement is good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results were well above the national average in 2004.
- Assessment is very well used for pupils on examination courses to show them how to improve their work.
- Achievement and standards are highest in food technology.
- The curriculum in Year 9 does not cover some aspects in sufficient depth.
- All pupils have unsatisfactory skills in the use of computer-aided manufacture, and for Year 9 pupils, in developing product design for resistant materials.

## Commentary

96. Teacher assessments and inspection evidence show that standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national average overall for both boys and girls. This represents good achievement from standards on entry which were in line with the national average overall. However, there is inconsistency. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average in food technology, in line in textiles, but below average in resistant materials. All pupils have insufficient knowledge of how to use computer-aided manufacture and unsatisfactory skills in developing product design ideas for resistant materials. Similarly, pupils do not have adequate knowledge, understanding and skills in electronics and control technology. This was a weakness at the last inspection, and the curriculum is not taught to sufficient depth. More competent pupils work at higher levels, but only in food technology, where they have very good practical skills and produce detailed design work. This design work compensates in some measure for the shortfall in resistant materials, and overall pupils have a good understanding of how to apply their knowledge and understanding in design work. Pupils make good use of ICT in some aspects, for example to represent the results of surveys in the form of graphs. However, lower attaining pupils do not always explain the significance of these findings. In the elements of the curriculum which are covered, pupils' achievement is good overall.
97. Pupils have the opportunity to take courses in food technology, textiles and resistant materials. The 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average overall, being strongest in food technology and textiles. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the results were above average. Girls' results are better than boys', similar to the national trend. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average in food technology and textiles, and average in resistant materials. Pupils' achievement is good overall, but weaker in resistant materials. Pupils who have a talent in design and technology attain high levels of work. More competent pupils have very good research and analysis skills, well supplemented by the use of ICT. Less competent pupils do not always show the links between stages in the design process.
98. Teaching and learning are good overall, although in a very small minority of lessons they are unsatisfactory. They are consistently stronger in food and textiles than in resistant materials. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which is well applied in the majority of lessons, for example, by the skilled use of questions to reinforce and extend pupils' understanding. Marking and assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in Year 9, but very good in Years 10 and 11, where pupils respond well to the guidance given on how to improve their work. Teachers engender very good attitudes to learning, which have a positive impact on achievement. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory when slow pace and low expectations lead to pupils' lack of interest. Aspects of health and safety are not always emphasised sufficiently to promote good practice. In all years, pupils develop and apply their mathematical and English skills to good effect. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support, which leads them to achieve as well as other pupils.
99. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. The head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards further. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, some important issues are yet to be addressed, which necessitate senior management support through whole-school decision making. For example, the provision of facilities for all pupils to use computer-aided manufacturing equipment and to improve the provision for resistant materials work in Year 9 requires senior staff support for resources. Accommodation is satisfactory, although in food technology some damaged work surfaces are a health and safety hazard. The resistant materials room has restricted facilities, inhibiting the range of processes and materials with which pupils can work. Staffing is satisfactory, but recent staffing difficulties have had an adverse impact on pupils' attainment. Thus, whilst GCSE results have risen, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Formal assessment, recording and tracking systems are lacking in rigour.
- Pupils make very good use of ICT to generate of visual images.

### **Commentary**

100. The standard of artwork produced by pupils on entry to Year 9 is below national expectations. The studies in their visual diaries tend to be single pieces of work and show limited understanding of how to develop ideas and sustain concentration over time. However, pupils make good progress and are presently producing work of a standard that is in line with national expectations. Achievement is good in Year 9.
101. In the 2003 GCSE examination, results were below the national average for pupils achieving the highest grades A\*-C. There was significant improvement in 2004 when standards were well above the national average. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average overall, although a significant minority are not realising their potential. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with examples of very good practice. Teachers' subject expertise is good with some significant strengths. Organisation is good, but in the least effective lessons is just satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, management of pupils is very good, but in other lessons too much idle conversation was tolerated which had an adverse impact on concentration and consequently on standards and achievement. Assessing of pupils' work during lessons is good and in some instances is very good, but more formal written assessment records lack rigour. Feedback to pupils, on the quality of their work, is inconsistent across the department. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are overly generous. Leadership is very good and management good. The head of department has a very clear vision for future developments. He has been very supportive of the second in the department and is a very good role model for staff and pupils alike. His obvious enthusiasm for the subject is communicated readily to others. There is a good department development plan, which is reviewed and updated annually. It is acknowledged that in the procedures for assessment there is a need for a more rigorous and detailed, systematic recording of pupils' progress. Accommodation is good, although there are occasions when classes are too large for the available space, and this has an adverse impact on standards and progress. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Resources are good; pupils now have ready access to a wide range of different media and materials and provision of ICT is very good. Pupils are making very good use of the computers, digital cameras and scanners to generate interesting images. Displays are impressive and reflect positively on the quality of work that is being produced. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination are in line with the GCSE results at the time of the last inspection.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

- Overall standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils enjoy music and have very good attitudes that contribute positively to the progress they make.

- Schemes of work and assessment procedures for Year 9 limit pupils' learning.

