

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL

Oldham

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105739

Headteacher: Mrs J. Hollis

Lead inspector: Mr D. Cox

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th November 2004

Inspection number: 268951

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of students: 11 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1329

School address: Egerton Street
Oldham

Postcode: OL1 3SQ

Telephone number: 0161 6241484

Fax number: 0161 6284997

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of
governors: Mr C Platt

Date of previous 30th November 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Blue Coat School is bigger than most other secondary schools and educates boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. The school is situated in the town centre of Oldham. Its founder, Thomas Henshaw, died in 1810 after leaving an endowment with which to establish a school for poor boys of the area. The school opened in 1834. Its character changed several times before it became a voluntary aided Church of England Comprehensive School in 1966. Most students come to the school from nearly 100 primary schools in the Greater Manchester and surrounding area.

The popularity of the school has resulted in it being well over-subscribed. Preference is given to families active in the Church of England. There are 1329 students on roll with 231 in the sixth form. The sixth form is larger than most other sixth forms. Most year groups have about 20 per cent more girls than boys; this is even more evident in Year 12. The vast majority of students are white. The school population reflects a wide socio-economic background but is above average overall.

There are very few students for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average

and the percentage of students who have Statements of Special Educational Need is below the national average. Most students are on the register of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia, social and emotional and behavioural needs or visual impairment.

Overall attainment on entry to the main school is above average, although in subjects such as physical education, attainment is average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average in comparison with all sixth forms.

The school is a specialist science college and a Leading Edge school. The school receives leadership incentive funding as part of the Excellence in Cities programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10297	David Cox	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics.
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English.
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science.
33219	S. Green	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design. English in the sixth form.
11933	D. Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology. ICT in the sixth form.
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music.
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Business studies
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Geography. Special educational needs.
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education.
20124	J. Peach	Team inspector	Modern languages.
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Sociology in the sixth form. Health and social care in the sixth form.
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship. Work-related learning.
22155	K. Dixon	Team inspector	Biology in the sixth form.

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **very good** quality of education and **excellent** value for money. Teaching, students' achievement and the leadership of the school are all very good. The sixth form is very good and its cost effectiveness is excellent.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average, reflecting students' very good achievement as a result of very good teaching.
- There is an ethos in the school that promotes hard work, excellent attendance, very good attitudes and equality for all.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- The leadership of the school has clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations.
- The work force reforms have been embraced fully and are having a major impact on the quality of provision and support for all students.
- Teachers do not always use the wealth of assessment information available to them when matching work to the needs of all students.
- The school's marking policy is not always applied consistently.

Progress since the last inspection has been **good**. Standards have been maintained at a level that is well above average as a result of improved teaching. The few weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully. There have been significant improvements in the quality of support staff, accommodation and resources.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A- very high; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average*

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

Students' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

By the end of Year 9, students achieve very well in art and design and physical education. They achieve well in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, French and German where achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11, students achieve very well in art and design, geography, physical education, and music. They achieve well in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, design and technology, French and German where achievement is satisfactory.

Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are above average. The achievement of those students who are talented is excellent because of the excellent provision for them

across the school. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as other students. Achievement in the sixth form is very good; standards are well above average. It is not only in their subjects where students achieve very well; they also achieve very well in areas such as sport, the arts and many other extra-curricular activities.

Students' attitudes and behaviour, together with other aspects of their personal development, are **very good**. This is helped considerably by the very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes and behaviour; attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. The quality of teaching is very good. There are differences between the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that in the upper years. Teachers increase the pace of learning in the upper years and have very high expectations of what students can achieve. The quality of the curriculum is very good and very good attention is given to the care and welfare of students. There is an excellent range of extra clubs and activities. The school has a very good partnership with parents. The school has very good support staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the school is **very good** and management is good. The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other senior staff is very good. The school's mission statement – "Faith, Vision and Nurture" – encapsulates much that is happening in the school. Management is good although there is some inconsistency in the application of school policies. Governance is very good. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have a very good strategic overview of the school. The financial management of the school is excellent.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents are very happy with the education their children receive; students are also very happy.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the school's marking policy is applied consistently.
- Ensure teachers make better use of the wealth of assessment data available when planning their lessons.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

	THE SIXTH FORM AT THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL	
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OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **very good** education and its cost-effectiveness is **excellent**. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well overall as a result of very good teaching.
- Students achieve very well in sports and physical education and health and social care as a result of the very good teaching they receive.
- Members of the sixth form make a very valuable contribution to the life of the school.
- Teachers do not always use the wealth of assessment information available to them when matching work to the needs of all students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Science	Provision in biology is satisfactory . Students achieve satisfactorily because of the satisfactory teaching they receive.
Humanities	Provision in sociology is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is satisfactory . Students achieve satisfactorily because of the satisfactory teaching they receive.
Information technology	Provision in ICT is satisfactory . Students achieve satisfactorily because of the satisfactory teaching they receive.
Business	Provision in business studies is good . Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in sport and physical education is very good . Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is very good . Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Very good routines are in place for the care and personal guidance of students. The quality of educational support and guidance is very good. The head of the sixth form and other staff have a very knowledgeable understanding of the students in their care.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is **very good** and management is good. The sixth form has made good progress since the previous inspection. The very good leadership of the head of sixth form has ensured that standards have remained well above average. The school's founding Christian principles are as apparent in the sixth form as they are in the main school. Governors provide very good strategic leadership. Whilst management systems are good, there are inconsistencies.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are very happy at the school and have no real complaints about their education. They are particularly appreciative of the time and effort provided by their teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment that are above average overall, although this varies from subject to subject. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. Students attain well above average GCSE results and achieve very well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Talented students achieve exceedingly well in areas such as music, sport and art and design.
- Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the very good teaching they receive and their very positive attitudes.
- Examination results have been maintained at a level that is well above average.
- Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students.
- In Years 7 to 11, whilst achievement is satisfactory in design and technology, French and German, it is currently not as good as that seen in other subjects, although improving.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, ICT and history. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of French and German where standards are average. Students achieve very well in art and design and physical education. They achieve well in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, French and German where achievement is satisfactory.
2. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are well above average in English, science, art and design, ICT, history, geography and music. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of French and German where they are average. Students achieve very well in art and design, geography, physical education, and music. They achieve well in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, design and technology, French and German where achievement is satisfactory.
3. Achievement in design and technology is satisfactory and has improved in the recent past because of good leadership in the department. Achievement in French and German is satisfactory and improving because of good leadership and the commitment of teachers to improve.
4. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching they receive. Students' very positive attitudes and the support they receive from their parents also make a major contribution to their achievement. Students achieve well because of the very positive ethos that permeates the school; students come to school wanting to learn and do their best.

5. Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the strong work ethic that is very evident. This work ethic is supported by students, staff and parents alike. Students want to succeed and the school brings all its resources to bear to help students to achieve their goals. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 and makes a significant contribution to students' very good achievement.
6. Standards of literacy, mathematics and ICT across the school are above average. Most students are articulate and confident speakers. Students learn and use subject-specific vocabulary well. They read with good understanding and are able to conduct research when asked to do so. Most students can express themselves clearly in writing. Students' mathematical skills are put to good use in other subjects. Students use their ICT skills to enhance their work and to research topics using the Internet.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs mirrors that of other students. In small group work, students quickly improve their mathematics and English skills because teachers provide work which suits individual needs. Students who are gifted achieve as well as other students because of the wide range of activities provided for them. Students who are particularly talented achieve exceedingly well, for example in music, sport and art and design. In music, the bands are expertly led, with ambitious performance goals and have a very high profile in the school, the community, national competitions and in worship.
8. The school sets demanding targets for improvement and usually meets these, although in 2004 it fell slightly short of its five plus A*-C GCSE target.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.0 (41.4)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	40.4 (38.4)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	37.4 (36.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 222 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	81 (80)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	44.3 (44.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 213 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average and are at a similar level in 2004. In 2003, in comparison with schools with similar prior attainment, achievement was very good. The trend in results is above the national trend.

- Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and are at a similar level in 2004. Students achieved very well given their standards at the end of Year 9. The trend in results is broadly in line with the national trend. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of those students from different ethnic backgrounds.

NB. Religious studies was not inspected under Section 10. However, it must be noted that all students in Year 11 study for GCSE in religious studies and attain well above average results.

Sixth form

Whilst students enter the sixth form with above average levels of attainment overall, attainment on entry varies from subject to subject. Overall, by the end of Year 13, standards are well above average and students achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in sports studies and health and social care because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Results are well above average and have been so for many years.
- Whilst achievement is satisfactory in design and technology, ICT and biology, it is currently not as good as that seen in other subjects.

Commentary

9. In the subjects inspected in detail, students attain well above average standards in health and social care. Standards are above average in all other subjects with the exception of biology where standards are average. Students achieve very well in sports studies and health and social care. Achievement is good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology, biology and ICT where it is satisfactory. In many other subjects not inspected in detail, examination results suggest that students achieved very well and attained well above average results. For example, examination results in music and psychology were well above average.
10. Students achieve very well overall because of the very good teaching they receive. Their very positive attitudes also contribute significantly to their achievement. It is not only in their subjects where students achieve very well; they also achieve very well in areas such as sport, the arts and many other extra-curricular activities.
11. Results overall in the 2003 A-level examinations were well above average and were at a similar level in 2004. Results have been well above average for some years. Students achieve very well given their starting points when joining the sixth form in Year 12. Very few students fail to complete courses and retention is high.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93.6 (94.1)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	29.7 (30.2)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per student	326.6 (329.8)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 221 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Commentary

Students' attitudes and behaviour, together with other aspects of their personal development, are very good. This is helped considerably by the very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are proud of their school. They are keen to live up to its high expectations and mostly work with considerable effort and enthusiasm.

- The school is successful in its aim to put “Faith, Vision and Nurture” at the centre of its work and this contributes very significantly to students' personal development.
- A sense of personal responsibility is promoted to very good effect, so that students have a strong sense of right and wrong and become very mature in their attitudes.
- Students enjoy being at school and most do not like to stay away. Staff have much success in supporting the few who might lose out through unnecessary absence.

