

INSPECTION REPORT

THE HOLY FAMILY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Walthamstow, London

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103106

Headteacher: Mr E Breen

Lead inspector: David M Bain
3258

Dates of inspection: 7 – 10 February 2005

Inspection number: 268969

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1071
School address:	1 Shernhall Street Walthamstow London
Postcode:	E17 3EA
Telephone number:	020 8520 0482
Fax number:	020 8521 0364
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Murphy
Date of previous inspection:	8 March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Holy Family Technology College is a popular Catholic comprehensive school for students aged 11-18 situated in Walthamstow in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The school occupies two sites, Walthamstow House and Wiseman House, which are about half a kilometre apart. The school is of average size with 1071 on roll, of whom 143 are in the sixth form. There has been a significant increase in the number of students staying on in the sixth form this year. There are more boys than girls overall. In the current Year 11 there are twice as many boys as girls, but in most other years numbers are fairly balanced. The school serves a wide catchment area, taking some students from Newham, Hackney and Haringay, as well as Waltham Forest. Whilst most students are Catholic, the school values the small number from other Christian denominations and other religions who choose Catholic education. The school has a rich cultural diversity. About a quarter of students are of white British background, a sixth black Caribbean and a sixth black African. Others come from a variety of European, Asian and Latin American backgrounds. Whilst the proportion of students whose first language is not English is higher than in most schools nationally, at 10 per cent, it is well below the level in many London schools and only a small number are at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals, around 20 per cent, is above average, but is decreasing. Whilst students come from a broad range of social backgrounds, overall, the level of socio-economic advantage is below average. About a seventh of students are identified as having special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average, as is the number with statements of need. Overall, students' attainment is broadly average on entry. The number of students who join or leave the school other than at the start of Year 7 is below average. The school has been a specialist technology college since 2000 and has been involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3258	David Bain	Lead inspector	
16472	Catherine Stormonth	Lay inspector	
20729	James Berry	Team inspector	Science, biology
8216	Geoff Binks	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language
17709	Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education, psychology
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	History
11864	Michael Lafford	Team inspector	Geography
22723	Robert Hartman	Team inspector	Mathematics
31332	Peter McKenzie	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
12226	Caroline Clarke	Team inspector	English, English literature
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design
13623	James Waddington	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
19867	Maxwell Pettitt	Team inspector	Music, drama
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team inspector	Business studies, PSHCE
3653	Stuart Powell	Team inspector	Design and technology, Post-16 ICT

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	17
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	30
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	33
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	35
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	64

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Holy Family Technology College is an effective and popular school, with some very good features. It provides a good education for its students, who achieve well overall and very well in some subjects. There is a very good ethos: everyone gets on well together. It is a very caring school and students' very positive attitudes support good learning. Racial harmony is very good. Most teaching is good, some very good or outstanding. The school is housed in buildings which do not fully meet the needs of the curriculum. The school is well led and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is good.
- In 2004, the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE was above the national average. Attainment was well above average in design and technology and French and above average in drama, history and geography.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very good in drama and design and technology. There is also much very good teaching in geography and history. However, classes have experienced a high number of changes of teacher in some subjects which has adversely affected their learning.
- The school has a very strong ethos: there is a real sense of community. Students wish to learn and have very good attitudes and good attendance. Relationships are very good, as is the degree of racial harmony.
- Leadership and governance of the school are good. The headteacher has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
- The school is a very caring institution. Provision for students' support, care and welfare is very good, whilst that for advice and guidance is good.
- Aspects of curricular provision, organisation and management are unsatisfactory. These include, amongst others, aspects of the arts, physical education, work-related learning, ICT in Years 10 and 11, 14-19 provision, including vocational courses, and timetabling.
- Students' moral and social development is very good.
- The school has not involved students sufficiently in its work and development by regularly and systematically seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- The school has very good links with parents. Good links with local parishes and the community enrich students' learning and personal development.
- The school's accommodation remains unsatisfactory, despite the many improvements made in recent years.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved significantly, as has the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, very good progress has been made on the key issues identified in the last inspection. Students' achievement has improved, especially amongst boys and greater use is made of performance data. The needs of different abilities including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language are better met. Some health and safety issues remain, partly as a result of the accommodation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	C	C	

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

Students' achievement is good. Standards are broadly average on entry to the school and in national tests in Year 9. Attainment in examinations at the end of Year 11 is average compared to all schools, but well above average compared to similar schools. Attainment in the sixth form is average overall, but above average in a growing number of subjects. The achievement of those with special educational needs and English is an additional language matches that of other students. Those from different ethnic backgrounds do as well as each other and the gap in attainment between boys and girls is narrowing.

Students' personal qualities are very good. Their attitudes are very good, as are relationships, including racial harmony. Behaviour and attendance are good, as is students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, overall. Moral and social development is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7-11 and very good in the sixth form, as is the quality of learning. The quality of assessment is satisfactory, overall. Students' very positive attitudes support the quality of learning, as does teachers' very good command of their subjects and their very good encouragement to students. However, the quality of learning in some subjects is severely affected by constant changes of teacher. Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, but could be strengthened to meet the needs of all students in Years 10-13. Provision for students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are good. Opportunities for enrichment are good; support for learning outside the school day is very good. Learning resources are good, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The provision for students' care and welfare is very good, whilst that for support, advice, and guidance is good and for health and safety is satisfactory. Procedures for taking students' views into account are unsatisfactory. Links with parents are very good, whilst those with the local community and with other schools and colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The head's leadership is strong, with a very clear vision for the school focussed on students' learning and achievements within a Catholic, caring community. He is supported well by senior and middle managers. Satisfactory management ensures the school runs smoothly. Governance is good, overall. Governors are effective and share actively in the vision for the school.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have high levels of confidence in the school and feel part of a strong and welcoming family community. Most parents feel a true sense of partnership based on good communications and mutual trust. Only a small minority expressed concerns. Most of these related to the high turnover of staff in some subjects, the poor behaviour of a minority of students and the quality of information provided about their children's progress. Almost all feel teaching and achievement are good and say their children are happy at school. Students are also generally very positive. They feel it is a good school to be at, that they are well taught and expected to work hard. Some expressed concerns about the behaviour of a minority, changes of teacher, provision for the arts and the accommodation. Students feel trusted, but do not feel that their views have much effect on how the school works and develops. They call for more celebration of their multi-cultural heritage to increase understanding and appreciation of the rich diversity of the school's population.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- review curricular provision, organisation and management;
- involve students in its work and development by regularly and systematically seeking, valuing and acting on their views;
- take further innovative action to address shortcomings in accommodation and to replace temporary teachers with permanent appointments;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure students' work in citizenship is assessed and reported.