## Commentary

103. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above national averages, and generally, this shows some improvement on the standards reached by pupils in 2003. These results are consistent with the standards seen during the inspection. Most pupils are reaching the nationally expected levels in terms of performance, with some exceeding these. They can perform vocal chants and complex patterns with confidence, although the less capable sometimes find it difficult to sustain rhythmic patterns with a steady pace. Most pupils show good understanding of how music communicates meaning and higher attaining pupils are beginning to suggest how performances could be improved. The achievement of most pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. They build effectively on prior attainment and experience, although procedures for assessment do not always maximise this progress. The more capable pupils do not always achieve well enough as there are insufficient opportunities for them to make critical judgements and to suggest improvements to their own and others' work.
104. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, results were above the national averages. Currently, only a small number of pupils in Year 11 are taking the examination course. The standards they are reaching are above average overall. They can identify instrumental techniques such as glissando, pizzicato and tremolo. Most compose to a good standard, showing awareness of structure and genre. Pupils make good use of the improved ICT resources, including an extensive range of network resources to support their learning. Their performances show musical sensitivity, style and good technique. Overall, achievement is good.
105. Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of very good practice. An infectious enthusiasm for music transmits itself to pupils. In Year 9, lessons have good pace and very good use of questions consolidates pupils' understanding of musical concepts, challenging them to think about their work. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and extensive assessment records exist. However, whilst there is some use of assessment in lessons and some extension work for more capable pupils, the accurate use of National Curriculum levels in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. A good variety of learning strategies that links theoretical work with practical experience enables pupils to make good progress in developing listening skills and musical understanding. Activities are well matched to needs, interests and aptitudes as the pupils are well known. Assessment of pupils' capabilities is good and they are well supported and guided in their work.
106. Across the school, pupils enjoy music lessons and have very positive attitudes. Behaviour is very good and pupils are able to work both collaboratively and independently, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is good use of key musical vocabulary and the development of pupils' literacy is good. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural, moral and social development. Extra-curricular provision is good and choirs take part in local and national events. A jazz ensemble and occasional string group are supported by teachers from the local authority music service which also provides instrumental and vocal lessons to over 50 pupils. The school's facilities are beginning to be used well by pupils who have organised their own bands. Links with other schools and colleges are good.
107. Leadership and management are good, and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The experienced head of department has a clear sense of purpose and vision. The development plan identifies appropriate priorities. However, effective monitoring of teaching and learning, especially in Year 9, is limited. Some account of pupils' opinions is taken through use of questionnaires. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. However, in Year 9, whilst it is broad and balanced, the scheme of work does not have clear learning objectives to identify fully how the needs of pupils of differing capabilities are to be met. This weakness is visible in the lessons observed and work scrutiny, and was commented on at the last

inspection. There have been improvements in ICT, although on occasions, pupils have to share resources.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Joint leadership and management of good quality have been successful in raising standards.
- Good lessons catch the interest and imagination of pupils and motivate them to do well.
- Assessment is very good, helps to raise standards and leaves pupils in no doubt as to what they must do to improve.

### **Commentary**

108. GCSE exam results in 2004 were below the national average. These results were a great improvement on the previous year at the higher grades, and represent a good level of achievement for all groups of pupils.
109. In Year 9, pupils achieved well as they planned, rehearsed and presented scenes from a Victorian melodrama. Effective pair work and self and peer evaluation helped them to do well. They showed themselves capable of using a range of dramatic techniques such as freeze-frame and sculpting which helped their presentations. Working notes of good quality helped them to evaluate and improve their performance. Pupils took direction well. They have, however, not yet adopted spontaneously effective ways of working together, so that ensemble work is a comparative weakness. Standards are in line with national expectations.
110. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above the national average, reflecting the better progress pupils are making. All achieve well, as shown in the wide range of dramatic skills they brought to an interpretation of a well-known Italian farce. Group work was strong in this lesson, with written evaluation of performances and production notes a strong factor in their learning. A very good standard of writing helped their analysis of performance, and confident and articulate speech helped them to collaborate effectively in groups. Written evaluation of professional performances shows good skills of critical analysis and is a significant strength of their attainment.
111. Teaching and learning are variable but good overall. Lessons are well planned. They have clear learning objectives, which are shared with the pupils, so they know what they are meant to achieve. The level of knowledge the teachers bring to the subject is high and backed by professional acting experience. Class management is good and ensures no time is wasted. Learning activities are well planned to challenge and engage the pupils, who learn well individually, in pairs and small groups. Ensemble work is still a weakness in some of the lessons in Year 9, but rapidly improves in Years 10 and 11 and helps pupils' practical performance.
112. Joint leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear, shared view of future developments. Essential management functions are well covered. There is mutual support and guidance. Monitoring of achievement is now well established and there is a strong focus on raising standards. Assessment is very good, and a strength of provision. Self-assessment by pupils, group assessment or a teacher's assessment of individuals are all highly effective and very well used to move pupils on. All assessment procedures are well embedded into written and practical activities and leave pupils in no doubt as to how they should improve. Target setting is highly effective in helping pupils prepare for the external examinations.

113. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection. Only now, however, is the subject recovering from a recent period of decline, and results still do not reach standards described in the last report. Schemes of work have recently been rewritten. Accommodation has been improved and is now very good. Extra-curricular activities have been resumed and a play is in production. Detailed working practices showing how drama may be used to exploit other areas of the curriculum are now being actively considered in a belated response to a criticism in the last report.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average, and represent very good achievement.
- Inadequate procedures for monitoring result in inconsistency in teaching and learning.
- Good leadership and management are beginning to have a significant effect on raising standards.
- Assessment systems and procedures are not used effectively enough.
- Indoor facilities restrict the breadth of curriculum at both key stages.