Commentary

12. Very good attitudes and behaviour are the norm across the whole spread of school activities. This is very apparent in lessons. Helped by interesting content and effective management strategies, students mostly concentrate very well on learning activities. They grow in confidence and readily volunteer ideas or respond to questions. They work together, helping each other when this is asked. At times commitment is really outstanding, as in outdoor sports lessons where students are so keen that they appear completely oblivious to poor weather conditions. On occasions when teaching is less strong, students often show a good degree of tolerance and remain co-operative. However, a hint of boredom or restlessness occasionally creeps in, more so among boys. Students with special educational needs or other disadvantageous personal circumstances are as fully involved as others, because of the support extended to them. Students show much appreciation of the wide range of extra-curricular activities organised for them, and join in enthusiastically.
13. The school's Christian values underpin the very effective provision for all aspects of students' personal development. There is a very strong sense of community which students value greatly. All students have a faith background and older ones say the school makes good provision to support their faith. They all take religious studies to GCSE level and this makes a very good contribution to their spiritual awareness. Similarly there is a strong spiritual element in assemblies. Especially when students take a leading role, assemblies deepen their awareness of issues such as how great things grow from small beginnings. Occasionally opportunity for prayer is omitted when students remain in their classes during assembly time and results in the school not providing a daily act of collective worship for all students. The school enables students to gain a good awareness of the arts and cultures of other nations through subjects such as music, dance, art and design, geography and religious education. Students are encouraged to put their faith into action and raise very impressive sums of money each year for international, national and local charities of their own choice.
14. The very good provision for moral and social development springs from the commitment to nurture all. Parents are very happy with this area of the school's work. Students gain a clear understanding of right and wrong because of the ideals promoted prominently by all who work in the school. Through the example and expectations of staff they learn to consider others' feelings and to show care for one another. Science has a particular strength in building moral and social awareness in topics such as the environment and gene therapy. The personal, social citizenship and health education programme (PSCHE) also makes an important contribution, for instance when Year 9 students study moral aspects of crime and punishment. Students show a mature approach to doing what is right, rather than behaving just because they are told what to do. Consequently, few concerns arise about bullying. Students know that staff will help if they tell them about such problems. Incidents of really poor behaviour rarely arise and when they do they are well managed so detract very little from the quality of the school community. Compared with other schools, there are very few exclusions.
15. Students support each other and respond well to the opportunities to interact with those from other years through the house activities. They make good contributions to

the running of the school through the school, house/year and form councils. They readily join in initiatives to meet and work with students from other schools.

16. Provision for cultural development is very good. The school is very active in fostering good relationships with people of other cultures and backgrounds in the community around it. An exchange day with a nearby school that has students of predominantly Bangladeshi heritage extends awareness of the multi-cultural nature of the local area. It successfully promotes mutual understanding and acceptance. In religious education students gain a good understanding of the cultural aspects of Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. There are visits to a Jewish synagogue and a Hindu temple. In citizenship, students study poetry that explores what multi-culturalism means and how it impacts on society. There is a very extensive range of visits that includes theatres, museums, art galleries, universities, places of work, and language and sports trips at home and abroad. Music makes an excellent contribution to all aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is particularly strong in representing the local culture in its brass bands.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1249	10	2
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	15		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	15		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British Caribbean	6		
Black or Black British African	6		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	0		
Any other ethnic group	0		
Parent/student preferred not to say	17		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded. The number of students on roll is for the current year

17. Attendance remains similar to that seen at the previous inspection and is very high in comparison with other schools. Nearly all students come to school regularly and they rarely stay away without good reason. This is helped by the way staff carefully monitor attendance. The social inclusion officer is quick to follow up any unexplained absence with well-judged action and support. The occasional lateness that arises is usually due to the late arrival of school buses. The school limits this by its frequent communications with the bus company.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Sixth form

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal development is very good. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students understand very well their own responsibility for their work.
- Students respond with great enthusiasm and maturity to the many opportunities offered for them to contribute to the life of the school community.

Commentary

18. Students are very happy with the provision made for them in the sixth form. An atmosphere of friendliness and respect is very apparent between students and teachers, with a shared sense of purpose. Students appreciate the way teachers help their learning and respond with maturity, settling down willingly in lessons and concentrating hard on making progress. They work very well together, supporting each other's learning, when this is appropriate to the task. They remain co-operative towards the teacher even when the presentation is occasionally boring, though their enthusiasm tends to dwindle at such times.
19. They understand that they must organise themselves to work and usually show considerable responsibility in the way they cope with independent tasks. Students know well that they need to make good use of private study time so as to keep up to date with their work; they mostly succeed in handing in work on time. Instances are seen, however, where a few students, males especially, waste time in their free periods. However, serious misbehaviour is very rare. Students accept the firmly upheld expectations of regular attendance; attendance in the sixth form is as good as in the main school. Students are usually in time for lessons.
20. Provision for students' personal development builds further on that offered by the main school. All members of the sixth form take studies in philosophy, religion and ethics as part of their general education. They speak with respect of others' religious beliefs and they respond in a mature and reflective way to the opportunities given to them to consider ethical and moral issues. There is a well-established tradition of

support from sixth formers to the rest of the school community. They respond willingly and make a mature and very worthwhile contribution. This year their input has been formalised, with every Year 12 student undertaking a specific responsibility. These are wide ranging. For example some are trained to run the Xchange peer counselling service and some choose to help younger ones with catch-up reading sessions. Those appointed as senior prefects train and organise Year 10 prefects and others contribute to social and sports activities through their houses.

21. As a result of the range of very good opportunities students become confident young adults with a good understanding of their responsibility for others within the school community and beyond.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. The quality of teaching is very good. The quality of the curriculum is very good and very good attention is given to the care and welfare of students.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are very good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and leads to students achieving very well.
- The work of support staff contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers manage students well which aids achievement and learning.
- Teachers use very engaging methods and resources to capture students' interest and involve them in learning.
- The quality of marking, whilst good, is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers do not always use assessment data when planning their lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 163 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2.5%)	53 (32.5%)	58 (35.6%)	44 (27.0%)	3 (1.8%)	1 (0.6%)	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.

COMMENTARY

22. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are very good in art and design and physical education. They are good in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, French and German where they are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good in art and design, music, physical education and geography. They are good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology, French and German where they are satisfactory.
23. It is the consistency of good and very good teaching that students receive that enables them to achieve very well during their time at the school. It is not just what goes on in lessons that make the teaching so good. A significant strength of the teaching is the sheer volume of work that students are expected to do in lessons, and also outside of normal lesson times. The scrutiny of students' work indicates that the substantial amount of homework that is set is expected to support and extend teaching. Teachers and support staff are always available to help students. Students speak highly of their teachers and support staff, and are grateful for the additional time that staff spend with them when problems arise.
24. The quality of teaching was a strength of the school at the time of the previous inspection and it continues to be so. Much of the school's in-service training in recent years has been about improving teaching and learning and the effects of this are now being seen in the classroom.
25. Much of the teaching is very good and students learn far more than is usually expected. Teachers set demanding targets for students and the students respond by

throwing themselves into the work. In most lessons, students start working as soon as they enter the room. Homework is set at the most appropriate time in the lesson, rather than waiting for the end, so all students have it noted down.

26. Teachers have very good strategies to manage the behaviour of students and consequently relationships between staff and students are very good. It is rare for a teacher to have to reprimand a student. Teachers have very high expectations about the presentation of written work. Teachers ensure that students make careful notes about what they have learnt in a lesson and students are expected to refer to them later. This is especially effective in ensuring that students can do their homework and revise well for any tests; this has helped to raise attainment.
27. Most teachers play a good part in developing students' skills in reading, writing and everyday mathematics. However, there is not a consistent approach to improving students' skills within all subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers make good use of ICT to support students' learning.
28. There are two areas of teaching where, although good, it could be easily made better: the marking of students' work and the use of assessment data. Students' work is generally assessed well, so students get a good idea of what they have done well or not well enough. It also ensures that teachers have a good idea of the students' strengths and weaknesses. However, in several subjects, whilst work is marked, comments do not always help students to understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not always make effective use of the wealth of assessment data that is available to them when matching the work to the needs of students; this leads to some students drifting off task because they find the task too difficult or too easy.
29. There are differences between the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that in Years 10 and 11. Teachers increase the pace of learning in Years 10 and 11 and have very high expectations of what students can achieve. Also, teachers have a very good understanding of the demands of the examination system, not only in terms of syllabi content but also the pressure that students are under to achieve well. Teachers and support staff spend a considerable time with students developing examination techniques and providing students with support mechanisms.
30. Students with special educational needs get the same access to teaching of a very good quality. Most teachers in the school have a good knowledge of the strategies which help students improve. For example, they break down the work into small segments and vary activities, so that students remain interested. As a result, students' attitudes to their work are very good and behaviour is often exemplary.
31. Assessment of students' progress is good. When students enter the school their attainment is tested and this information is used as the baseline to measure any future progress. It is used especially well in subjects such as English where any weaknesses are identified and, for example, special support is organised if necessary. The school holds information about students' achievements centrally and all teachers have access to this information electronically so that progress is well tracked. Students are given good information about their performance and are now offered regular review sessions to discuss the information.

32. Students are usually aware of what they need to do to improve, especially in subjects such as art and design, but in design and technology and modern foreign languages students are not always told clearly what they need to do to reach the next level or grade.

Sixth form

Teaching provision is very good and brings about very good learning. Assessment procedures are good.

Main strength and weaknesses

- The very good teaching provision leads to students achieving very well.
- Teaching is particularly good in sports studies and health and social care, and students achieve very well.
- Students respond to the very good teaching by working hard.
- Whilst teaching is satisfactory in ICT and biology, on average it is not as good as that seen in other subjects.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information to match work to the needs of all students.

Commentary

33. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching is very good in sports studies and health and social care. It is good in all other subjects with the exception of ICT and biology where it is on average satisfactory, although examples of good and very good teaching were observed.
34. Teachers manage students exceedingly well. This leads to trust and a mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers provide their students with a supportive framework but with a good degree of independence as to how they will work within this framework. However, teachers are always ready to intervene if a student starts to struggle.
35. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and so are able to talk about topics that are not part of the planned lesson. The marking of written work is generally very good; errors are signalled and suggestions are made to students about how they might improve content. Students respond to the very good teaching by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision. Teachers prepare students well for examinations and, even in the early stages of Year 12, students are required to judge the quality of various possible examination answers in order to extend their understanding of precisely what the questions require.
36. In the comparatively weaker subjects, when teaching is less effective, it is for a variety of reasons. The pace of the lesson is slow, tasks lack challenge and students become bored.
37. In the sixth form, students' progress is tracked well. Students' performance is analysed and compared with predictions for future attainment, and this allows

teachers to intervene promptly if action is needed. However, teachers do not always use this information to match work to the needs of all students.

The curriculum

Main school

The curriculum is very good in Years 7 to 11. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its needs and very good support staff; resources are very good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide range of subjects available in Years 7 to 11.
- There is excellent provision for extra-curricular activities.
- The school has used its specialist college status very well to enrich the curriculum.
- There is an extensive programme for gifted and talented students, which has a significant impact on the achievement of students, particularly for those students identified as being talented.
- The school currently provides a limited range of vocational courses.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for every student.

Commentary

38. The curriculum has good breadth in Years 7 to 9; all students are taught drama as a separate subject and start a second language, German, in Year 8. There is a good range of subjects in Years 10 and 11, especially as students are able to indicate their preferences before subjects are set in the 'option' columns. Currently, there are limited opportunities to study vocational subjects. Subjects such as engineering and child development are available but the school is looking to increase the provision in the near future. The school has used its specialist status well to enhance the curriculum, such as new science and mathematics courses in Years 10 and 11 which enable the different learning needs of students to be well addressed. Other subjects have also improved their curriculum by making links with other schools and sharing good practice. There is an extensive programme for gifted and talented students, which has a significant impact on the achievement of students, particularly for those students identified as being talented.
39. Form time each day is used inconsistently; most teachers use the time productively to discuss topical or moral issues, while a few do little other than record attendance. Occasionally, there is not a daily act of collective worship within form time. There is a good programme for teaching personal, social and health education. Careers education is very good. It starts as early as Year 7 and builds on this foundation as students progress through the school.
40. The programme of work in literacy and numeracy for lower attaining pupils when they enter the school is based upon the National Strategies and provides very effective support in enabling pupils to catch up with their basic skills. Additionally, students are generally provided with a good range of other opportunities to develop their skills, though there is inconsistency across the departments. Students with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as other students and to all

areas of the school's activities.