THE SIXTH FORM

The average-sized sixth form provides a good range of academic courses, but limited vocational provision.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a good education for its students. It is effective. Results in 2004 were broadly average and reflect good achievement. The quality of education provided is good. However, whilst there is a wide range of academic courses offered, provision below advanced level and for vocational courses is limited, as is the breadth of the curriculum undertaken by most individual students. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a very strong, positive ethos, which is reflected in students' very positive attitudes. The school is rightly proud of the young adults that study in its sixth form. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. However, as a significant proportion of sixth form provision is subsidised from resources provided for the main school, value for money is only sound.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is good, overall. It is very good in history, ICT, business studies and drama.
- Standards in the sixth form are average, overall, but are improving. A-level results in 2004 were above average in drama, design and technology and sociology and well above average in history and ICT.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as giving literacy support to younger students.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in history, ICT, psychology, drama and business studies and good in English and mathematics.
- The breadth of the academic curriculum is good, but the offer below advanced level is too narrow, as is provision for general education, including physical activity.
- Provision for students' care and welfare is very good, whilst that for support, advice and guidance is good.
- Too many students are following a narrow curriculum, particularly in Year 12.
- There are too many small classes, which do not support effective learning, and consequently a significant proportion of sixth form provision is subsidised from resources provided for the main school.
- Accommodation for use by the sixth form, for socialising, for private study and for lessons is inadequate.
- The school has not involved students sufficiently in its work and development by regularly and systematically seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Students experience a good range of enrichment activities within the curriculum, but those outside the curriculum are less well developed.

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	Good in English: good teaching and learning is resulting in good achievement, although results are below average. Students have a sound grasp of their texts and most can make sustained and informed responses.
Mathematics	Satisfactory in mathematics: achievement is satisfactory. Results are well below national expectations. However, good teaching, coupled with positive attitudes to learning, is increasing levels of attainment.
Science	Satisfactory in biology: achievement is unsatisfactory and results are below average, but standards in Year 13 are higher. Teaching and learning

are satisfactory on an interesting and challenging course.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Very good in ICT: achievement is very good and results are well above average. Teaching and learning are good: students are enthusiastic and apply themselves to work well.
Humanities	Very good in history: results are well above average and achievement is very good, as a result of very good teaching and learning. Very good language development helps students to increase their understanding of complicated issues and explain them in writing. Very good in psychology: achievement is good, with the trend in results above the national average in recent years. Teaching and learning are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in drama: results are above average. Students progress very well because of the very good teaching they receive. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and are keen to do well. Satisfactory in media studies: results are below average, but achievement is satisfactory. The standard of practical work involving the production of film is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Business	Very good in business studies: teaching is very demanding so that students learn very effectively and achieve very well within lessons. Results at A-level vary. They were below average in 2004, but above in 2003.

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

Care, advice, guidance and support are good. Care is very good: most students feel they have an adult who knows them well and they trust for care and advice. They receive good advice and support from both subject teachers and form tutors. Careers education and guidance for students are more uneven. Induction into the sixth form is good, but support in applying to higher education could be improved.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, overall. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for its development. Curriculum leadership is sound but the curriculum offers insufficient variety for many students in Year 12. Students are guided and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Students have their learning outcomes monitored and reviewed by tutors.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They all enjoy being in school and get on well together. They are very positive about the quality of most of the teaching they receive, which is challenging and demanding. They like having teachers they know and cite this as one of the reasons for staying on to the sixth form. They are appreciative of teachers' very good subject expertise and most feel they are helped and encouraged to study independently. However, they feel that poor accommodation for private study and limited access to ICT can hinder their ability to research topics and work independently within school. Whilst most feel they had helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form, not all do. However, they do feel that their choice of courses suits their career plans. A significant number feel they have been given insufficient advice on the next stage of their education and on careers. Some in Year 13 feel that support over university applications, particularly online, is limited. Some identified issues related to the breadth of courses offered in the sixth form, including a lack of physical activity and timetable clashes. Some indicated that there were too few enrichment activities specifically for them. Students would like to have greater opportunity to express their views and to contribute more fully to the school's development. Most feel the school council has yet to make much impact.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, students' achievement is good. Standards are broadly average on entry to the school and in national tests at the end of Year 9. Whilst attainment in external examinations at the end of Year 11 is average compared to all schools nationally, it is well above average compared to similar schools. Results in examinations in the sixth form, although average overall, are above average in a growing number of subjects. The achievement of students with special educational needs matches that of other students, as does that of those for whom English is an additional language. Students from ethnic minorities do as well as their peers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in all years and in most subjects. Their achievement increases as they progress through the school, as a result of their very positive attitudes and good teaching. Achievement is very good in design and technology and drama, as well as in business studies, history, and psychology in the sixth form.
- In 2004, the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C was above the national average. Attainment is well above average compared to similar schools.
- Attainment at GCSE is consistently well above average in design and technology based subjects. In 2004, it was also well above average in French and above average in drama, history and geography.
- Attainment in the sixth form is average, in part, as a consequence of the lower than average number of AS-level courses studied by many students. In 2004, results were well above average in history and information technology and above average in design and technology, drama and sociology.
- The school successfully addresses weaknesses in students' standards of literacy. As a consequence, students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well.
- Successful strategies have been used to raise the achievement of boys.
- Students' very positive attitudes help raise achievement, but the significant number of regular staff changes, particularly in English, and some aspects of curricular organisation have an adverse effect on both achievement and students' attitudes.