### Commentary

114. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average. The courses are popular and a significant number of pupils' results were at the highest grade. Pupils join the school with standards in line with national averages. Throughout Year 9, pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. However, the breadth of the curriculum is restricted and pupils have limited opportunities for dance. In Years 10 and 11, the standards in core physical education are in line with those in most schools. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' very positive response supports progress. This is especially so when pupils are developing their basic techniques in invasion games. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and so gain accreditation through the Junior Sports Leadership scheme. Standards in GCSE are well above national average. Standards are well above in both theoretical and practical elements of the course. Pupils show very good commitment to their work, and achievement is very good. They develop very good skills of research, analysis and evaluation, which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning.
115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, with examples of very good practice. Where teaching is very good, teachers are very knowledgeable, plan their work very well and have high expectations. Relationships are strong. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know what they are learning and why, and regularly check progress by intervention with individuals and groups so that they know what they can do and how to improve. Pupils make use of opportunities to enhance their learning through satisfactory information and communication technology provision. Not all lessons are as effective. In lessons where it is satisfactory, teachers do not use assessment as part of learning. Pupils are too dependent on the teacher. Pupils in these lessons do not know at what level they are working, are given tasks which are not appropriate for their level, and do not develop skills which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning.
116. Leadership and management are now good. The very new head of department has had a significant effect on the provision during his short time at the school. There is now a clear vision for raising standards more quickly. He acts as a very good role model for other teachers and pupils. Good practice is now shared through good communication systems and an improved department handbook, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. A subject review has identified areas for improvement. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but is restricted by a time allocation, which is below the recommended level, and

indoor facilities, which limit the breadth of activities. A satisfactory extra-curricular programme in a wide range of sports enhances the learning of some pupils. Teams and individual pupils achieve well. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

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

Pupils have two sessions of 30 minutes duration each week, which provide the opportunity to study personal, social and health education or citizenship. There is some relevant overlap of topics under each heading.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **satisfactory**.

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

- Pupils contribute well to the range of oral discussion.
- The course is well linked to religious education for some aspects of the work.
- Teaching and learning have too much inconsistency.

#### **Commentary**

117. The PSHE programme is comprehensive and is well linked to religious education, which deals with elements of sex education, enabling it to be discussed in a religious context. Other elements of personal, social and health education are covered in the 30-minute lessons which are taught by form tutors. They include drug-related health, relationships, anti-bullying and harassment. Careers education is integrated into the course throughout the school. Careers-related units develop pupils' skills of decision-making, completing personal statements and interview techniques. Through its citizenship links, the work undertaken in PSHE helps pupils to gain an understanding of wider issues. External visits and visitors from the community provide breadth to the course, making a valuable contribution to the work. Resources to support the course are adequate and are readily accessible to pupils.

118. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the best practice, pupils and teachers work very well together to ensure maximum use of the time available. The materials are well used to generate discussion and pupils contribute well, bringing to bear their above average skills in language and literacy. However, where teaching is only satisfactory, the materials are not dealt with in sufficient detail and pupils are rote learners. They lose interest and their learning suffers.

119. Leadership is good in that the course is well structured and every effort is made to ensure that it remains up-to-date. Management is satisfactory in that there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning to ensure consistent practice.

#### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- Leadership is good and provides a clear sense of direction for subject improvement.
- There is no ongoing assessment and so pupils do not know how well they are doing.

## Commentary

120. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and their standards are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils generally show little interest in the subject and do not value it. Consequently, the work is briefly and superficially done. However, the standard of work shows improvement prior to the assessment test done in Year 11. In Year 9, pupils show that they have an understanding of gender stereotyping and discrimination at work, showing concern for those who are homeless. They are developing an understanding of local and regional government, including the court system, and the role of a local councillor. By the end of Year 11, pupils have continued to develop their understanding of the working of the court system, how laws are made and the mechanism of electing members of the national and European parliaments.
121. Pupils' achievements are reported to parents at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in terms of the work covered and a comment about the standard of their contribution to class discussions. Comment is not made, however, about their skills of enquiry and communication and participation and responsible action. There is little ongoing assessment of what the pupils know and understand about the content of the course, the pupils' involvement in community activities or the development of research skills.
122. Generally, teaching and learning are satisfactory. On the few occasions when the teaching observed was good or very good, the better quality was due to the relevance of the materials and the challenging pace of the lesson. Generally, however, teaching is routine and flat, covering the essentials of what the pupils have to know and understand. It does not develop their research skills using a variety of methods including ICT, nor does it give sufficient opportunities to allow pupils to express, justify and defend their opinions well. Pupils are critical of the limited teaching styles used.
123. Leadership is good in that the co-ordinator has ensured that schemes of work meet the National Curriculum requirements, and has made a sustained effort to improve the overall provision. She has a strong sense of direction and knows which areas need to be improved, but the management strategies are not yet adequate to achieve these changes. Management is judged as being satisfactory because monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough to secure improvement and a rise in subject status, and assessment is unsatisfactory.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten 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 2004. In some subjects the number of candidates entered for the examination is very small. Consequently, any comparison with national examination results is unreliable.