41. The opportunities for students to participate in clubs and other activities during and beyond the school day are outstanding. The school provides many more clubs and activities than are usually seen. Participation in music and sports is high with 300 students currently learning to play a musical instrument and many opportunities are available for students to engage in competitive sports. Many students throughout the school benefit from residential visits to France and Germany, which leads to students improving their competence in the language.
42. Resources are very good. New ICT facilities are enabling students to use ICT across the school and enhance coursework. The library is very good and contains up-to-date facilities that students make full use of when developing their research skills.

Sixth form

The curriculum is very good with the same excellent range of extra clubs and activities as for the main school. The sixth form has sufficient teachers to meet its needs; resources are very good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are a large number of advanced level courses available.
- There is an excellent enrichment programme available for students.
- The range of vocational courses is rather limited, though the school improvement plan shows provision will improve significantly over the next two to three years.

Commentary

43. The school is very successful in encouraging students to stay on into the sixth form, including recruitment of students from other schools because of the high number of courses available. The opportunities to study vocational courses, however, are limited but the school is currently looking to develop its vocational provision in order to better meet the wide range of interests and aspirations of students. The extensive range and number of extra clubs and sports enable students to develop skills and broaden their experience. Students are well prepared for their next stage of learning through careers guidance and the very good links with universities and colleges. The same very good resources are available for members of the sixth form to use.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Students receive very good pastoral care and support. Very good account is taken of their views and preferences. Academic guidance is good. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attention is given to helping Year 7 students settle in happily.
- A very effective climate for learning pervades the school, so students are equipped and motivated to succeed.
- Care and support are particularly well developed for any individuals in danger of losing out through particular circumstances or needs.

- The school makes very good efforts to find out students' views. It refers to them in making important decisions about the organisation of the school.
- Routines for checking that all relevant risk assessment routines are not implemented fully.

Commentary

44. The very good pastoral care systems, rooted in Christian principles, contribute significantly to the very effective climate for learning. Students and their parents are very happy with the support provided. This starts before students join Year 7; although they come from around 100 different primary schools, a member of staff visits each one during the summer term. In addition, Year 6 pupils visit The Blue Coat School for introductory meetings and sample lessons. They meet their tutor and the sixth form students who will give them extra support at the start of the autumn term. Staff monitor carefully how students are coping and give extra support to the few who find it harder to settle in. The house structure, supplemented by the heads of year, contributes to the quality of care and gives a sense of identity. The 'away weekends' organised by the three houses for Year 7 students during the autumn term prove very successful in helping students get to know each other. Induction and support programmes for Key Stage 4 students (and their parents) enable students to adapt effectively to the demands of GCSE.
45. Ongoing pastoral support is also very good. Students are confident that help is available from staff if they need it. There is much positive encouragement of hard work and helpfulness; students like the systems of awards that operate. Academic guidance is good. Students understand their attainment grades and usually know how to improve their work. They appreciate the extra help that is readily available if they need it, initially from teachers and in extra clubs and classes and from the learning mentors.
46. Very good monitoring and support systems operate when any individual has problems, arising for instance from poor self-organisation, adverse social circumstances, or behavioural difficulties. Pastoral staff, including learning mentors, the social inclusion officer and other support staff, have a very good understanding of the individuals they help. They regularly share and discuss information, determine relevant support strategies, and later review progress. Liaison with a wide range of external agencies, within and beyond the borough, is maintained, to further add to the breadth of support extended to students. Very thorough attention is given to ensuring that all staff know about the child protection procedures to follow if any concerns arise. The very effective and inclusive approach of the school's pastoral staff makes a significant contribution to students' well-being and achievements.
47. Special educational needs staff give good guidance to students with learning difficulties and help them to feel more confident in their own abilities. Individual education plans are in place and targets are reviewed regularly, so that students' personal and academic needs are well met.
48. Students' own views are valued and built on in ways that aid their achievements. Full account is taken of the preferences of Year 9 students when the arrangements for their Key Stage 4 optional courses are made. Students' views are also considered through a questionnaire and through the structure of house, year and school councils.

The school makes very good efforts to respond wherever possible. For instance, a recent survey gained a very positive response, but was slightly more negative about some relationships between students. The school has good strategies in place for responding to the few incidents of bullying that arise but nevertheless plans to refine its approach. In addition, it has engaged a researcher from a local university to conduct an innovative, detailed study of bullying issues.

49. Health and safety procedures are underpinned by a good relevant policy. Most aspects accordingly get good attention. For example, risk assessments are in place to support the safety of individuals with physical disability as they move around the site. However, instances occur, for instance in music, in physical education and in design and technology, where risk assessment routines and health and safety practices are not comprehensive enough.

Sixth form

Very good routines are in place for the care and personal guidance of students. The quality of educational support and guidance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive very good guidance about sixth form options and the routes open to them when they leave the school.
- The school extends very good support to students through readily available well-targeted help and advice.

Commentary

50. Guidance starts well before students join the sixth form, with explanations about the full range of post-16 options available as well as about the content of sixth form courses. Students' preferences for courses are canvassed and they appreciate the efforts made to ensure they can follow the combinations they want. The application of the entry criteria ensures that students only join courses where they have a reasonable chance of success. The continuing provision for careers advice enables all students to consider their own strengths and preferences. They are given the skills they need to take the initiative in conducting their own careers' research. They speak highly of the support they receive to help them in their choice of university course. Parents mention especially the advice over completing university applications. Careful attention is also given to advising students who wish to follow other routes when they leave.
51. The quality of support within the friendly, caring school community is greatly valued by all students. Any who join from other schools soon feel settled. From the start, students receive much effective encouragement to take personal responsibility for their own learning. At the same time teachers soon notice if a student falls short of the high expectations about attendance and work. The head of the sixth form and other staff have a very knowledgeable understanding of the students in their care. They follow up emerging difficulties even if the student involved does not take the initiative by asking for help. Their support strategies show a good degree of success. Where particular difficulties arise, relevant support, for instance from the school's learning mentors, is arranged just as in the main school.
52. All students benefit from the system of regular reviews and reports. A sense of personal responsibility is promoted as the student's own assessment of his or her strengths and development targets is discussed with subject teachers and with the form tutor. Relevant assessment data and projections of the student's achievements are also shared. Students find

these helpful but do not always understand apparent inconsistencies, for instance between projections based on their GCSE performance and those entered on their university application forms.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

Main school

Partnership with parents is very good. Links with the community and with other schools and educational establishments are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and this is helped by the willingness of staff to involve them and to respond to their views.
- A very good innovative approach leads to very effective links with other schools in the local community.

Commentary

53. Parents think highly of the school. Staff welcome their interest and make very good efforts to maintain the effective partnership with them. Parents have few criticisms or concerns. Those they do mention are reflected in the school's improvement planning. For instance, they would like to see improvements to the facilities and a buildings project is currently under way. Parents receive a very good flow of information, starting with a comprehensive welcome pack before their child joins the school. The vast majority of parents willingly get involved; they attend consultations with teachers in very good numbers and at the annual house presentations they help celebrate the distribution of certificates of achievement. They also join in celebrations such as the annual carol service in the local parish church. Nearly all parents readily back up the school's efforts to maintain students' high standards of behaviour and attendance. Staff make very good efforts to work with the few who are less supportive.
54. The system for informing parents about students' progress has very good features; it provides for regular information through the year, with informative summary reports in addition to a well-detailed annual report with comments about the progress made by the student in each subject. However, last year there were difficulties with the computerised production of reports and information in some was too limited. The school has improvements in hand.
55. Students transfer from many primary schools scattered across several boroughs, and good liaison is in place to help them cope happily with the transition. Importantly, the headteacher and other staff are also building links with schools nearby and integrating the school effectively into its community within Oldham. They are vigorously exploiting the school's specialist and Leading Edge School status to develop productive partnerships with local schools, both primary and secondary. A range of initiatives is aiding the achievements and personal development both of their own students and of others. Specialist staff in a range of subjects such as mathematics, religious studies, geography, science, art and design, music and physical education are involved in supporting other schools through a range of staff training initiatives,

which also add to their own experience and expertise. A notable partnership is developed with the local behaviour support unit; its students' achievements have been boosted by lessons in the school's science laboratories and in addition the library has helped them access a wider range of books.

56. Other joint initiatives involve Blue Coat students in a number of ways. They help present a mathematics road show or an eco-project in local primary schools, and enjoy problem-solving days when Years 6 and 7 tackle activities together. Students' comments show that these initiatives let them experience work in partnership with others from differing ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds and help prepare them to take their place in the diverse national community.
57. More usually encountered links with the community are also very well developed. For instance, local employers help with mock interviews as well as by providing work experience placements. Wide-ranging links contribute to the very extensive programme of visits. However, there are occasional missed opportunities, as in business education where suitable links should be developed.

Sixth form

Partnership with parents is very good. Very good partnership is also established with the local community and with other educational establishments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reports provide very good information for parents.
- Links with the community and with schools and universities contribute both to students' personal development and to their educational achievements.

Commentary

58. The overall flow of information for parents is very good, just as in the main school. The reporting system gives parents a regular flow of information about how their son or daughter is progressing. Written reports are particularly supportive of parents' interest because alongside teachers' assessments they include the student's self-evaluation and agreed steps to address any weaknesses.
59. Local links continue to contribute considerably to students' experience and understanding of the diverse community they live in, when they help with a mathematics road show in a local primary school for instance, or through performances with the school's band. Strong links with higher education are established to aid students' learning and help with their career choices. For example, the learning of mathematics' students is enhanced by a master class in mathematics at a local university.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and governance are very good; management is good.

Main school

Main strength and weaknesses

- The headteacher is ensuring that students achieve very well.
- The financial management of the school is excellent.
- The school's founding Christian principles encapsulate much that is happening in the school.
- Governors provide very good strategic leadership.
- The school has enthusiastically used its specialist science college status as a background to providing excellent extra-curricular experiences for its own students as well as giving help and support to other mathematics and science departments.
- Whilst management systems are good, there are inconsistencies in the application of the school's policies.