Commentary

1. Overall, when students join the school in Year 7 their attainment is broadly average. Results in diagnostic tests taken on entry, show attainment has improved in recent years. It was highest with the current Year 7. In this year group, over four-fifths of students attained the average level, Level 4, or better at the end of Year 6 in national tests in English, mathematics and science. Around a third attained Level 5 in English and mathematics and nearly half did so in science. These are above average results, but attainment in some other subjects is less high on entry.
2. Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good and has improved in recent years. In 2003, results were above average in English, average in mathematics, but below average in science. In 2004, results in mathematics improved. Whilst they remained average overall, the proportion who attained Level 5 or better was above average. In contrast, results fell in English and science. Those in English were average, but in science remained below average, because the proportion attaining higher levels, Level 6 or better, was lower than that attained nationally. Results of boys and girls are similar in science, but whilst girls attain better than boys in English by a similar amount as nationally, boys attain better than girls in mathematics, whilst nationally they attain as well as each other.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.8 (34.5)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	35.9 (35.1)	n/a (35.4)
science	31.8 (32.6)	n/a (33.6)

There were 191 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also good, overall. Attainment in external examinations at the end of Year 11 is average, based on students' average point scores. In 2004, the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C, 60 per cent, was above the national average, 52 per cent, and the highest ever achieved by the school. However, nearly one in eight students failed to attain five or more grades A*-G. Compared to similar schools, based both upon prior attainment and the proportion of students entitled to free school meals, students' average point score and the proportion attaining five or more grades A*-C are both well above average. Girls attain better than boys, as nationally. However, the gap between them has narrowed. The school has adopted a range of strategies to improve the performance of boys. Whilst, in 2003, girls attained better than girls nationally, with boys broadly in line with boys nationally, in 2004 this was reversed. Girls were in line, whilst boys attained better than boys nationally. However, there was significant variation between the performance of boys and girls in different subjects. In French, for example, whilst boys and girls achieved similar results, boys' results were significantly better than those of boys nationally, girls less so. Girls performed significantly better than boys in art and design, design and technology and both English language and literature, but significantly less well in mathematics. Whilst girls attained better in design and technology subjects, boys' results were well above those of boys nationally. Boys also attained very well in physical education. Students from ethnic minorities are well integrated and their needs understood, consequently they do as well as their peers.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60 (54)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (89)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.3 (35.0)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 205 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results at GCSE vary significantly between subjects. In the last two years, results in English language and literature have been broadly in line with the national average. However, in both years in literature, and in 2003 in language, the proportion attaining grades A*-C was above average. Results in mathematics were broadly average in both years, although fewer attained the highest grades A* and A in 2004. In contrast, results in double award science improved significantly in 2004. In 2003, they had been well below average, particularly the proportion attaining grade C. In 2004, almost all were entered and results were just below the national average. The other core subject, studied by all students, is religious studies, although the proportion entered for GCSE was lower than that of the others in 2004. Results over the last

two years have been broadly average, but with fewer attaining the highest grades A* and A than nationally.

5. All students also study a design and technology based subject. Results, overall, in these subjects are significantly above the national average. In 2004, nearly three-quarters attained grades A*-C compared with just over half of students nationally. Results are particularly high in textiles, where almost all attain grades A*-C, and food studies, where over four-fifths do so. In both subjects, the proportions attaining grades A and B are also high. However, results are also above average in graphic products, and just above in resistant materials. Results in child development are also above average
6. In 2004, results were also significantly above the national average in French, from just over the third of the year group that entered the subject, and average in German and Spanish. Results are consistently above the national average in drama, with three-quarters attaining grades A*-C. In 2004, they were also above average in history and geography with two-thirds attaining grades A*-C. Although this was not as high as those attained in history in 2003, when over four-fifths attained grades A*-C and a third A* or A. However, for the last two years, results in art and design have been well below average.
7. Whilst the school carries out analyses of its results at all levels and receives further detailed analyses from the LEA, including those of performance by ethnic grouping, this is not used effectively by all departments to compare their performance. Data on individual pupils is collated on entry and the results of diagnostic tests and National Curriculum assessments are added to it. This is available to all staff and is used to set both individual, departmental and school targets. Whilst it is used effectively to identify groups requiring additional support, use varies between departments. School targets set in conjunction with the LEA are challenging. In 2004, most were met, whilst some, such as that for five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, were surpassed.
8. Overall, in work seen during this inspection, students' achievement is good. Achievement was good or better in about two-thirds of lessons seen, including about one-seventh where it was very good. Achievement was less than satisfactory in about one lesson in twelve. Achievement tends to improve as students move through the school. Significantly more very good and less unsatisfactory achievement was observed in Years 10 and 11. However, this was not so in French, ICT and physical education, where achievement was good in Year 7-9, but only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In ICT and physical education this results from a lack of curricular time. Overall, the two greatest influences on students' achievement are their very positive attitudes and the good teaching they receive. Achievement is best where students experience a range of teaching styles and where they are encouraged to work both collaboratively and independently. However, the significant number of regular staff changes, particularly in English, is having an adverse affect on achievement, because teachers are not always familiar with students, some students become disgruntled and boys, in particular, use the opportunity to misbehave.
9. Standards seen during the inspection vary significantly between subjects. In English, standards by Year 9 are broadly average, which represents satisfactory achievement. The school has introduced a range of different strategies to support students in English and raise standards of literacy. These have an impact across the curriculum and have contributed to the improvement in standards since the last inspection. By Year 11, standards seen were above average and represent good achievement. Writing skills have developed well and many students are able to argue logically and succinctly using examples to support their ideas. Standards seen in mathematics are in line with those found nationally and achievement is good. The support provided by teachers and classroom assistants is successfully developing students' mathematical confidence. The most capable Year 10 students now have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics a year early and study additional mathematics in Year 11. Not only does this give abler students greater challenge in Years 10 and 11, it is also preparing them well for the A-level course. Standards in science are below average in Years 7-9, but are improving and are average by Year 11, when students' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in science has been strongly influenced by the difficulties that the school was having with recruiting and retaining science staff.