### *Level 3 GCE AS-level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	0.0	21.6	50.0	78.3	10.0	28.5
Biology	4	0.0	10.4	75.0	63.5	27.5	19.8
Chemistry	1	100.0	13.2	100.0	70.3	60.0	23.0
Drama	2	0.0	19.8	50.0	85.6	20.0	30.9
English literature	6	33.3	17.4	100.0	86.2	38.3	29.7
French	1	100.0	19.4	100.0	79.8	60.0	28.2
General studies	5	0.0	16.9	100.0	73.6	26.0	25.5
German	1	0.0	18.8	10.0	81.6	30.0	28.8
History	5	40.0	20.8	100.0	82.2	36.0	29.2
Mathematics	3	33.3	14.1	100.0	59.9	40.0	20.5
Other social studies	1	0.0	15.1	100.0	67.8	40.0	23.2
Physics	1	0.0	14.8	100.0	66.4	20.0	22.4
Religious studies	5	40.0	26.1	80.0	82.2	38.0	31.2
Sociology	1	0.0	19.6	0.0	72.1	0.0	25.9

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	6	83.3	50.2	100	98.3	106.7	87.1
Biology	8	50.0	40.0	100.0	96.6	87.5	79.3
Chemistry	11	27.3	50.0	100.0	97.7	78.2	85.7
Communication studies	3	100.0	40.4	100.0	99.2	113.3	83.5
English/English language	4	25.0	36.4	75.0	99.2	55.0	81.1
English literature	19	68.4	44.9	100.0	99.4	96.8	85.5
French	2	100.0	53.1	100.0	99.0	110.0	88.9
Design and technology	2	50.0	35.0	100.0	97.8	80.0	77.9
General studies	36	47.2	30.5	97.2	94.9	81.7	72.9
Geography	2	50.0	46.4	100.0	98.8	100.0	85.2
German	1	100.0	49.6	100.0	98.6	120.0	86.3
History	10	60.0	45.6	100.0	99.0	98.0	85.1
Mathematics	12	66.7	56.6	100.0	96.8	98.3	89.5
Music	1	100.0	37.1	100.0	98.2	100.0	79.5
Other social studies	2	50.0	42.5	100.0	97.4	80.0	81.6
Physics	6	66.7	45.3	100.0	96.7	90.0	82.6
Religious studies	15	46.7	49.5	100.0	99.1	82.7	87.4
Sociology	26	61.5	45.3	100.0	98.5	97.7	84.6
Sports/PE studies	3	66.7	30.9	100.0	97.8	86.7	75.4

**Level 3 vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining A-B		% gaining A-E		Average points Score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	30.0	24.1	100.0	91.6	76.0	67.9
Health and Social Care	8	0.0	24.9	87.5	93.5	47.5	70.0
Science	2	0.0	10.2	100.0	89.9	70.0	58.9
Information Technology VQ	7	57.1	26.9	100.0	88.3	8.6	67.8
Travel and Tourism	1	0.0	19.6	100.0	90.1	40.0	64.9

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus for the inspection was English literature and French.

### **English literature**

Provision in English literature is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Students are thoroughly prepared for examinations.
- In some lessons, learning is too teacher led and activities are too narrow.

### **Commentary**

124. A-level results were well above average in 2004 and average in 2003. AS-level results were also well above average in 2004. Students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE results.
125. Current standards in Year 13 are above average. Standards on entry to the course are average and students achieve well. They learn how to analyse literature competently and acquire a very thorough, detailed knowledge and understanding of the texts that they study. They can argue a case and quote effectively to back up their views. Students understand how a writer develops themes – for example, an essay in which the student explored the differences between William Blake’s religious views and those of the established church of the day. Most students write detailed, extended essays, and the highest attaining have an interesting, sophisticated style. Lower attaining students write shorter, much less analytical, essays.
126. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, explain aspects thoroughly and ask questions that make students think. In one Year 13 lesson, the students were learning about different layers of meaning in ‘The Merchant of Venice’. The lesson was effective as a result of the depth of the teacher’s explanations and examples. There was also a good emphasis on examination requirements and how to maximise available marks. Preparing students for examinations is a strength of the department. Written work is helpfully marked and assessed. There are times in some lessons when teachers over-dominate discussion and learning would be better if they did less and students did more.
127. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The acting head of department has been doing a good job in maintaining the subject over the last six months. Sixth form provision has been reviewed and there are plans to introduce another English A-level course. However, procedures to evaluate learning and teaching and track students to identify anyone who is underachieving are underdeveloped. The subject has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

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

128. Standards of literacy and spoken English in the sixth form are well above average. Students’ reading skills enable them to carry out high-level research. Students also express their ideas clearly in discussion and write in appropriate styles. In an advanced vocational ICT lesson, for example, students confidently and articulately expressed their views. In most subjects, teachers correct spelling mistakes and clumsy expressions. In physics, students explain very well the work that they have done using computers, and show good skills in incorporating the technology into their explanations. In history, teachers help students to structure their essays,

although opportunities for independent research are rather limited. There is good support for helping students on the health and social care course to develop their literacy skills.

## French

Provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Listening and speaking skills are developed through the use of French during the lessons.
- ICT is used for independent research and to extend reading skills.
- Good opportunities to take part in the French exchange programme enhance learning opportunities.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Grammatical errors are not rigorously corrected.