Commentary

60. Leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher has clarity of vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations. She has been in post for two years and during that time has motivated staff to share her vision and work together very effectively to make the best provision for the school's students. She has been successful in building a team of senior leaders who all fulfil their responsibilities most effectively. There is a real sense of commitment to creating an environment within which everyone feels valued, respected and able to succeed. Fundamental to the school's work is a commitment to the Christian principles on which the school was originally founded; to this end the school is very successful. The school's mission statement "Faith, Vision" and Nurture" encapsulates much that is happening in the school.
61. All members of the leadership group are well informed and all have considerable expertise in each of their own specialist fields. Together they form a formidable team with a strong and genuine shared commitment to succeed. The clear system of line management enables all aspects of the school's provision to be thoroughly reviewed with the major focus being the achievement of all students, an approach which is very successful.
62. The school has embraced fully initiatives such as the work force reform, specialist college status and the Leading Edge School programme. For example, the work force reforms have provided the school with far more support staff who are being used very effectively. Learning mentors are providing a valuable service in supporting students who are experiencing problems. The school has enthusiastically used its specialist college status as a background to providing excellent extra-curricular experiences for its own students as well as giving help and support to other mathematics and science departments. Leading Edge School status has involved the school also in supporting other religious studies departments and leading developments in e-learning in geography across the education authority.
63. The school improvement plan is a well-conceived document which is regularly evaluated. It provides a very good record of the progress the school is making towards realising its goals. The school's targets are focused firmly on the development of teaching and learning and the improvement of achievement for all its students.
64. Monitoring of the school's performance and provision is very good. All aspects of the school's work, including the pastoral system, are monitored and suggestions are made to improve the already very good systems. All departments have a comprehensive annual review made by their head of department, line manager and headteacher. There is a very thorough evaluation of teaching and learning through classroom observation. This makes a very good contribution to the development of department teams, identifying weaknesses and sharing good practice. However, within some subjects, the interpretation of examination results is not understood fully and this occasionally leads to subjects thinking they are doing better than they actually are.
65. The management of the school is good. Whilst the school operates very smoothly on a day-to-day basis there are aspects of the school's work that are good but can still be improved. For example, the central assessment system is good but the use of data within departments is inconsistent.

66. There are many examples of effective team work among staff. For example, the very good leadership of physical education has resulted in students achieving very well. The school site is very well managed and is improving all the time. The pastoral teams are led very well which is key to the very positive ethos that pervades the school.
67. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has shown good leadership in training staff to implement the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. There are good systems, procedures and administration for special educational needs. There are clear identification procedures, well-established priorities and good support for students.
68. A strength of the school is its approach to staffing. Right from the very beginning, soon after their appointment, new staff are made welcome through an extensive induction programme; this applies to both teaching and support staff. The programme of continuing professional development programme is focused on improving the quality of education for students. There are very good links with personnel from outside of the school; for example, researchers from universities are being employed to analyse the impact of school initiatives. The work force reforms have been embraced fully and are bringing about a revolution in the way the school operates. There are now strong links between the internal support services, which is helping to release teachers from burdensome tasks and to focus on improving the quality of teaching.
69. The financial management of the school is excellent. Top-flight commercial practices are the norm. The school receives below average funding and provides excellent value for money. Surplus funding is earmarked to underwrite the extensive building programme which began in the autumn.
70. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have a very good strategic overview of the school; they work with the school in producing the school improvement plan. They keep a watchful eye on the budget and challenge the school leaders appropriately. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, although the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is not fulfilled.

Sixth form

The quality of leadership and governance is very good; management is good.

Main strengths and leadership

- The very good leadership of the head of sixth form has ensured that standards have remained well above average.
- The school's founding Christian principles are as apparent in the sixth form as they are in the main school.
- Governors provide very good strategic leadership.
- Whilst management systems are good, there are inconsistencies in the use of examination data.

Commentary

71. The headteacher has identified sixth form development as a key priority to the school; this is reflected in whole-school improvement planning for curriculum, teaching and learning, accommodation and enrichment.
72. The head of sixth form ensures that all students are treated equally and that the school's Christian values are continually striven for. The head of sixth form is exceptionally well informed about the students' academic and personal development because he has forged a team of highly effective tutors who know their charges very well. The same very good systems are used for monitoring and supporting teaching as exist in the main school and they are equally effective. There is a very good relationship between the sixth form and the main school. Management systems are good but some departments do not always understand what the examination data is telling them or how this might improve their teaching.
73. The governors view the sixth form as equally important as the rest of the school and take their role here equally as seriously. The governors have a very good understanding of the work of the sixth form. The sixth form is extremely cost effective not only in its subject provision but also through the enrichment opportunities that students enjoy.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4544152	Balance from previous year	108761
Total expenditure	4256004	Balance carried forward to the next	396909
Expenditure per student	3246		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	No judgment possible
Achievement	Not applicable	No judgment possible
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	No judgment possible

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience and work shadowing are very good and successfully support and complement school-based work.
- Analysis, monitoring and assessment are strengths and have been responsible for the way WRL has developed.

- The co-ordinator for WRL gives strong leadership, management and direction to the subject.
- Not all departments have used WRL to enhance provision.
- Good use is made of visits, visitors, local employers and partnerships to enhance learning.

Commentary

74. There is no examination course in WRL. Only two lessons related to WRL were observed, one in engineering and another in child development. Teaching was good in the lessons seen. However, an insufficient number of lessons was seen to make judgments about teaching, learning and achievement.

Standards and achievement

75. WRL courses are successfully building upon work experience placements for the Year 11 students where good links have been established with employers. A thorough analysis of WRL has taken place. Links with Oldham College enable students to gain access to vocational courses. Courses such as dance and drama, plumbing, carpentry, sport and leisure are attended by a small cohort of Year 11 students. After evaluating the 2003 courses the school now provides WRL in engineering, in child development and in science through 21st Century science for Year 10 students. These school-based courses are in the early stages of development. About a third of Year 10 students undertake work shadowing during their holidays. During the autumn term there is a two-week work experience placement for all Year 11 students. Students value their work experience placement, understanding it both supports and complements the work they do in school and successfully develops an awareness of the world of work. Students receive a full programme of careers guidance from Year 7 to Year 11, which includes individual interviews through the Connexions service.

Teaching and learning

76. During the inspection it was possible to see only two lessons directly related to WRL. Not all subjects have embedded fully WRL within their schemes of work. However, subjects such as English, mathematics, PSCE and ICT involve students in problem solving and working, both independently and collaboratively. WRL is seen in these subjects as a tool to enliven teaching and improve students' learning and achievement. The school has developed business, commercial and industrial partnerships in order to enliven students' learning, especially for those who prefer to learn in a practical way. For example, the local Rotary Club gives students the opportunity to be involved in interview preparation.

Leadership and management

77. WRL is building on a strong and established work experience programme. The co-ordinator has carefully analysed and assessed the needs and opportunities to develop WRL within subjects but as yet it is underdeveloped.

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**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are, overall, good throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Students have good attitudes which help them to achieve well.
- A small proportion of the teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

78. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average; results were at a similar level in 2004. In 2003, GCSE results obtained in English and English literature were well above average. Overall, results in 2004 were at a similar level.

Standards and achievement

79. Students' skills in speaking and listening are well above the national average. In Year 9, students are confident, use a full vocabulary and can speak at length when it is appropriate to do so. Standards in reading are also high. Students understand what they read and have a good recall of literature they have studied. Most students are able to present their ideas clearly in writing and understand how to adapt language for different audiences.

80. In Years 10 and 11, students improve their skills and achieve well. Most of the features found in the three earlier years are also found in Years 10 and 11. The majority of students are articulate, speak in turn, listen carefully, and can debate issues in a considered and respectful manner. Standards in reading are high, with many students showing considerable insight into demanding literature. Most students produce well-structured essays on a good range of topics, though the work of lower attainers tends to be marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Higher attainers produce work of very high quality. Most students redraft their work with care

in order to improve its quality. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as other students.

Teaching and learning

81. Examples of excellent and very good teaching were seen and a small proportion of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching is most effective when the teacher has very good subject knowledge and can use this to probe students, particularly on literature they have read, so that they think more deeply and develop their powers of discrimination and their capacity to debate. When the pace of the lesson is brisk and the work includes variety, students respond well to the challenge and concentrate hard. Students also enjoy being active in their own learning and are ready to share and explore ideas together in groups when they are given the opportunity to do so. Teachers share their learning objectives with students and this helps to give lessons a good sense of direction. Marking is of good quality and gives students guidance on what they need to do in order to improve. Teaching assistants are well briefed and very effectively deployed in supporting students' learning. Most students behave very well in class, co-operate fully with their teachers and each other, and want to succeed. Students in Years 10 and 11 adopt a mature attitude towards their studies and work hard at redrafting their written work.
82. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, the pace of the lesson is too slow, the work lacks variety, and students become noisy and restless and do not make satisfactory progress. In the less effective lessons, students are told to complete tasks; in the best lessons they are shown how to do so.

Leadership and management

83. The head of department is a good role model which has resulted in good progress being made since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. Standards of literacy are above average. Most students are articulate and confident speakers. Students learn and use subject-specific vocabulary. They read with good understanding and are able to conduct research when asked to do so. Most students can express themselves clearly in writing.
85. The programme of work in literacy for lower attaining students when they enter the school is based upon the National Literacy Strategy and provides very effective support in enabling students to catch up with their basic skills. Additionally, students are generally provided with a good range of other opportunities to develop their skills, though there is inconsistency across the departments.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	French: average German: average	French: average German: average
Achievement	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory

Teaching and learning	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory
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Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are committed to improvement and have a shared understanding of how to achieve this.
- The new leadership is ensuring that standards are kept under review and that problems are tackled.
- Speaking is not as well developed as other skills.
- The performance of boys is below that of the girls.

Commentary

Examination results

86. In French, examination results were average in 2003 and have fallen for the past three years. In German, results rose slightly between 2003 and 2004 but are still well below the results from 2002. In both subjects the gap between the performance of boys and girls is larger than would be expected nationally and students perform worse in languages than they do in other subjects they take in the school.

Standards and achievement

87. By the end of Year 9, students are working around the level that would be expected of them nationally in French and German, which represents satisfactory achievement. Standards have been affected by the previous instability in staffing. Students are mostly confident when listening to tapes on familiar topics and can read and understand short passages of written French or German, although they do not do much extended reading. Students' speaking skills are less well developed than their ability to listen and understand written passages. Higher attaining students are making satisfactory progress but they do not often work from memory and are a little hesitant when speaking. Lower attainers have weaker spoken skills and their writing is very short but they are better at listening and reading as they are given more support for this by teachers. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. Girls are significantly better than boys at writing and working accurately.

88. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are average in French and German; they continue to make satisfactory progress but have also been adversely affected by the instability in staffing and have entered Year 10 with some gaps in their knowledge. In both languages, speaking is the weakest skill, especially for the lower and middle attaining boys who often have poor pronunciation and fluency although some higher attaining students in German have good spoken skills. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; teachers are aware of their needs and support them within the class.

Teaching and learning

89. Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages but students have had a varied quality of teaching until now. In some of the good and very good lessons, students rise to the challenges they are given and enjoy, for example, being expected to work out grammatical patterns in the perfect tense in German or the position of adjectives in French. Teachers use carefully selected resources and prepare students carefully for the examinations by giving them helpful revision guides and extra help in the lunch hour. Teachers are also beginning to use ICT effectively to make their presentations of teaching points clear as they have just been given interactive whiteboards. Students get plenty of practice listening to tapes and are responding well to the system of awards for good work. Most teachers use French or German to explain tasks but there are occasions when English is used unnecessarily so students do not hear French and German used for real purposes.

90. Students' work is marked regularly but they are not, however, always told exactly what they have to do to improve and feedback on their oral work does not focus enough on pronunciation.

Leadership and management

91. The department now provides a similar quality of education to that at the time of the previous inspection. The new head of department has not yet had time to implement all the changes necessary but teachers are committed to improving. The head of department keeps a close eye on standards and there is a shared understanding of how teaching can be improved but this consistency of approach has not yet been in place for long enough to have an effect by improving standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching they receive.
- Gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 are well provided for with GCSE statistics and additional mathematics.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management of a strong department, with a clear vision to raise standards.
- GCSE results in both 2003 and 2004 have fallen.