10. Amongst other subjects, standards are highest in drama and design and technology. In design and technology they are well above average and this represents very good achievement throughout the school. It is achieved because the work set is demanding and nearly all students engage effectively. In drama, standards are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11. Throughout Years 7 to 11, students develop confident skills in physical drama. By Year 11, students demonstrate thoughtful directorial skills and the ability to evaluate each other's performance with growing insight and maturity. Standards are also consistently above average in history, because of informed and sensitive teaching, which sets high expectations. In geography, students also achieve well because of good teaching and because of the emphasis placed on enquiry skills, fieldwork and the interpretation and presentation of data.
11. Achievement in Years 7-9 is also good in French, ICT and physical education, but only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In French, by Year 9, standards in writing are particularly good. However, an over-emphasis on writing is affecting skills in speaking and listening, which results in only satisfactory achievement by Year 11. In ICT, standards attained by students in Year 9 are above national expectations, but only a minority are taught ICT as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11. As a result, achievement for most in these years is only satisfactory. Similarly, in physical education, standards at Year 9 are above those expected nationally, as are those of the groups studying GCSE. Students are improving on their weaknesses in theoretical understanding by applying key concepts in practical demonstrations. However, restricted curriculum time for some in Year 9 and those not studying GCSE in Years 10 and 11 limits the achievement of others. Standards in art and design are in line with national expectations. Achievement is good, but standards are adversely affected by a lack of preparatory work and the development of initial ideas. Achievement in music is unsatisfactory as a consequence of a lack of a permanent teacher.
12. Students with special educational needs achieve well in most subjects. Their progress is generally similar to that of other students. Progress is particularly good where there is active help from support assistants and teachers working collaboratively with the class teacher. Good examples of this were seen in mathematics, French and history lessons, where good teamwork and the use of different tasks for different groups of students helps all to achieve well. Students who receive additional help to improve literacy skills make good progress because pre-school activities are very well organised and students attend regularly. The paired mentoring by sixth formers of Year 7 students and the 'catch up' programme run within English teaching time in Years 7 and 8 gives valuable help to students with language skills that are below average on entry to the school. Similar provision for students with English as an additional language and those with weaker literacy skills is made in tutorial time in Year 9. Most students develop greater confidence in the use of language by attending regularly. Students with English as an additional language achieve well in school. Most are very happy to attend the drop-in sessions at breaks and lunchtimes where they can receive help and advice with homework and coursework. Gifted and talented students achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching provided for them, particularly in mathematics, history, geography, drama and physical education; and because of the extensive programme of extra activities provided to encourage them.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.7 (89.7)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.7 (31.0)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	230.4 (237.6)	265.2 (258.2)

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

13. Overall, results in the sixth form AS and A-level examinations were broadly in line with the national average in both 2003 and 2004. As nationally, female students attained higher results than male students, although the gap narrowed in 2004. There are no significant differences in the results of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of entries passed at grades A to E improved in 2004, and was just above national average. The proportion passed at the higher grades A or B is lower than average, although there was a significant improvement in the proportion of higher grades attained by male students. The gap between students' average point score and that attained nationally widened in 2004. Whilst the gap is partially due to the lower proportion of higher grades attained, it is also a consequence of the lower number of AS-level courses studied in Year 12 by most students. However, overall, compared to students' GCSE scores on entry to the sixth form, these results represent good achievement.
14. Overall results mask significant variations in attainment between subjects. Entries in some subjects are very small and make comparisons with national figures difficult. In general, better results are achieved from subjects where class sizes are larger, enabling better discussion and collaboration between students, but there are notable exceptions to this, such as in drama. Results at A-level are consistently above average or better in history, information technology and sociology. In 2003, those attained in history were very high. In that year, well above average results were also attained in psychology and above average results in business studies, geography and religious studies. In 2004, results were also above average in art and design (from one candidate), design and technology and drama. Results in the sciences, mathematics, English literature and media studies tend to be below or well below average, although those attained in biology in 2003 were average. Results in business studies were also below average in 2004.
15. Results attained at AS-level by last year's Year 12, show attainment remains well above average in history and information technology. It is also well above average in drama, mathematics and sociology and above average in business studies, geography, government and politics, psychology and religious studies. Results in mathematics showed a dramatic improvement on those of previous years, when many had failed AS-level. A large group of candidates were entered for a Level 2 vocational qualification in business studies. Almost all passed, but only one attained a merit grade.
16. Standards of work seen during the inspection show some improvement on levels attained in examinations in recent years. This is particularly so in mathematics. Standards observed are typical of those found nationally, an advance on those attained in examinations in previous years. This represents satisfactory achievement. There has been a substantial effort by teachers to push up standards involving a great deal of work outside lesson times, which students appreciate. Achievement in English is good. Standards of written work are above average and students are becoming familiar with a wide range of English literature. By Year 13, they have developed an independent, critical and personal voice in their writing. Standards in biology are average and represent sound achievement. Across all subjects, students' very good attitudes support rising standards. The good working atmosphere in ICT, where all students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject, contributes significantly to good learning. Here, achievement is good and students are good at helping each other and discussions are always relevant to the task.
17. As in the main school, standards and achievement in drama are well above average. Students demonstrate confident acting skills. Students' critical evaluation of drama is insightful and reflects good research and knowledge of stagecraft and theory. All students work with high levels of commitment and have high aspirations. Achievement is also well above average in business studies, history and psychology. Business studies and psychology are new areas of study for all students. In business studies, it is the structure of the course that builds up students' understanding systematically, supported by very good teaching. In psychology, students are very motivated learners. They achieve well because they develop the ability to confidently evaluate the impact of various psychological theories. In history, the high standards reached by students are due to very effective teaching, as well as students' attitudes. However, in media studies, standards of work vary according to which aspect of the

syllabus is being covered. They show above average levels of technical expertise and knowledge of the codes and conventions of film genre, but their knowledge of media theory and language is below the national average.

18. Those students with special educational needs who stay on to the sixth form achieve well. However, the limited range of courses below advanced level offered in the sixth form means that few with special educational needs remain after Year 11. Some sixth form students for whom English is an additional language achieve very well, for example in psychology.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning are very good and behaviour is good. Aspects of personal development including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also good. Attendance is good. Although punctuality on arrival at college is satisfactory, punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes are very good and they feel that the school has many strengths.
- The school sets very high expectations for conduct and behaviour is good.
- Moral and social development is particularly strong.
- The attendance rate and the procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good.
- Unsatisfactory punctuality causes some lessons to start late.