### Commentary

129. In 2004, two students were entered for A-level and they gained top grades. Detailed comparisons with national data are not valid because of the small group sizes, though these results show very good achievement. At AS-level, students obtained better results in the areas of listening, speaking and reading than in writing.
130. Standards on the AS- and A-level courses are above average. In Year 12, students develop skills in researching topics, understanding complex text and expressing their ideas in an orderly and detailed manner. In Year 13, they can work independently and show confidence in discussion and in the presentation of material in lessons.
131. The achievement of students in Year 12 is good and in Year 13 it is very good. From top grades at GCSE AS-level students move rapidly to the study of more complex grammar. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above the national average. They use French to express carefully formulated opinion and to give detailed factual information. They were observed analysing the popularity and influence of reality television in France from written information. In Year 13, students presented the results of their research into aspects of religion in France by using PowerPoint presentations. They also discussed fluently in French issues surrounding criminality and recalled knowledge acquired in work on previous topics to develop argument.
132. Teaching and learning are very good overall, being good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Teachers plan thoroughly and provide stimulating reading material which encourages students to learn. They use French effectively in lessons and students therefore have a good opportunity to improve listening and speaking skills. New topics are introduced by sharing ideas and the development of prior knowledge. In Year 12, students increase their range of vocabulary and structure as well as their confidence in discussion work. They develop good research skills using the Internet. Teachers show them how to present argument in writing and their work is marked in detail with advice about how to improve. In Year 13 students are expected to work more independently and to use ICT for their own research, which they do well. Teachers have the linguistic competence to redirect work according to need and to challenge students. Students learn to use a wide range of vocabulary and structure confidently and communicate very well, but emphasis is not placed on strict grammatical accuracy.
133. The quality of leadership and management are very good. Despite the lack of detailed written schemes of work, the two teachers work effectively as a team and there are good resources. There is a clear focus on examination skills and students are well informed about the examination requirements. There is a very positive learning environment. Students learn better because of their experience of visiting France on the exchange visit. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Links with France have led to a larger uptake in Year 12 and in the current Year 13 group there are more students than in the two previous years.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good.
- The quality of the teaching and learning is very good.
- Assessment procedures are very secure and analysis of performance aids learning.
- ICT is underused as a resource.

### Commentary

134. In 2004, the number of students entered for the GCE mathematics AS-level examination was too small for a comparison of performance to be made against national figures. However, all students entered achieved a pass grade or better. Standards seen during the inspection are above average and the students are achieving well. Year 12 students are well into the new courses, making very good use of their previous GCSE work to move into new areas of learning. For example, they were able to consolidate their understanding of the measures of spread when applied to statistical data. The students worked collaboratively on multi-choice questions, sharing their methodology and identifying where examination marks could be assigned.
135. Results in the 2004 GCE A-level examination were above the national average. All students entered for the examination achieved better than a pass grade, with an increased proportion of students achieving the highest grades compared to the previous year and to the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and the students are achieving well. Year 13 student files are well organised, with much assessed work included, and provide a good record for review and revision. Students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in lessons, sometimes contributing as much as the teacher. For example, in a pure mathematics lesson, groups of students worked collaboratively on some challenging questions involving the binomial expansion. The exercise resulted in several presentations being made to the rest of the class, identifying where examination marks would be assigned and the likely areas for error.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject effectively and are aware of course requirements. Lessons are planned well, with some innovative methods requiring the students to work collaboratively. Relationships between the teachers and the students are very good. However, there are instances where learning is less effective because teaching is too directive, and there are not enough opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. Homework is set regularly and marked up to date. The students are frequently assessed and encouraged to evaluate their own work with respect to individual aspirational targets.
137. Leadership and management are good. Issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed, although standards continue to fluctuate. There is a range of appropriate courses which meet students' needs very well, in particular the higher attaining students. However, the broad range of capability in Year 12 is too wide and impacts on the students' pace of learning. Students have the opportunity to complete a further mathematics distance learning course after school using ICT professional software as a result of the new specialist school status in mathematics and computing. However, the use of ICT during lessons to aid research and build on conceptual understanding is not exploited sufficiently. Procedures for assessment are very good. There is an experienced team of subject specialists who are committed to raising standards. Teachers are approachable and prepared to give up their time outside lessons to support the students - which is appreciated.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

138. Students' standards in mathematics are above average overall and other departments support the use of numeracy well. For example, in physics, students are able to translate ideas on the strength of electrical fields into relevant mathematical equations. In health and social care, students make good use of statistics when interrogating collected data on smoking, blood pressure and male and female rates of growth. However, the application of number in individual subject schemes of work and programmes of study are not being identified sufficiently. Opportunities are missed to make teaching and learning across the curriculum more effective.

## SCIENCE

The main focus for the inspection was physics. Students' attainment in all the A2 level sciences of physics, biology and chemistry was well above national averages in 2004. Year 13 **chemistry** was sampled. The teaching was very good and pupil attitudes excellent. Difficult mathematical concepts were taught in an effective way; and achievement was high.

### Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are good and prepare students well for the examinations.
- The resources for independent study are very good.
- Leadership and management have been very effective in ensuring improvement in provision.