Commentary

Examination results

92. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. In 2004, the results fell slightly. The GCSE results in 2003 were not as high as those attained in 2002 but were still above the national average. In 2004, the results fell further. Steps have now been taken to try to remedy this situation and improve the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11, which presently is satisfactory.

STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT

93. By the end of year 9, student's numerical skills are well above average. Higher attaining students find the nth term for a linear and quadratic sequence and use trial and improvement methods well. However, the lower attainers' numerical skills are weaker due to their insecure understanding of multiplication tables. In Year 11, higher attaining students have above average algebraic skills and do well in binomial expansion and in understanding the use of Pascal's triangle in obtaining the general

term. The lower attainers have average data-handling skills; in drawing scatter graphs the students do not choose the most appropriate scales and hence end up being uncertain where to plot their points.

Teaching and learning

94. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. The three-part lesson structure is fully integrated and effective use is made of starter activities linked to the main topic of the lesson. However, only in the better lessons do teachers recapitulate learning well or get students to self-assess learning to assist future achievement. Teachers plan their lessons well and share the learning objectives with the students. In the better lessons the expectations of the teacher are clearly relayed to the students in terms of lesson content. Consequently these lessons proceed with an efficiency and brisk pace to them which help the students understand the relevance of their learning and the achievements to be made. In a minority of lessons students' lack of concentration reduces the learning made in those lessons. Students are not given enough opportunities to work together, although when they do as seen in one Year 8 lesson on fractions, they learn more quickly. Helpful, diagnostic, marking of students' work is taking place, though a greater consistency is needed. Students are well assessed through the use of end of topic and mid-year tests. The outcomes of these are made known to the students and this helps them to understand how well they are doing. Students know their target levels or grades. ICT is used well as a teaching resource as seen in one Year 10 lesson on trigonometric functions.

Leadership and management

95. The head of department provides good leadership and is also a good role model with a clear vision to raise standards. The good, responsive management has put in place a number of measures, such as the move to a modular course structure at GCSE level, in order that the recent fall in standards may be reversed. Good assessment of students' progress takes place and the resulting data is used well to track student performance, monitor targets and inform the planning needs within the department. Gifted and talented students are well provided for in Years 10 and 11, through the ability to study GCSE statistics and additional mathematics. The department also offers students excellent learning enrichment activities. These include booster lessons during lunchtimes, and a homework, mathematics and cipher club to name but a few. Very good outreach work by the department has involved training other schools in the use of graphical calculators. Links and communications with parents are good and have involved an evening presentation to parents on how to support their children in learning mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

96. Standards in mathematics across the school are above average. The teaching of mathematics as a basic skill in all subjects across the curriculum is good. The science and mathematics departments have worked well together to identify common themes, such as the use of algebra in chemical equations. This has resulted in mutually supportive resources being produced to develop numerical skills. However, the support given to other subjects to fully embrace numeracy across the curriculum has yet to be made.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain better GCSE results than might be expected in relation to their test results when they enter the school.
- Learning activities are imaginative and interesting so that students enjoy science and concentrate well in lessons.
- There is not yet enough monitoring of teaching to ensure that all students experience consistently good teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities, including clubs and visits, extend students' experience and understanding.

Commentary

Examination results

97. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average. Results fell in 2004, particularly at the higher levels 6 and above. GCSE results for double award science were well above the national average in 2003. Students did better in science than they did on average in their other subjects. In 2004, results in double award science were similar to those for 2003. For the first time in 2004, one group in Year 11 took three separate GCSE science subjects; results in all three subjects were well above the 2003 national averages.

Standards and achievement

98. Students generally have at least a satisfactory knowledge of the topics they have studied recently and higher attainers often have much better understanding than expected for their age. For example, some students in Year 9 know the principles underlying the production of electricity in a power station. Students' understanding of more complex ideas is very good in the separate science courses in Years 10 and 11. Lower attainers usually know the basic facts but find it difficult to recall the detail of earlier topics and often do not say precisely what they mean when answering questions in writing. Students of all abilities have investigative skills that match their standards in other aspects of science.

99. In 2004, students did not do as well as expected in the national tests at the end of Year 9, given their test results when they entered the school. Hence for this year group, there was significant under-achievement. The department has now completed its major overhaul of lesson planning for Key Stage 3, and improved its assessment procedures, so that students in Years 7 to 9 are no longer under-achieving and achievement is satisfactory.

100. Students achieve well through Years 10 and 11, as a result of the good teaching they receive. Therefore, by the end of Year 11, their GCSE results are better than expected in relation to their standards when they joined the school. Girls achieve better than boys, largely because some boys, even in higher attaining groups, are lazy about giving enough detail in written answers and presenting calculations as carefully as they should.

Teaching and learning

101. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and plan their lessons carefully. When teaching is good, teachers give very clear instructions and explanations so that students know what they are supposed to do and what they are required to understand. The department makes particularly good use of 'starter' activities so that students have to start thinking as soon as they arrive at the lesson. Teachers make good use of laptop computers and projectors to provide valuable visual reinforcement of important facts and processes. Many of the learning activities are imaginative and stimulating so that students' concentration and interest are held throughout the lesson. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher used a presentation on a real investigation into plankton growth to show interesting evidence for global warming.

102. There is more variation in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 than Years 10 and 11 and this has led to differences in what students have learnt and what they now remember. This makes it difficult for teachers in later years to provide lessons that meet the precise needs of every student in the group.
103. In lessons that are satisfactory, rather than good or very good, there is often not enough emphasis on, or reinforcement of, the major points that students need to learn. Occasionally, the teacher uses an activity that students enjoy but that does not produce sufficient genuine learning.

Leadership and management

104. The head of department leads by example, both in the quality of her own teaching and her determination to make science a relevant and exciting subject for students. The department works well as a team and has enthusiastically used the school's specialist science college status as a background to providing excellent extra-curricular experiences for its own students as well as giving help and support to other science departments.
105. The department was very disappointed by the 2004 Year 9 test results and is working hard to ensure that students' achievement is improving. However, there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and the department is aware that there is not yet enough regular, systematic monitoring to ensure that all students experience consistently good teaching and learning.
106. Since the previous inspection, the department has maintained standards that are well above average. In addition, it has introduced many improvements, including very good assessment procedures, a new GCSE syllabus, 21st Century science, and the opportunity for higher attainers to study three separate GCSE science subjects. Hence the department has made good progress since it was last inspected.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision.
- Students achieve well because of well-planned lessons and good subject knowledge of the teachers.
- The department is well resourced with very good support from the ICT technicians.

- There is insufficient time to deliver all aspects of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Examination results

107. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above average in 2003 and improved in 2004. Boys performed better than girls did overall.

Standards and achievement

108. By the end of Year 9, students' knowledge and skills in using ICT to solve problems are well above average. Students present ideas in differing ways using ICT, demonstrating a clear sense of audience. Students also use ICT models to predict outcomes and vary the rules within them. Given the knowledge and skills that students have when they join the school, achievement over time is good. By the end of Year 11, students are able to design successful methods of collecting and preparing information for processing. Most students discuss knowledgeably the social, economic, ethical and moral issues raised by ICT.

Teaching and learning

109. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from very knowledgeable teachers. Teachers plan lessons very well and use time very effectively. Good use is made of projector equipment which captures the interest of the students although there is often insufficient involvement of the students in group work. As a result, there are limited opportunities for the students to share ideas and develop creativity. Homework is used well to reinforce learning.

110. In Years 10 and 11, students are engaged in interesting and challenging activities as a result of carefully planned work. The learning objectives are made clear for the students at the beginning of the lesson. However, there is insufficient variety of tasks when re-visiting these objectives at the end of the lesson. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and high expectations of what the students can achieve. Teachers effectively meet the individual needs of students through, for example, providing more challenging tasks for gifted students. As a result the students make good progress in their learning. Marking and assessment are very good. Students receive clear guidance on what level they are working at and what they must do to improve.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for developing ICT both within the department and across the school. There are good plans for further improvement which include development of the courses available. Performance of the subject was good at the time of the last inspection. This level of performance has been maintained and developed. Therefore progress continues to be good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

112. Standards of ICT across the school are above average. There is currently insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum for all students. However, all subjects at the school are now providing opportunities for

students to apply ICT in their subject area. In geography, students give presentations on their work. In art and design, ICT is used imaginatively to produce very high quality work. In modern foreign languages the students use the interactive whiteboards effectively, and in design and technology there are plans for further development of computer-aided design and manufacture.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection.	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, a strong combination of very good teaching and excellent student attitudes ensures a sharp rise in standards.
- Very good procedures for assessment ensure that students are aware of their progress and how to improve their work.

Commentary

Examination results

113. GCSE results in 2003 were high compared to national averages. Provisional results for 2004 indicate a decrease. This is partly due to a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching which has now been corrected.

Standards and achievement

114. By the end of Year 9, students develop a good foundation of geographical skills. They have an above average technical vocabulary and are knowledgeable on topics. Higher attaining students can locate places. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well because their learning needs are identified and they are helped by additional adult support. In Years 10 and 11, students take care in presentation and as a result achieve high standards in coursework. Students have good communication skills. Higher attaining students illustrate answers well and make good use of computers to present work. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Teaching and learning

115. Where teaching is very good, teachers ensure that students develop not only a very good level of factual knowledge, but also the very good interpretation and investigation skills that are essential to success. Students have excellent attitudes to work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This combination of very good teaching and

students' excellent attitudes is a major factor in the strong rise in standards that takes place. The department makes very good use of ICT to improve students' learning. Students regularly use a range of tables and graphs in their work and interpret statistical data. This makes a very good contribution to the development of their numeracy. The subject's contribution to literacy and citizenship are good. Procedures for assessment are very good with students knowing how to improve their work. The use of the data provided to track students' attainment and progress and to show them how they can improve their work is very good. Where teaching is less than satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, planning is poor and as a result, learning is superficial and lessons lack challenge.

Leadership and management

116. Geography makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by very effective use of fieldwork. Leadership of the subject is very good. A team of teachers is in place that work hard and support one another very well. The head of department has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Planning has well-focused areas for development. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection; high standards have been maintained.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching by enthusiastic teachers.
- Lessons are interesting and challenging; students behave well, work hard and are highly motivated to succeed.
- Teachers give good feedback so that students understand how to improve on their written work.
- The proportion of the very high GCSE grades gained in 2003 was below the national average.

Commentary

Examination results

117. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were average. This, however, was below the consistently well above average standard of recent years and, in 2004, results improved.

Standards and achievement

118. In Year 9, students reach well above average standards and, as students are above average when they enter the school, their achievement is good. In their oral and written work students show that their skills have developed well in using sources of evidence to interpret events. They judge convincingly, for instance, how useful and reliable different portraits of Elizabeth I are to an interpretation of her motives and personality as well as of her appearance. Students present the shared views of their groups confidently and clearly to the class with the use of overhead projector transparencies. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others because their specific needs are met in lessons. By the end of Year 11, students analyse and judge with impressive accuracy, against actual mark scheme criteria, the levels of answers written by other students; this helps them to understand how to gain the well above average GCSE results that are the norm in most years. The number of students who write particularly well is greater than normally seen, as is evident in answers that evaluate the degree of success of President Ebert in dealing with the problems facing the Weimar Republic in 1920's Germany.