Commentary

19. Students are enthusiastic about most aspects of school life and have very positive attitudes. In discussions, they praised the school's good reputation and technology specialist status, good and caring teachers and good food and feel that the school builds character and confidence. In their questionnaire, nearly all students felt that this was a good school to be at and that they are expected to work hard and do their best. They also feel lucky to have so many clubs and many opportunities for additional help and support for learning outside the school day. Students typically have good concentration levels and answer questions eagerly. They follow instructions well, work hard and are keen to discuss their work and take pride in good presentation. Students relish challenge and this was often seen, for example, in design technology and drama lessons.
20. Students are helpful, considerate and consistently behave well. Behaviour in most lessons is good and enhances learning, although in a minority of lessons there is some low level disruption, mostly off-task 'chat.' Break-times and lunchtimes are pleasant and relaxed on both sites. Students show reverence during assemblies and prayer, when their behaviour is exemplary. Very high expectations are set for conduct and the school rigorously implements policies to achieve them. Bullying and racism seldom occur. Students are very pleased about this. Some older students have been trained as peer mentors and are available to support younger students who may be experiencing bullying. Whilst this works effectively on the lower school site, with sixth form students acting as mentors, it is less effective on the upper school site. Students praise the very good racial harmony within school and how everyone mixes freely and happily.
21. There is a higher than average rate of fixed term exclusion, which reflects the tough stance the school takes on behaviour. Exclusion works effectively as a deterrent for the majority of offenders. There is however a disproportionately high number of black boys excluded but, on investigation, their exclusions are justified for persistent serious behavioural incidents. However, most students, whatever their ability or ethnic background, behave well.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	286	27	0
White – Irish	69	5	0
White – any other White background	61	5	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	27	6	0
Mixed – White and Black African	17	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	18	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	40	7	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	41	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	197	35	1
Black or Black British – African	187	31	1
Black or Black British – any other Black background	38	13	1
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	39	2	0
No ethnic group recorded	29	3	0

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

22. There is an atmosphere of trust, respect for all and a strong community spirit. The ethos is very positive and the college mission statement is reflected in its work and practice. The close links with parishes, the Chaplaincy arrangements, Masses, retreats, assemblies, regular prayer and use of the chapel effectively promote the good spiritual development. Moral and social development is very good. Positive reinforcement of gospel values, very high moral standards and the recognition of their intrinsic worth are real strengths. This helps students to be considerate and thoughtful in their approaches to others and have high expectations of their own behaviour. The qualities required to become more mature and responsible, as students get older, are promoted well. Students' confidence and self-esteem are good and they have good social skills. Cultural development is satisfactory and has strengths in drama, the humanities and design and technology but elsewhere across the curriculum it is underdeveloped, especially in art and music. Students called for more celebration of their multi-cultural heritage to increase understanding and appreciation of the rich diversity of the school's population.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.4
National data	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	1.1

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

23. Attendance is good and is above the national average. There is very little unauthorised absence and it is well below the national level. This reflects the effective way the school promotes attendance and efficiently follows up absences. Punctuality on arrival at school is good for younger students but a significant minority of older students are regularly late. Students are not always punctual to lessons. After breaktimes and between lessons, some were seen dawdling with no real sense of urgency to get to the next lesson. When teachers have to move between the two school sites between lessons there can be a delay of up to 15 minutes before the next lesson starts. This causes lessons to have disrupted starts and the time lost hinders learning.

Sixth form

24. Students' attitudes towards work and school life are very good, as is their behaviour. Students enjoy the freedom and privileges accorded to being in the sixth form. They work well, in partnership with their teachers, in pursuit of high standards and this instils in them a real desire to learn and succeed. They demonstrate maturity, self-discipline and are keen to take on responsibility when they have the opportunity. Many are active peer mentors to younger more vulnerable students and others help younger students in the successful shared reading scheme. Students help with extra-curricular activities and have helped lead many charity fundraising events. Although there are many opportunities for extending students' personal development, they feel that these were not well advertised and call for better communications within school.
25. Attendance is very good but punctuality on arrival at school is unsatisfactory, with one in ten students regularly late.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-11 and very good in the sixth form. The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall. Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where it fails to address the needs of all students. Opportunities for enrichment are good; support for learning outside the school day is very good. Learning resources are good, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there are too many posts filled by temporary teachers. The provision for students' care and welfare is very good, whilst that for support, advice, and guidance is good and for health and safety is satisfactory. Procedures for taking students' views into account are unsatisfactory. Links with parents are very good, whilst those with the local community and with other schools and colleges are good.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-11 and very good in the sixth form. The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall, but good in the sixth form. Students' very positive attitudes, particularly in the sixth form, support the quality of learning, as does teachers' very good command of their subjects and their very good encouragement to students. However, the quality of learning in some subjects is adversely affected by constant changes of teacher.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good or better, and rarely unsatisfactory. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

- The constant change of teachers experienced by some classes in some subjects is adversely affecting the quality of learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good, but learning is sometimes adversely affected if group sizes are too small or too large.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in drama and design and technology, and also in business studies, history and psychology in the sixth form. There is also much very good teaching in geography.
- Teachers, who have very good command of their subjects, engage very well with students and give them good encouragement. Students appreciate the additional time given by teachers to support their learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good. It particularly supports the development of students' literacy.
- The school development plan, whilst correctly focused on raising achievement, is not targeted sufficiently at improving the quality of teaching and learning to increase the proportion of very good lessons.
- The use of assessment is inconsistent; it varies greatly in quality between departments.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 163 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	33 (20%)	85 (52%)	33 (20%)	6 (4%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

26. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is good or better in three-quarters of lessons and satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. Whilst the proportion of very good or excellent teaching is similar to that at the last inspection, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced significantly. However, although students experience teaching which is generally good or better, they still experience some unsatisfactory teaching. They also experience too many temporary teachers in some subjects, which affects the quality of their learning. Whilst some of these temporary teachers are very competent, the constant change of teachers results in discontinuities in learning. Very effective support is given to temporary teachers in many subjects to ensure that teaching standards are maintained, but in some classes many students become frustrated by the constant change of teacher and some have given up in these subjects. In music, an experienced temporary teacher has set clear ground rules for learning, which has enabled students to settle to serious work after a long period of staff instability.
27. The reduction in unsatisfactory and increase in good teaching is a consequence of a successful programme of professional development to improve teaching practice. A teaching and learning policy provides "a framework to identify and respond to students' individual needs by providing a variety of learning experiences." However, whilst the school development plan is correctly focused on raising achievement, this is not targeted sufficiently at improving the quality of teaching and learning to increase the proportion of very good lessons.
28. Excellent teaching was seen in child development, design and technology and psychology and some very good teaching occurs in many subjects. Overall, in Years 7-11, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in drama and design and technology. There is also much very good teaching in history and geography. It is good in almost all other subjects, but satisfactory in science, in English in Years 7-9 and in French and art and design in Years 10 and 11. In physical education, whilst teaching is good, the quality of learning in Years 10 and 11 is only satisfactory because of limited curriculum time. The proportion of satisfactory or better teaching is now the same in Years 7-9 as it is in 10 and 11. However, there is twice as much very good or excellent teaching in the higher years.

29. Teachers' command of their subjects is very good. In drama, for example, students progress very well because teachers possess expertise that enables them to provide a stimulating and imaginative curriculum that engages and inspires students' to learn. In music, the new teacher supports her explanations by skilled musical demonstrations. Teachers' planning is generally effective. Lesson objectives are made clear and in most lessons in art, for example, skills to be acquired are demonstrated to the whole class. Lessons often start with checking what was learned last time. However, in some less successful lessons planning is not consistently matched to students' needs. Where this occurs, some students misbehave. Generally, however, teachers' expectations are high, providing good challenge to students. For example, in mathematics, lessons are harmonious and characterized by high levels of challenge; teachers expect the best from their students. In history, students are effectively challenged in their learning and they are expected to achieve highly. For example, effective use is made of interactive whiteboards in a Year 8 lesson to help students use their language skills in examining bias in historical evidence on King John.
30. Most teachers engage very well with students and give them very good encouragement, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In interviews, students indicated that teachers "actually care that you do well." Relationships are good. Students appreciate the additional time given by most teachers in study clubs and extra-curricular activities, or to them as individuals. Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to help students learn; they make effective use of praise to encourage effort and to reward achievement. Most teachers employ a range of strategies effectively for establishing positive behaviour. In some subjects, such as drama, class management is excellent and students benefit from clear ground rules for purposeful lessons. However, whilst, in general, students behave well, are attentive and work hard, in some subjects, such as science, there is often a background of chatting from some of them, which degrades the learning environment for the others. Many teachers have received good training on the different ways girls and boys learn best. Whilst, often, these are used effectively in single gender groups in Years 7 and 8, behaviour does not always support learning in some all-male classes.
31. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and activities. They often provide interesting and challenging tasks, which reflect their high expectations of students. In drama, teaching methods ensure students increasingly take ownership of their own learning. Lessons are very well planned to provide progressive activities that accelerate learning. Similarly, in physical education, tasks are logically sequenced to the final required outcomes and always create a lively pace for learning. In English, students respond to 'hot seat' questioning with fluency and maturity. In history, students improve their presentational skills by sharing their research findings with the class. In the best lessons in science, skilful questioning leads students to develop topics for themselves, but some science teachers make insufficient use of questions which stretch students of all abilities. In the most successful subjects, such as design and technology, teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic, well organised and focused upon students' learning. In these subjects, well-directed questioning by teachers ensures that learning is well matched to the needs of students.
32. Whilst teachers generally use resources and time effectively with older students, they do so less effectively in younger years. However, in all years, deployment of teachers on the split site can result in both teachers and students being late for the start of lessons. In English, for example, the pace of most lessons is brisk. In less good lessons, across the curriculum, pace is slower and not all students are "pulled along"; this results in only satisfactory learning. Whilst generally time is used well, plenary sessions at the end of lessons are not always used effectively to check on understanding or to consolidate the learning of all students. Whilst resources are used effectively in most subjects, there is limited planned use of the libraries to enrich students' learning. Satisfactory use is made of ICT across the curriculum. The provision of electronic whiteboards has enhanced its use, although many teachers are not confident in their use and so their proper, interactive potential is yet to be realised fully. However, in science, students make good use of ICT for data logging and, across the curriculum, good use is made of the Internet. In physical education, teaching and learning are improved by the good use of digital cameras and video to demonstrate relevant techniques and to analyse personal performances.