### Commentary

139. At the end of 2004, students attained good results in the A2 examination, although any comparison with national averages is unreliable because of the small number of entries. Results were better than in 2003. At AS-level the current Year 13 all gained grades in line with their expectations. Standards observed during the inspection show that Year13 students are currently working at levels well above course requirements to maintain this very good attainment.

140. Students' achievement is very good. They maintain their high level of attainment from GCSE through to Year 13. They contribute very enthusiastically in lessons, answering and asking challenging questions. They work very well collaboratively during practical and theoretical sessions, supporting one another in their learning. Student attitudes are very good. They enjoy the mental and logical challenges posed, and they relate very well to their teachers. They confidently continue questioning until they are satisfied that any misconceptions have been cleared, and this attitude contributes well towards their effective learning. Students are able to understand concepts, derive mathematical formulae from graphs, think logically and mathematically, and pose challenging questions to their teachers. They can write well, using technical language very well or explaining complex concepts in plain English. Their coursework was unavailable as it was being externally moderated at the time of the inspection, but examples of the previous cohort's coursework indicate a good range and breadth of individual study opportunities, and very high quality reports. The teachers rightly place full responsibility on students for making notes. However, some students have too casual an attitude to note-taking and would benefit from more support in structuring notes for revision purposes.

141. The overall quality of teaching is good. The most engaging teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm. Models and analogies are used very effectively

to provide visual images on which to pin very abstract concepts, for example in a Year 12 class on wave behaviour. Probing questioning also contributes to the effective teaching. Students are very well prepared for examinations, with very good written and oral feedback on independent tasks and projects. Assessment is used very well to improve learning. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, where marking had revealed misunderstanding, the teachers' carefully structured questioning and reasoning rapidly raised students' confidence in changing speed-time graphs into distance-time graphs, before moving to the more complicated graph calculations. Teachers provide a very good balance of practical enquiry and demonstration, theoretical work, and independent research and practice. Assessment is very good, in line with whole-science department policy, and students know their current levels and targets very well. ICT is also used appropriately for practical and analytical studies.

142. Overall, leadership and management have been very good. Structures and systems operate smoothly. There is an annual review, with ongoing developments, but these are not effectively recorded in the science development plan. The physics course was an innovative choice when introduced, illustrating staff willingness to develop and improve to meet the needs of potential students, especially girls. Course resources provide very good electronic resource material to enable very effective individual study. The course provides very well for other key skill development as it links the study of physics with exemplar material that is relevant to today's world, so that the social, moral, ethical and cultural aspects of physics are integral to the course.
143. The recently appointed head of science has not yet had the opportunity to monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of teaching or development planning, other than through assessment data, which is used very well to check that students are on target to achieve to their potential. Recruitment of girls into physics is growing, although there are still more boys than girls in both year groups. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is very good, reflecting the students' extremely positive attitudes to learning.
- The course is well planned and teaching, including assessment, is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Industrial links and placements are not used to extend the students' understanding.
- Insufficient access to computers outside of lesson time hampers independent learning.

### **Commentary**

144. Students who are taking the AVCE (Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education) reach standards that are above the requirements of the courses, mirroring the school's results over the past few years. This represents very good achievement when compared to students' prior attainment as they entered the sixth form with no formal qualification in ICT. Students show a good awareness of the processes and theory that underpin the well-taught practical skills. The more capable, especially, are adept at applying their understanding to a new context such as aspects of systems development when studying spreadsheets. Students produce high quality desktop publishing documents and demonstrate care in their use of refined researches whilst working on their healthy lifestyle project. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
145. Teaching and learning are good. The course is taught in a structured and systematic manner and marking and assessment are most effective. Staff refer to the details of specific criteria which intrinsically relate to the task the student has just completed. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and, on occasions, very well communicated to the students. This occurred

when an experienced teacher helped students to overcome problems by the skilful use of focused groups to engender solutions to a particular problem. Teaching of ICT skills is very good but the quality of teaching overall is not very high because there are inconsistent references to the wider social aspects of ICT and the formal teaching of evaluative techniques. Students are mature and work very hard on relevant assignments and coursework, but they are not given the opportunity to extend their learning outside the classroom through work placement and a range of visits and visitors.

146. This serious omission for a vocational course is one reason why leadership and management are judged to be good as opposed to very good. The head of department has high expectations for the subject, as exemplified by a focus on team teaching to improve standards further and the insistence that students understand the importance of the annotation of change. The strong assessment procedures also function to monitor teaching and learning, although the self-review and evaluative aspect is not sufficiently rigorous. The head of department's calm and caring ethos sets a good example for staff and students. ICT is a popular subject and the retention rate is very good. Students legitimately complain about unsatisfactory access to computers outside lesson time and the difficulties this presents in doing really well.

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

147. Students' competence in the use of ICT in the sixth form is good. However, insufficient access to computers places significant limitations on their use. The main resources are located in a large computer suite and on many occasions students work in one area while pupils in Years 9 to 11 are taught their lessons. This is distracting for all concerned. However, students make very good use of computers to support their knowledge and understanding as part of their independent study skills. A considerable number of subjects have shared user space whereby teachers and students can work as an e-learning partnership. ICT supports teaching very well in a number of subjects such as art, science and sociology and it is good in music and history. It is a most effective tool to aid students with special educational needs. Students have been encouraged to improve their competence by studying for the CLAIT examination.