Teaching and learning

119. In Years 7 to 9, all students benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and provide interesting and challenging learning tasks. In a lesson on Mary I's religious changes, for example, the atmosphere buzzed as students, in role, debated whether or not their parish would obey or defy Mary's instructions to return to

Catholicism. Students' work is assessed accurately and they know, because of informative marking, how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Homework is used well to extend learning beyond the lesson. Learning is well enriched by provision of extra-curricular activities such as the History Club and study visits. The teaching of literacy is effective in helping students to improve their writing but speaking skills need more considered and planned development. Students' learning is good because of good teaching.

120. By the end of Year 11 students produce good assignments because teachers have emphasised the importance of this to the gaining of good GCSE grades. Good teaching continues to challenge and capture the interest of students who work hard and strive to reach the highest levels possible. Assessments are accurate and students benefit from very knowledgeable feedback from teachers who are experienced external examiners.

Leadership and management

121. The subject is well led and managed. During the long-term absence of the recently appointed head of history the acting head of department has both maintained good standards and promoted further development, including the History Club. The department development plan matches school priorities and focuses on further improving learning and teaching, and on improving examination results, particularly at the highest grades. The subject's plans do not yet, however, state explicitly enough the strategies that teachers must use to further improve students' literacy skills, especially speaking skills. Good progress has been made in all respects since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education was not part of the Section 10 inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the head of department has reversed the decline in standards evident in recent years.
- Insufficient attention is paid to health and safety in lessons.
- Students do well in food and textiles, because the teaching is of a better standard than in other areas.

Commentary

Examination results

122. Results in GCSE examinations were average in 2003 but improved significantly in 2004. However, far fewer students study the subject to GCSE level than is usually the case.

Standards and achievement

123. Students arrive at the school with above average standards in the subject. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in terms of both designing and making so students' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average, reflecting students' satisfactory achievement. Work in food and textiles is particularly good. Students are very good at research and their presentation is also well above average, often as a result of their use of ICT. Evaluation skills are a little weaker, with students not going into sufficient detail. Practical skills remain above average.

Teaching and learning

124. Throughout the department, teachers make good use of the resources available to them in planning lessons based on topics that the students find interesting. Teachers often explain things well, but do not ensure all students are listening, so some do not understand what they have to do. This can lead to the teacher having to explain things more than once. Even if all the students understand the task, there are often occasions when the teacher does not ensure that all students are working. Nevertheless, there is very good practice in the department, notably in the teaching of food and textiles, where lessons are taught at a very good pace as a result of the teachers' insistence on all students paying attention and working hard.

125. Insufficient attention is given by some teachers to health and safety in workshops; students occasionally use equipment without goggles.

Leadership and management

126. There have been indications of significant underachievement in the subject in the recent past. The department has gone through a difficult period since the previous inspection, with the head of department and another senior member of department absent for health reasons. Over this period, results fell. In 2003, a new head of department was appointed who has raised standards significantly in a relatively short period so that they are now back to the level seen at the last inspection. This recent improvement has been brought about by the head of department's good leadership in forging a team of teachers together and providing the department with the right priorities for them to move forward. The department rightly plans to use the strengths evident in the department to raise the quality of teaching, and also to ensure greater consistency in its work, such as the ways in which work is assessed. The extra clubs and activities provide by the staff are much better than those usually seen, especially

ones such as the booster classes aimed at raising the standards of the higher attainers still further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and contributes to the well above average standards.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject and are creative and imaginative.
- Students' written notes lack structure and do not adequately describe their ideas.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Commentary

Examination results

127. In 2003, GCSE results were at the national average. There were staffing difficulties during this period. In 2004, results improved significantly.

Standards and achievement

128. Students enter school with broadly average skills in art and design. By Year 9, they draw well from observation and get the proportions correct. They show good confidence and draw boldly in pencil, chalk, charcoal and ink. Work in ink is particularly impressive. Students have a good awareness of the effects of texture and apply their ideas creatively.

129. In Years 10 and 11, all work is highly individual and imaginative. Studies of portraits based on the work of major artists are impressive in the depth of colour and tone. The good inspiration students gained from a visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park resulted in a wide range of imaginative responses. In general, work is bold and dramatic with very good studies in colour. Work in mixed materials is particularly effective in all years. There is very good use of ICT for research and for the manipulation of images that opens up new opportunities for experimentation.

Teaching and learning

130. The teachers have very good expertise in the subject and create interesting approaches to studies in design as well as teaching the key skills of drawing and painting formally. There is some exemplary use of specific artists' work that inspires

Year 7 students to use mixed media very effectively. There is very good one-to-one support for students in all lessons that ensures that all make appropriate progress. There are challenging extra lessons for gifted and talented and all interested students where work is of an exploratory nature. Although there are very good strategies and well thought out examples to illustrate and support literacy, students' written notes do not adequately describe their ideas, particularly in GCSE.

Leadership and management

131. Planning and documentation are of a very high standard. Assessment and record keeping are very good and ensure that the very high standards are maintained. There is very good extra-curricular provision at lunchtimes and in the evenings as well as a wide range of visits to art galleries and museums. Students' work is celebrated by extensive exhibitions within the school and in the community as well as a permanent exhibit in the cathedral. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by examining these aspects in the work of major artists. There are particularly good studies of religious art in the Renaissance period. The very good aspects identified in the last inspection report are maintained. Boys' achievement has improved.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well overall due to consistent, high-quality teaching.
- Excellent extra-curricular provision enhances provision very well.
- Music makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development.
- Inadequate accommodation limits the effectiveness of teaching and the aspirations of the department.

Commentary

Examination results

132. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average; results in 2004 improved significantly. The number of students opting for GCSE is rising year by year, with an above average proportion now taking music.

Standards and achievement

133. By the end of Year 9, students' musical skills are above average. They understand the basic principles of notation; they listen to and appraise music, understanding how

various musical concepts can be used in different contexts; they can combine melody and harmony with varied success in composition. Higher attaining students who learn instruments achieve very well, applying their performing skills to advantage across the whole course. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. Many students are fine performers, working independently and collaboratively to develop stylish interpretations. Students work very well to draw inspiration from the craftsman-like music compositions they have studied. A strong command of technical language complements very good listening skills. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys or girls, students with special educational needs, or those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Teaching and learning

134. Very well devised course-books ensure students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Students focus well on practical work, due to lively teaching and well-linked activities. Teachers know the needs of individual students very well, making for very good attitudes to learning. Aspects of literacy, numeracy and citizenship are taught well. Homework is set regularly, including challenging research projects. Explanations of theory are not consistently supported by musical illustration and younger students are over-reliant on alphabetic annotations when reading from notation. Good application of ICT enhances composition in Years 10 and 11, but music software is not used in Years 7 and 8. Work is marked regularly; students know how to improve. Lessons are occasionally disrupted due to poor access and sound-proofing. The lack of space for working in groups with percussion instruments restricts the breadth of activities in Years 7 to 9. An above average proportion of students learn instruments or singing. Many students participate in the wide, varied and systematically organised vocal and instrumental groups. The bands in particular are expertly led, with ambitious performance goals and a very high profile in the school, in the community, in national competitions and in worship.

Leadership and management

135. Responsibilities are shared very well in the department. Staff are committed to creating the best possible opportunities, despite the shortcomings of space. Some electrical cabling presents safety risks.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of their very good attitudes and the very good teaching they receive.
- Very good leadership provides a distinctive ethos and a clear direction for the subject.
- The Years 7 to 9 curriculum requires review, as it is not yet fully inclusive.
- An outstanding extra-curricular programme gives all students, particularly the gifted and talented, the opportunity to excel in school and beyond.

Commentary

Examination results

136. The 2003 GCSE examination results were above average, and the 2004 results were at a similar level. Boys attained better than girls.

Standards and achievement

137. Standards in Year 9 indicate that students are on target to achieve above average standards by the end of the year. This represents very good achievement not only in relation to students' starting point on entry to the school, but also in overcoming the challenge presented by the poor outdoor facilities. All students achieve very well in cross-country running; boys also achieve very well in volleyball and girls in dance. Students with special educational needs are well supported, and all students achieve equally.

138. Standards in the Year 11 core curriculum are above average. Year 11 boys achieve very well in football, despite difficult playing conditions. Standards are above average in the theoretical aspects of the GCSE examination. Overall, students are achieving very well in this course, illustrated, effectively, by boys' well above average performance in football, and very good collaborative group work by girls and boys in planning a fitness training programme. Standards in extra-curricular sport are very high, reflected in many students' successes at local, county and national levels in a range of sports. Earlier this year, three Blue Coat trampolining teams reached the finals of the National Schools' Trampolining Championships.

Teaching and learning

139. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and very well planned teaching motivates students, and demands a high level of activity. Students' attitudes are very good, and often excellent, well illustrated by consistently high standards of participation, dress and behaviour. Students' enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in their support of and commitment to extra-curricular activities, and the good physical effort they put into their work, including outdoors in poor weather. Very good teaching reflects challenge,

pace and high expectations. The best learning occurs when students are rigorously challenged to improve their performance, as seen in volleyball, and made to think deeply by probing questioning, as seen in GCSE theory lessons. There is insufficient planning for the development of students' literacy, numeracy skills. Marking and assessment procedures are good, although some of the teacher assessments of practical activities at the end of Year 9 are too generous.

Leadership and management

140. Very good leadership, supported by a strong team, provides clear vision and direction for the subject. A vibrant ethos of active participation and commitment to high standards prevails. An outstanding enrichment and extra-curricular sport programme provides opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel. Every effort is made to overcome the problems of poor outdoor facilities to enable students to achieve very well. A good development plan identifies areas for further improvement. Curriculum provision is not yet inclusive in Years 7 to 9. Boys do not have access to dance, and the time allocated to boys' gymnastics is inadequate. Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities are not yet fully completed. The school is well on the way towards achieving the aim of the national strategy for all students to have two hours a week of quality physical education. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. The high standards of achievement previously reported have been maintained, and the overall quality of teaching is now very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 11
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well because of good teaching.
- The good attitudes that students have to learning lead to them achieving well.
- The poor development of business links reduces students' curricular experiences.

Commentary

Examination results

141. Results in the 2003 business examination of the combined GCSE IT/business course were average but improved in 2004.

Standards and achievement

142. By the end of Year 11, students have a range of knowledge of topics, such as the different ways companies market products in order to increase sales. They know a wide range of business terms and use them in appropriate context. Standards of many students are above average because they are able to apply their knowledge through study of real examples, although some students do not make enough use of case studies to support their theoretical knowledge. Students are competent in reading data about cash flow patterns and use the information to identify problems and offer solutions. The achievement of some students, however, is lower than expected when work is left incomplete.

Teaching and learning

143. Students benefit from being taught by specialist teachers and it leads to them achieving well on the GCSE course. Lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectation of students' effort and application. As a result, lessons are orderly; students concentrate well and make good progress. Lessons generally engage students well in learning, particularly in using ICT, but at times teachers give insufficient attention to meeting the different learning needs of students so that the pace of progress is not brisk enough for higher attaining students. The marking of assignments informs students well about the strengths and weaknesses of the work, but the day-to-day marking does not always provide comments that will help students to improve.