33. Homework is used with increasing effectiveness to reinforce and extend students' learning as they move through the school. It is set regularly for students of all capabilities, although discussion with students suggests less emphasis is placed on setting homework in Year 8. Most parents and students indicated that homework set is manageable, although varies between years. Whilst it increases as students move through the school, in Year 11 it is set less regularly in some subjects, because students have longer coursework assignments. Most older students display a mature attitude to handling the pressures and recognise that time spent should be kept within sensible parameters, ensuring they have time for a good social life as well.
34. The school has a good commitment to inclusion. A mix of grouping by ability in a few subjects, whilst teaching mixed ability groups in most, is used effectively to promote equality of opportunity. The best teaching, as in drama, is highly inclusive and enables students whatever their ability to achieve very well. Some parents, teachers and students questioned the continued use of single gender grouping, in Years 7 and 8.
35. As students move through the school, they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding with growing confidence in most subjects. For example, one well-planned, inspirational lesson was seen in English on the study of poetry with a group of Year 7 boys. The focus was on rhythm and the boys sang and tapped out rhythm and wrote their own limericks using the five basic rules that they had all learnt. In history, teachers expect students to be thoughtful in their learning and this enhances their understanding of complicated issues. In science, however, they seldom have an input into the design of experiments; consequently whilst all can successfully do the experiment, few know why they are doing what they are doing. In art, there is sometimes insufficient emphasis on the development of ideas and preparatory work before moving on to finished artwork.
36. Students' literacy development is well supported, for example, in mathematics they are encouraged to read aloud, justify and explain their working. Teachers pay good attention to developing literacy and numeracy by integrating and emphasising it in every day work. Drama lessons contribute well to students' oracy. Teachers take care over the introduction of new vocabulary and use is made of word lists displayed on classroom walls in most subjects. However, in a small number of lessons, resources are not sufficiently adapted to the literacy needs of some lower-attaining students and this sometimes results in confusion about the tasks.
37. Students' application and productivity is good, as is their capacity to work independently and collaboratively. Students are generally enthusiastic and their learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes. When given the opportunity, students work well in small groups and help each other effectively. In interviews, students were extremely positive about the emphasis placed on working together and discussion in many lessons. In pair and group work, in English, for example, students are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves. In most subjects, students' concentration and enthusiasm play a major part in good learning. For example, Year 7 classes find learning French fun and make good progress as a result.
38. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good in most subjects. A team of experienced teachers and learning support assistants gives good support to students both within lessons and separately before and during the school day. Subject teachers in all areas are aware of the particular learning needs of students and most attempt to meet them. Teachers are familiar with the details on students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs), but not all plan lessons to accommodate these different needs. A strong feature of the wider support for learning is the productive use of registration time in both school buildings. Regular morning sessions provide selected Year 7 students with practise in improving reading skills guided very ably by sixth form mentors. In the upper school building, Year 9 students receive additional literacy support to improve their reading and writing. These activities are open both to students with special educational needs and to those at an early stage of learning English. The teaching of gifted and talented students is very effective in

mathematics, history, geography, drama and physical education. Students are well identified in all subject areas but many departments have yet to establish effective methods for challenging these abler students.

39. Assessment is satisfactory. The school has made assessment one of the main foci for whole-school development and in doing so has made good improvement in collating a wide range of assessment data on students' achievements. Marking is generally used well to assist learning and make students aware of the relevance of their performance. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in some departments in using National Curriculum levels to set relevant targets. In many instances these targets are agreed with students and reviewed on a regular basis. But this is presently an area that is still under-developed.
40. As a result of training, there has been good progress made in some departments using assessment evidence in lessons to set clear objectives to focus learning. This enables departments like history to establish a strong sense of purpose in their lessons and to match learning closely to the needs of the students. But there are still inconsistencies between departments and the school has not fully monitored and reviewed the impact of this area of development. In several subjects, students are aware of their standard set against national results and of their own targets but do not always know precisely what they need to do to reach these. In lessons, it is expected that teachers will include references to matching work to students' needs on lesson plans but this is inconsistently carried out in practice. There is also inconsistency in the way departments analyse data on overall GSCE performances and compare them school-wide as well as to prior attainment and target grades. The school is aware that the next level of training needs to focus on how assessment information is used directly to influence the teaching strategies used in lessons to further impact on students' achievement. Work in citizenship is not assessed and reported on, as is now required.

Sixth form

41. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. It is the amalgam of good and very good experiences in lessons, which makes it so. Whilst the proportion of very good or excellent teaching is much the same as in the rest of the school, unsatisfactory teaching is rare and over four-fifths is good or better. The quality of students' learning was very good or better in a third of lessons observed. This is a much higher proportion than in younger years. It is a consequence of students' strong desire to succeed and very positive attitudes. In the subjects inspected fully, teaching is very good in business studies, drama, history and psychology, good in English, ICT and mathematics and satisfactory in biology and media studies.
42. A significant strength in most subjects is the teachers' very good subject knowledge. In business studies, teachers are experts and bring their experiences gained in industry and commerce to make the lessons relevant and up-to-date. Planning remains good, with a good range of teaching and learning strategies used. A strength of teaching in mathematics is the emphasis placed on getting students to explain and justify their methods, whilst, in biology, strong features include the setting of clear objectives and the use of probing questions to drive topics forward. Very good language development in history helps students to increase their understanding of complicated issues and explain them in writing.
43. Teaching groups vary greatly in size. A few groups are very large, whilst some, particularly in Year 13, are very small. Whilst teachers adopt effective strategies to cope with these two extremes, the best learning generally takes place where classes are large enough to split into groups for discussion, but small enough for the teacher to provide individual assistance when required. Where classes are large enough, students work very well in groups. However, in media studies, for example, whilst the interaction between students and the teacher is lively, more discussion between students would make learning more effective.
44. Across the curriculum, students rise to teachers' very good expectations of them and are happy to accept responsibility for much of their learning. Teaching is consistently challenging and varied in presentation in most subjects. A strong feature of English lessons, for example,

is the way that students show an interest in the activities, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. In biology, many students respond well, show a keen interest and ask their own questions, however, some expect to be told rather than to discover. Teachers have higher expectations of their students than in younger years. Teachers' encouragement and engagement with students is very good. Sixth form students value the way most teachers treat them as adults. A feature of mathematics lessons is the creation of a mature, hardworking, learning culture in lessons. In ICT, considerable flexibility is afforded to students in their response to tasks set. This equips them well in terms of their capacity to select appropriate software, analyse information and communicate effectively. In the best lessons, the key issues of all areas of study are clearly identified and linked well with examination question expectations.