## **HUMANITIES**

The subjects focused on for the inspection were geography, history and sociology.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well, and standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment is very good and helps students to improve their work.
- Effective leadership and management have initiated good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

148. Students' achievement is good, and retention rates on the courses are good. Results in the AS and A2 examinations are consistently above the national average.
149. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average, reflecting previous examination results. In Year 12 lessons, students made confident, well-illustrated presentations on the effects flagship projects have had in Birmingham. They effectively stated the nature of competition for land on the urban fringe and explored conflict of interest. They defined 'green belt' accurately

and considered the effects of building a supermarket on a greenfield site. In their study of physical features they examined the hydrography of rivers, using correct geographical vocabulary. In Year 13, the students assessed the evidence of global food production, fully understanding the processes of change and analysing its causes.

150. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have a good level of knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, which students appreciate. Very good use of the projector and whiteboard, allied to clear and accessible explanations, helps students to extend their geographical understanding. Subject-specific vocabulary is well promoted, so that students appreciate the importance of accurate definitions and use them well. Marking and assessment are very good so students know what progress they are making, and this encourages them to improve their work. Students also learn well because they are taught to assimilate information from a range of sources. They order their facts well for pieces of extended writing, which are of good quality. Skills of geographical inquiry are strong. Students readily enter into constructive conversation with the teacher, which helps them to learn. Group discussion further helps their learning as they ask and answer geographical questions and come to a consensus. Fieldwork, geographical games and simulations extend and deepen their knowledge of the subject.
151. Leadership is good, with a strong focus on how standards can be further improved. Management is also good. Teachers have worked well together to evaluate teaching, which is now of consistently high quality. Assessment is also consistent and very good. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The department has successfully adapted the curriculum to the changing needs of students, and the high standards described in the last report have been maintained.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject.
- AS enrolments are strong with most students continuing onto the A2 course.
- Assessment is very good.

### Commentary

152. Results in the GCE examinations have been good, with all candidates attaining a pass grade. The standards were well above national expectations and this represents good achievement for all students. Inspection evidence shows that well above average standards are present in the current Year 13 and signify that achievement is good. History is an increasingly popular subject with a large number of students studying the AS course in Year 12. The majority of students continue with their studies into the second year. They have very positive attitudes towards their studies and this strongly contributes to the standards achieved.
153. Teaching is good and enables students to learn effectively. The teachers have very good knowledge of their specialist periods of seventeenth century English and nineteenth and twentieth century European history. They lead the lessons in a scholarly, reflective way. At times, their scholarship dominates the learning and students have insufficient opportunities to develop their own understanding of the issues. This has been identified as a continuing development issue within the department, remaining from the last inspection. The courses are very carefully structured, giving good opportunities to use original documents and to examine in detail the historiography of the relevant periods. In the Year 13 lesson that studied the impact of Lenin's April Thesis, there were good opportunities for the students to work together to develop their understanding of the detailed arguments. They then shared these points in an effective whole class discussion. Homework is set very regularly and is marked very

thoroughly. The students have a very good understanding of what progress they are making. There are some very comprehensive handouts that give good support to the students; however, the number of additional individual reading books is limited.

154. The leadership is satisfactory. The department is led by a non-specialist and the two specialist teachers develop the sixth form courses under her overall guidance. Currently, the schemes of work are being improved. The day-to-day management is good. The students' progress is monitored carefully and they are encouraged to work hard. The curriculum offers a contrast of studies in depth and longer outline periods and different periods to study. It provides considerable intellectual challenge to the students to which they respond very well. As a result, the post-16 courses attract large numbers and well above average standards are regularly achieved. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

## **Sociology**

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' achievement is very good
- Teaching and learning are very good
- ICT is used most effectively to support learning.

## **Commentary**

155. Results in the GCE A2 level examinations in 2003 and 2004 were well above the national average, with a very high number of students reaching the top grades, especially grade A. The standard of work of the current sixth form is broadly similar, although fewer Year 13 students appear set to obtain this top grade. Overall standards remain well above average, and this is also the case for Year 12. This represents very good achievement as students enter the sixth form with no prior knowledge of the subject and broadly average attainment in GCSE subjects. Students' success is linked to their mature attitudes and the high quality of subject leadership and management.
156. Teaching and learning are very good. The sometimes excellent teaching has a significant impact on students' achievement. Students are appreciative of their teachers' expertise. Marking and assessment are very good. Staff refer to the specific details of the sociological topic being studied and the exact level of attainment, which is related to the students minimum target grade. Students are required to respond and this interactive aspect is an integral part of the exceptionally well-planned, highly structured and challenging course. This gives students a comprehensive base for learning. Consequently, they have a very good understanding of theories such as functionalism and modern ideas such as the New Right. Students are expected to keep their own word banks, which also encompasses concepts and are formally taught the art of essay writing. Their literacy skills are very well developed. Continuous testing and reference to exam questions hones understanding and Year 13 were able to discuss religion and other topics with confidence and authority. They receive a very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and their use of ICT is very good, although there are difficulties with access.
157. The subject is very well led and managed. The department has extremely high aspirations for academic success and implements them. New staff are immediately involved in the revision of teaching units and there is a sense of partnership among staff and between teachers and students. Sociology is a very popular subject with a high retention figure; a significant number of students continue their social science studies at university. The very effective assessment system results in very good monitoring of teaching and learning and action is quickly taken if a concern arises. Staff use and prepare a good range of teaching materials but there is no

annotated book list. Students are insufficiently encouraged to study independently and report current events of sociological interest. No judgement can be made on improvement since the last inspection as sociology was not taught then.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

**Design and technology** was sampled through the provision on the adjoining school site. Students are achieving well and standards are above average.