Leadership and management

144. The subject is well led, with clear vision about how to raise standards and improve student opportunities, albeit that planning has not been formalised beyond the current year. Subject performance is monitored and reviewed and appropriate action is taken to meet targets. The scheme of work, however, does not give sufficient guidance about developing students' literacy skills or the contribution the subject makes to promoting citizenship. Links with the business community to support learning are poor. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Citizenship is taught through the personal, social, citizenship and health education programme with a significant contribution from selected 'carrier' subjects.

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not Applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities to take part in significant group activities both in and outside school time.
- Selected subjects (carrier subjects) make a significant and explicit contribution to the citizenship programme; this compensates for the limited time allocation given to citizenship.
- Leadership and management are good, which ensures students achieve well.

Commentary

145. There is no examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

146. Students join the school in Year 7 with a very wide range of experiences in personal, social, Citizenship and health education and citizenship. By the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, they show standards are above average, which represents good achievement over their time at school. Students in Years 7 to 11 have one lesson of personal, social, Citizenship and health education and citizenship each fortnight. By using a 'carrier' subject this compensates for the limited time allocation for citizenship in the PSCHE programme. Carrier subjects like English, mathematics, religious studies, geography, history, ICT and PSCHE all make a good contribution to citizenship. This was exemplified in a Year 10 English lesson when, as a consequence of very good teaching, students evaluated successfully poetry from local, and a range of different, cultures. Citizenship in mathematics uses data handling to evaluate national and regional identities. Religious studies contribute well to world issues of peace, conflict, prejudice and discrimination. Geography makes explicit issues such as the consequences of global warming. Citizenship is enhanced by activities such as house, year and school councils and charity work.

Teaching and learning

147. Teachers motivate students and engage them in enjoyable and stimulating activities. The PSCHE programme has been carefully put together so that all three strands of citizenship are successfully covered. A selected team of teachers teach the PSCHE programme, which gives consistency to the citizenship element. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects. In a good lesson, members of Year 9 successfully role-played a scene from a magistrates' court taking on the different roles of judge, barristers and jury. The teacher successfully got over the concept of justice. Students in Year 10 successfully debate the sociological issues related to drug taking and the consequences for the family and community. The scheme of work enables good lesson planning and consistency

Leadership and management

148. Good progress has been made in the introduction of citizenship. The school is committed and enthusiastic about the development of citizenship. The programme has been successfully integrated into the fortnightly personal, social and health education lessons with good use of carrier subjects and off-timetable days. This ensures that the specific strands of citizenship are covered well. Monitoring and assessment are developing well and allow students' progress to be measured. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Personal, social, citizenship and health education is taught by a team of specialist teachers, which ensures teaching consistency.
- The limited time allocation for PSCHE constrains students' achievement but this is compensated by specialist teaching and off-timetable activities.

Commentary

149. There is no examination course in personal, social and health education.

Standards and achievement

150. Students come to school with a wide range of experiences in personal, social and health education and by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 students reach standards that are above average. Students have one lesson per fortnight allocated to personal, social and health education. On occasions, a collapsed timetable allows topics to be taught in depth ensuring good achievement of students. For instance, in Year 7, additional time is created for issues like bullying, first-aid and conflict resolution, and in Year 9, sex education. The careers education aspect of the programme operates from Year 7 to 11. It provides for good progress in development of understanding and of skills for planning a career. It includes good use of expert visitors and is closely linked to work-related learning. There are very good links with the Connexions service, which contributes to the very good success rate in helping students identify their post-16 routes.

Teaching and learning

151. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and issues are dealt with sensitively. Scrutiny of students' work shows that by the end of Year 9, students have learned well about the need for rules, on how to deal with bullying, resolving conflict, alcohol and drug abuse, changing relationships and pressures of family life. Teaching is pacy and challenges students, which was exemplified well in a Year 10 drugs lesson considering the consequences of abuse for a family and local community. The scheme of work is good and provides good support for teachers in their planning of lessons. The subject successfully includes cross-curricular themes of citizenship and aspects; for example, a Year 10 lesson successfully considered financial management for a young family.

Leadership and management

152. The leadership and management of personal, social and health education linked with citizenship are very good. The assistant headteacher has a very clear vision for the

development of the subject and works very effectively with the citizenship co-ordinator and pastoral staff in order to develop a cohesive course. Good improvements have been made in specialist teaching and the development of citizenship within the personal, social and health education programme since the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	21	100	98.6	57.1	50.2	91.4	87.5
Biology	23	100	96.4	17.4	39.2	73.0	78.6
Business studies	17	100	98.7	35.3	36.8	80.0	80.1
Chemistry	15	100	97.6	53.3	49.0	86.7	84.9
English / English language	30	100	99.4	16.7	36.3	67.3	80.9
English literature	18	100	99.5	22.2	46.5	71.1	86.5
Design and technology	5	100	97.8	20.0	35.0	56.0	77.9
General studies	66	100	94.7	21.2	31.0	73.6	73.1
Geography	16	100	98.7	75.0	44.5	93.8	84.0
German	1	100	98.4	100	47.9	120	84.8
History	6	100	99.0	16.7	44.6	80.0	84.6
Information technology	25	100	95.6	24.0	24.6	72.8	69.5
Mathematics	20	100	96.7	75.0	55.6	106.0	88.8
Music	6	100	98.8	66.7	38.9	100	81.1
Other sciences	24	100	97.3	62.5	41.5	95.0	80.3
Other social studies	4	100	97.4	0	42.7	75.0	81.8
Physics	9	100	96.7	55.6	44.6	82.2	81.7
Religious studies	11	100	98.8	9.1	46.7	70.9	85.6
Sociology	22	100	98.2	54.5	44.3	89.1	83.6
Sports studies	21	100	98.0	33.3	30.9	76.2	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject for the inspection was English literature. During the inspection one Year 12 English language/literature lesson was observed. In this lesson, students achieved very well because of the very good teaching.

Provision in English literature is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and promotes high standards in critical thinking.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject that contribute to their success.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

Examination results

153. Results at A-level were well below the national average in 2003. They improved significantly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

154. In both Years 12 and 13, students are keen to take part in class and group discussions; this increases their understanding and improves their communication skills. Higher attaining students are able to identify and explain subtle meanings whilst lower attaining students have difficulty in making links to build up a clear set of opinions. In discussion, students are able to analyse a text closely step by step to establish what makes writing effective. However, this learning is not transferred effectively into extended writing. For example, students can identify the use and meaning of figures of speech but they do not adequately explain their effect on the reader. The writing of lower attaining students is not concise enough. Achievement is good; students are able to grasp new concepts and apply these to different situations. They can speculate well about a writer's intentions.

Teaching and learning

155. There is very good teaching of critical analysis step by step; students are fully involved in their own learning, examining the use and power of words closely. The teachers ensure that all students learn the key features by close questioning and judicious prompting. They give very good notes that deepen the students' knowledge of the subject. Marking is mostly of a high quality and explains what students have to do to improve. However, there is not enough guidance on how to write concisely.

Leadership and management

156. There is good planning and organisation to determine priorities in the department. There are four different courses in Year 12 and three in Year 13. Together, these courses make for very good curricular provision for students' interests. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by considering these aspects in the writings of the war poets and in studies of the modern novel.

Literacy across the curriculum

157. Standards of literacy are above average and students are well equipped to meet the demands of their subjects.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The school offers AS and A-level in the areas of pure mathematics, mechanics, decision mathematics and statistics. It also gives higher attaining students the opportunity to extend their mathematics by studying further mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- The quality of leadership is very good and leads to a clear insight into what needs to be done to improve standards.
- There are good methods of monitoring and tracking achievement so that students can see how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
- The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and links with universities enhance the mathematics curriculum and provide the students with challenging work.
- Students do not always have the opportunity to make extended contributions in class discussions.

Commentary

Examination results

158. In 2003, results at A-level were well above average. Results were not as high in 2004.

Standards and achievement

159. Standards are currently different from those suggested by examination results, because standards on entry to the course vary from year to year. Overall achievement

is good, given the students' attainment on entry to the course. The quality of students' written and oral work is better than that normally seen at this stage in the course. Students make good use of past work. For example, in the mechanics module, students resolve vectors accurately and use their understanding of trigonometric functions from their pure mathematics appropriately when finding magnitude and direction. Good work was seen in the pure mathematics module in Year 13. Students extend their knowledge of the number system to include complex numbers and can represent them well in the form of Argand diagrams. They progress to writing the complex numbers in polar form.

Teaching and learning

160. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. They give good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons so that they can improve their understanding further. Students generally respond well and have positive attitudes to the subject. Teachers plan their lessons well to build on previous learning. Homework is set regularly; it is used effectively to consolidate and extend new work that is introduced in the lesson. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their study skills by encouraging them to read about topics in preparation for lessons. The marking of students' work is good and contains very good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

161. The good teaching and achievement are the result of the subject having a very good quality of leadership and management with a clear understanding of what is needed for students to succeed. Teachers work very well together and their commitment is very good. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject, ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are very good links with universities and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that enhance the mathematics curriculum and provide students with challenging work. They inspire students to think mathematically and to look beyond the confines of the syllabus. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. The monitoring of students' work is good and the department has developed a good system of team teaching so that teachers can see each other teach and share good practice. Very good leadership has ensured that the subject has made good progress since the previous report.

Mathematics across the curriculum

162. Competence in mathematics is good. In sociology, students use their skills to analyse pie charts effectively and use the results in an informed manner. In ICT, students use their mathematical skills effectively when learning about the properties of spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

The focus subject for the inspection was biology. A Year 12 physics lesson was also observed. In this lesson the quality of teaching was very good.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average

Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are now above average and students have good practical and investigative skills.
- Students' achievement is improving as a result of the satisfactory teaching they now receive.
- Some of students' written work is not marked as frequently as it should be.

Commentary

Examination results

163. In 2003, biology A-level results were in line with the national average. Results fell in 2004, particularly at the higher grades A and B. Students did not do as well in biology as they did on average in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

164. In both Year 12 and Year 13, standards are better than those indicated by the 2003 and 2004 examination results because the quality of teaching has improved. Students now have knowledge, understanding and skills that are better than expected for students following such courses. For example, in an investigation into plasmolysis in onion cells, students handled apparatus confidently and safely when preparing microscope slides.

165. In 2004, students did not do as well in A-level examinations as expected, given their GCSE results when they started the course. Hence for this year group, there was significant underachievement. Students are now achieving satisfactorily because of better teaching and learning in the subject and significant improvements in the monitoring of students' progress, so that students now have a better understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Teaching and learning

166. Teachers provide demanding tasks for students. For example, in a lesson on respiration, students were asked to devise a strategy for measuring the oxygen used when an organism respire. Useful prompts from the teacher enabled students to plan good investigative procedures. In a particularly well prepared lesson on urine production in the kidney tubules, students were challenged by ideas of absorption/re-absorption and hypotonic/hypertonic. Students were quickly able to explain the terms and then showed their understanding by completing carefully planned worksheets. Occasionally, when teaching is less than satisfactory, students are left to read worksheets with too little guidance from the teacher, so that the pace of learning is too slow.

167. In most lessons, teachers are careful to test students' understanding and monitor their progress. However, in students' work folders there are incomplete and unmarked worksheets showing that teachers do not always assess students' written work as thoroughly as they should, nor do they make enough use of assessment information in setting targets and planning future work to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.

Leadership and management

168. The head of subject provides good leadership and is taking action to develop an effective team. There is a determination to raise standards following the disappointing 2004 A-level results. The department has changed the syllabus that it follows and improved its lesson planning and monitoring procedures.
169. In the previous inspection report, biology was not inspected as a separate subject but only as part of the science curriculum in Years 12 and 13. Hence it is not possible to judge progress in the subject since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus subject for the inspection was information and communication technology (ICT)

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very good; all students study ICT in Year 12.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, but do not ensure all students are involved in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

170. Examination results were above average in 2003 and at a similar level in 2004. Nevertheless, year on year, results are improving as the impact of improved skills lower down the school, brought about by whole-school ICT policy and by changes to the curriculum, start to filter through to the sixth form.

Standards and achievement

171. Students who have just started the AS-level course in Year 12 joined with above average GCSE results. They have a good understanding of how databases are used and are gaining an above average understanding of the more technical aspects of the subject, such as validation. Other students in the sixth form all study ICT as part of their core curriculum, which leads to them possessing standards that are consistently above average. Students on both courses are achieving satisfactorily, given their standards on joining the sixth form, but many more possess these above average skills than is usually the case. The same satisfactory achievement is true for students on the A-level course in Year 13. These students are on target to get the expected grades at the end of Year 13. Students' ICT skills and their understanding of the topics covered are both above average.

Teaching and learning

172. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject so are able to correct students' misunderstanding immediately, without having to refer to notes or textbooks. Teachers have spent considerable time and effort building up a very good bank of resources for students to use, all of which are available on the school's network. These resources include all the teaching notes, which means that students do not have to spend long periods taking notes; they can simply annotate the electronic copy with which they are provided. The drawbacks in the teaching are twofold. Firstly, a

common mistake in lessons is teachers failing to ensure that all students are involved and that they have understood the work; some students get left behind when teachers do not check their understanding of a task based on the theory they have been taught. The other problem with the teaching relates to the way that theory is taught. Too often students have to simply sit and listen to the teacher reading out from a presentation that the students could read for themselves anyway, with just a few questions asked every now and again. This lack of variety in approach leads to students becoming bored and failing to learn even the most important points of a lesson.

Leadership and management

173. The course is taught by four teachers who work as a close-knit team. The head of department has made sure that all are supported well by the resources made available to them. Standards are rising, as a result of the actions taken to improve standards. However, the messages provided by assessment data are not understood well enough to really identify where weaknesses occur, so the department gets an inflated sense of the quality of education being provided.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

174. Standards are above average in the sixth form. However, far more students possess these above average standards than is usually the case, because all students are taught ICT in Year 12. The rate of improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

The focus subject for the inspection was sociology. In addition, one lesson of Year 12 history was observed. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent relationships with students and this gives students the confidence to freely express their opinions.
- Teaching methods are well selected and time in lessons is used very productively.
- Not enough emphasis is placed on independent learning for students to take ownership of their own learning.

Commentary

Examination results

175. Results in 2003 were above the national average; results in 2004 were not as high.

Standards and achievement

176. Students in Year 12 demonstrate a secure understanding of key sociological terms and concepts. They show an understanding of how social structures and processes relate to one another. In a lesson on family diversity, students analysed pie-charts effectively and used the data in an enlightened manner. Students in Year 13 demonstrate an understanding of the methodology of the subject, including the strengths and limitations of different research techniques. They effectively draw concepts and theories from different sociological traditions. This was particularly evident in a very good lesson about the structuring of an examination style essay with reference to criticisms of Marxist theories. All students benefit from essay planning which is a regular feature of lessons and raises standards within the department.

Teaching and learning

177. Students benefit from teachers who have very good subject knowledge. Lesson objectives are always clear. The range of teaching activities employed allows teachers to meet differing individual needs and enables students to learn effectively. Teachers are highly sensitive to students' individual needs. In a Year 12 lesson about family diversity the teacher skilfully planned activities so that students were sometimes grouped by ability and could use the appropriate learning materials. Teachers use approaches which encourage students to express their opinions. When whole-class discussions take place, they are skilfully led in order to ensure that all contributions are encouraged and valued. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and they enjoy their work. There is good assessment of students' work and students are clear about the progress they are making and know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

178. The new head of social science is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards. There is a clear vision for improvement which is already making an impact upon standards within the department. The department is committed to inclusion, the promotion of equality, and has concern for the needs of individuals. The subject has grown rapidly in popularity since the previous inspection; progress has been good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus subject for the inspection was design and technology.

Design and technology

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers interest students with their good ideas.
- Teachers do not always ensure the students are working on the correct tasks.
- Good leadership has led to improvements in standards.

Commentary

Examination results

179. Examination results were well below average in 2003; they improved significantly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

180. Students who have just started the course in Year 12 have made satisfactory progress in the first few weeks of their course. They have developed their evaluation skills to the extent that they can now evaluate in more depth than is required for GCSE. Their understanding of issues relating to the design of a product is above average. Students in Year 13 are good at developing ideas through discussion and experimentation; their above average standards reflect their satisfactory achievement since starting their course.

Teaching and learning

181. Teachers have good ideas for lessons, such as analysing a range of camping stoves to develop students' analytical skills. As a result, students enjoy their lessons and work hard. However, students often miss the main point of a lesson. This can be either because the point has not been explained well enough or because the teacher has failed to check that the students are carrying out the written aspect of a task, rather than getting carried away with the fun part of the activity.

Leadership and management

182. The new head of department has concentrated on improving standards in the sixth form, where students were not getting their predicted grades in the recent past. The course is taught by three teachers who work as a close-knit team, supported very well by the head of department, who are now improving standards together. Achievement is now at a similar level to that found at the previous inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

One lesson of music was observed in each of Years 12 and 13. Students are achieving very well, due to very good teaching and the opportunities they have to develop as performers through the excellent extra-curricular provision. Their attitudes to learning are excellent, many being fine ambassadors for the school through their participation in music in the community.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus subject for the inspection was sports studies and physical education.

Sports studies and physical education

Provision in sports studies and physical education is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership inspires an enthusiasm for the subject reflected in students' achievements in and outside lessons.
- Students achieve very well as a result of their very good attitudes and the very good teaching they receive.
- Exceptionally good enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities extend and enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

Examination results

183. The 2003 A-level results were above average and these high results were maintained in 2004.

Standards and achievement

184. Students in Year 12 are achieving very well in the early stages of their course. They are on track to achieve above average standards by the end of the year. They confidently recall previous learning on information processing, and use the specialist language of the subject accurately. In Year 13, students show a good knowledge and understanding of the influence of public schools on the development of sport in the nineteenth century.

Teaching and learning

185. Teachers have very good knowledge, and infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Excellent planning and preparation ensure that students are motivated by interesting activities that give them an active role in their learning. Imaginative teaching makes students think deeply, and enables them to learn very well through reflection, problem solving and decision making. Students of all abilities benefit from the teachers' skilful use of questioning to consolidate learning. Very good marking offers students helpful advice on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

186. Strong leadership and management ensure that consistently high standards are maintained. The quality of support and guidance given to students is very good. Assessment data is used effectively to predict grades and set individual targets. Many students take advantage of opportunities to gain wider experience by assisting with extra-curricular activities and coaching younger students. They help in primary schools as part of the Community Sports Leader Award. Progress since the previous inspection has been very good. The A-level course is now well established, standards are above average and the quality of teaching is very good.

BUSINESS

The focus subject for the inspection was business studies.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching and guidance they receive.
- The links with the business community and higher education are underdeveloped.

Commentary

Examination results

187. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were above average, but declined marginally in 2004. Females achieved significantly higher than males did, particularly at the higher grades.

Standards and achievement

188. By the end of Year 13, students have good knowledge of topics and make effective use of data to understand the processes entailed in business decision making. They know how business is structured, with higher attaining students making good use of real examples to support their theoretical knowledge. In other instances, students do not make enough use of examples in assignments so that the standards reached are lower than expected. Students make substantial gains in their knowledge of subject terms; they use them in appropriate context and it leads to above average writing skills. Many students lack confidence in discussion and do not explain answers fully enough.

Teaching and learning

189. Students benefit from being taught by well-qualified and experienced teachers and it results in students achieving well. Teachers set challenging tasks and give students careful guidance on how to improve their work. Lessons are well structured but occasionally teachers do not complete the planned activities so that the outcomes are not consolidated. Teachers understand the course expectations very well and emphasise the importance of analysis and evaluation in lessons which leads to students improving their skills in these areas. Teachers focus on the practical applications of topics. This brings relevance to learning but it is not well supported through links with the business community. Discussion is actively used in lessons but students are not challenged enough to explain their ideas. Resources are used well, especially ICT for research and analysis of data.

Leadership and management

190. Development planning is good with criteria to measure success. Data is used well to help identify in-service training needs in order to raise standards. Opportunities to broaden students' experience through business contacts and higher education are not well developed. Since the previous inspection the subject has made good progress.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus subject for the inspection was health and social care.

Health and social care

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of very good teaching, students achieve very well.
- Teaching methods are very well selected to engage students and meet their diverse needs.
- Assessment procedures require further refinement

Commentary

Examination results

191. In 2003, single and double award examination results were above average. All students passed the course and most achieved their highest grade in health and social care. Results in 2004 improved significantly.

Standards and achievement

192. Students in Year 12 demonstrate a good understanding of health and social care services. They are very clear about the roles of the statutory, private and informal care services and are well able to relate to the historical perspectives of various charities. They clearly understand how to plan for health and well-being. Students identify positive aspects of their own behaviour and recognise how this can impact on a care setting. They understand the values which influence the way that support is provided. Members of Year 13 show a distinct understanding of how the principles of human behaviour are acquired and use appropriate technical terminology correctly. This was particularly evident in a lesson where students were exploring advocacy and empowerment within care organisations.

Teaching and learning

193. Teaching is stimulating, consistently challenging and highly sensitive to students' individual needs. Staff have excellent relationships with their students and they develop students' confidence. Teachers lead discussions skilfully and ensure that all students' contributions are encouraged and valued. They also question very effectively to check understanding. This was apparent when Year 13 students made confident and articulate presentations on early years' educators such as Froebel and Montessori. Assessment methods are currently satisfactory but the department is aware of the need to increase the use of portfolio log sheets, to thoroughly track the students' progress as they complete their tasks and for the tasks to be broken down into smaller component parts with deadlines of a shorter duration.

Leadership and management

194. The department benefits from a head of department who has a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the subject. She is committed to inclusion and has an appropriate concern for the needs of individual students. There is a uniformity of systems and good practice within the department. The department is well supported by the local community and effective use is made of visiting speakers. The head of department efficiently leads a team of teachers from many other departments who are now very clear about their roles and responsibilities with reference to health and social care. Maintaining a consistent staffing team has been instrumental in the department making good progress since the time of the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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