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

The focus for the inspection was art and design. **Music** was sampled. Teaching and learning are good and the capabilities and needs of students are well known. Students' achievement is good. They are good performers and most compose with a sense of style, genre and structure. They contribute well to the musical life of the school.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Formal written assessment and recording procedures lack rigour.
- ICT resources in the form of computers and digital cameras are very good.

### **Commentary**

158. In the GCE AS-level examination in 2004, results were just above the national average for students achieving the highest grades A-B. In the 2003 GCE A-level examination, attainment was just above the national average and in 2004, it was well above. Boys' attainment was well above that of girls in 2004. However, group sizes were small with only six students taking the GCE A-level examination in 2004.
159. Progress throughout Year 12 is good. From the evidence in the visual diaries, the majority of students have acquired the capacity for carrying out research with a reasonable degree of independence. They annotate, reflect upon and evaluate their own work and the work of artists such as Andy Warhol and Giorgio de Chirico. Although the majority make effective use of such secondary source material, a significant minority are over-dependent on the work of others as starting points for their own research. Students in Year 13 make very good use of their visual diaries as a means of collecting a body of information from which they can develop final pieces of artwork. They are much more confident about working from their own ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs and it is readily apparent that they have the capacity for thinking and learning for themselves. Achievement from the start of Year 12 to Year 13 is good, and by Year 13, standards are well above the course requirements.
160. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are well informed and they provide advice that is based upon their understanding of the requirements of the GCE AS and A-level examination specifications. In the most successful lessons, teaching employs methods that are suited to the nature of the set task. A considerable amount of time is given to discussion with individual students, which is achievable with the group sizes. Students are encouraged to improve the quality of their artwork by developing the capacity for critical evaluation of their own drawings and paintings.
161. Leadership is very good and management good. The head of department has a very clear vision of how the department should develop over time. Currently, he is encouraging students

to make full use of the ICT facilities in the art studios, to extend their skills in the use of computers and digital cameras in the production of interesting and exciting images. He is a very good role model for both staff and students alike and he provides very good support for the second in the department. Verbal feedback to students during lessons ranges from very good to good, but more formal, written procedures for carrying out assessment and for tracking and recording lack rigour. This shortcoming is recognised and new systems are planned for. The display of students' work is very impressive. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

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

No subjects were inspected.

## **BUSINESS**

**Business education** AVCE single course was sampled. It is taught as part of the sixth form partnership with a neighbouring school, and is a popular course. Students indicated that they enjoyed the challenge and rigour of the course work element of the portfolios. A significant number wish to continue their study of business and related subjects at university. Year 12 students indicated that initially they had found the independent learning approach difficult. The students are achieving well and reaching above average standards. Teaching and learning are good.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

A vocational course in health and social care is run in partnership with a neighbouring school from which students form the majority in classes on both sites.

### **Health and social care**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well due to well-planned teaching.
- Students have good attitudes to their work, and use local care settings well to enrich their work.
- Standards are below average but nearly all students go on to relevant jobs.

### **Commentary**

162. In 2004, five students from the school, including one male student, achieved well in their examinations, but the numbers are too low for valid national comparison. Standards for the current group are below the national average for AVCE but indicate good achievement when standards are related to students' well below average standards on entry to the course. Combining students from the two schools keeps the AVCE course viable. Most students remain once they start, and nearly all go on to health-related jobs.

163. Standards of current Year 12 students indicate an improving trend, and are in line with national expectations. Students achieve well. Their well-presented coursework shows sound understanding of risks to health by passive smoking. They understand dietary reference values and energy value of foods. They improve below average numeracy and literacy skills on entry by calculating body mass index. Higher-attaining students draw good graphs to analyse surveys. Students use ICT well to present course assignments. All Year 12 students go on weekly work visits to local care settings, such as primary schools, during half a day each week. They gain sound knowledge about children's developmental stages and acquire good team working skills. Students enjoy the course and support each other well. They keep up-to-date diaries effectively to record one to one interactions with young children.

164. Teaching and learning are good. Several very good features were seen. The relationship between teachers and students is very close, which helps students gain good attitudes to work in lessons. Teachers mark course work regularly and monitor individual students' progress in detail, giving especially extra encouragement to those with particular needs arising through long absences. Teachers help students to write reports and summarise articles to improve literacy skills. Higher-attaining students are encouraged to develop critical evaluation skills.
165. The course is very well led and managed by two experienced staff on the two collaborating schools' sites. They have a very good understanding of AVCE assessment requirements. Schemes of work are very thoroughly planned, although the effectiveness of learning is sometimes reduced because some students have timetable clashes. The subject was not previously inspected.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

The programme was sampled through one major revision technique session and an individual tutor group session. The quality of provision in the revision session was very effective and students found the advice given was very useful in assisting them in their study programme. In tutor periods, time is given to individual student interviews to discuss progress and aspirations. Overall, the teaching and learning are good, and the programme is well structured. Elements of religious education will be commented upon by the Section 23 inspectors.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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