45. Students enjoy their lessons and are prepared to talk about their subjects with enthusiasm. In psychology, questioning by the teacher is excellently linked to recent learning and used to challenge small groups of students to complete mini-research topics and to present their findings. As a result, the majority of students are increasing in confidence to make contributions in lessons. In drama, teaching methods are imaginative and challenging and make students take ownership of their own learning. Here, teachers often use radical techniques to enable students to comprehend the development of characters, to inform their view of how the actor and audience inter-relate and to help them understand the issues they have to consider when they take on a directorial function with a stage piece. Learning in many subjects is enriched by visits and trips, some of them residential, for example to World War 1 sites in France and Belgium and theatre visits to London and Stratford. However, regrettably, some planned trips have been cancelled as a result of concerns over terrorism. Whilst good use are made of interactive whiteboards by some teachers, the lack of ICT facilities in some smaller classrooms inhibits students' research during lessons. However, in media studies, good levels of research into aspects of the media are carried out with a sophisticated use of the Internet.
46. Assessment in Years 12 and 13 is good. Teachers use assessment criteria well so that students understand what they have achieved and how they can improve on their work. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, sometimes excellent. As a result, in psychology, for example, the teacher is acutely aware of students' individual strengths and weaknesses and uses this information very well to influence the next stages of their learning. In drama, assessment is rigorous, including regular self-evaluation, and indicates clearly what students need to do to improve further.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, but some aspects are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, as are aspects of curricular organisation and management. Opportunities for enrichment are good; support for learning outside the school day is very good. Learning resources are good, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there are too many posts filled by temporary teachers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of coherent curriculum philosophy, which ensures the needs of all students are met and provides progress routes from 14-19, including greater vocational provision.
- The school has introduced a good range of strategies to improve students' literacy in Years 7-9.
- Good provision is made for students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
- The introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the award of technology college status have improved curriculum delivery.
- Provision for the arts, physical education, languages and ICT is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Aspects of curricular organisation are unsatisfactory.
- The breadth of the curriculum studied by many students in the sixth form is too narrow, especially in Year 12.

- Provision for work experience is good, but that for citizenship is inconsistent and the wider aspects of work-related learning have yet to be addressed.
- Opportunities for enrichment are good; support for learning outside the school day is very good, but whilst participation in drama is good, provision for the other arts is not satisfactory.
- Enrichment activities for gifted and talented students are very good, but provision within lessons is inconsistent.
- Early entry in mathematics provides well for abler students and enables them to receive a good grounding in post-16 mathematics by studying additional mathematics in Year 11.
- Resources are good, but the school's accommodation remains unsatisfactory, despite the many improvements made in recent years, and too many teaching posts are filled through temporary appointments.

Commentary

47. The breadth of curricular opportunities offered to students is sound overall, but with some unsatisfactory elements, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is taught in 50 one-hour periods over a fortnight. The curriculum for Years 7-9 includes the full range of core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, as well as drama and personal and social development. There is no provision for students to study dance or a second European language, although some gifted and talented students are able to study Latin as an enrichment activity. ICT is taught through a discrete period in Years 7 and 8 and through work across the curriculum in Year 9. Curriculum time for some students in physical education in Year 9 is less than for others, because they are timetabled with only single periods and lose a significant amount of time travelling between sites. This is preventing them from attaining higher National Curriculum levels. The school has put in extra resources to support students in English and a range of different strategies has been introduced for this purpose. These include catch-up sessions to support Years 7 and 8, booster lessons and clubs in Year 9 and a specific initiative, RAISE (Raise Standards in English) in Year 9. The introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is also having a positive impact on delivery of the curriculum, particularly in the core subjects.
48. The school has introduced some flexibility into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, but, overall, curricular provision is unsatisfactory in these years. There is no coherent curricular philosophy, which addresses the needs of all students. All follow examination courses in English language and literature, mathematics, science and religious education and non-examination courses in personal and social development and physical education. As a technology college, students are expected to choose a technology-based subject - food, textiles, graphics or resistant materials. Students choose four options, including their technology subject. Only two new courses are offered, child development and a vocational course in information technology, which is equivalent to four GCSEs. The remainder receive ICT through their other subjects, in particular, design and technology, and do not attain any accredited qualification in the subject.
49. The curriculum overall is strongly academic and does not effectively meet the needs of all students. There is no planned progression from 14-19, except for those for whom advanced level courses are appropriate. A small number of students with special educational needs have a reduced academic curriculum and attend college courses or work placements for part of the week. These students now enter single, rather than double science at GCSE. There is no second European language offered, although a small number are supported in entering examinations in their home language. There is no option in dance and music has not been offered recently because of staffing difficulties. Provision for physical education for the majority of students is poor. The last inspection indicated a lack of time and breadth of studies for these students and this has been further reduced. The most capable Year 10 students in mathematics, however, now have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics a year early and enter additional mathematics GCSE in Year 11. This gives them a good grounding in post-16 mathematics.
50. The majority of subjects are taught to mixed ability classes. There is grouping by ability in mathematics from Year 8 and in science from Year 9. Only in these subjects and in

technology and physical education are class sizes reduced below that of tutor groups. Thus many subjects teach large classes, particularly in Years 7-9 and some continue to do so in Years 10 and 11. Whilst timetabling across a split-site is difficult and reduces the opportunity for some subjects to be taught fully in specialist rooms, deployment of staff and students results in a significant amount of time being lost from some lessons. There is no short break or travelling time scheduled between two pairs of lessons each day. This results in some classes being unsupervised whilst they await their teacher's arrival.

51. The award of technology college status has encouraged developments within design and technology, ICT, mathematics and science. However, it has yet to have a significant impact on other areas of the curriculum. There are plans to develop courses, such as music technology, but currently technology within the arts is under-developed. However, the award of specialist status has significantly improved links with other schools.
52. Citizenship is mainly taught through the personal and social development programme, where the three required elements are in place. This has one period per week delivered by the form tutor, and is a co-ordinated programme including work-related learning and personal development. There is also some planned provision across some subjects of the curriculum. However, the delivery of the major part of the subject is dependent on the interest and experience of the form tutor. Students indicate that the quality of delivery is inconsistent and work has not consistently been assessed or reported upon.
53. The school has not addressed the wider aspects of the new statutory framework for work-related learning. It has previous good practice in careers guidance, option choice in Years 9 and 11 and for work experience in Year 10 but these have not been built into an effective continuous programme of work-related learning that permeates systematically into lessons across all subjects. Teachers have been insufficiently trained for its introduction. Systems for tracking individual progress in work-related learning have not been started, but there is some good self-evaluation going on using the work experience programme diary.
54. The school makes good provision for students with special educational needs. They have access to the full curriculum. A team of experienced teachers and learning support assistants gives good support to students both in lessons and before and during the school day. A strong feature of the wider support is the productive use of registration time in both school buildings. Regular morning sessions provide selected Year 7 students with practice in improving reading skills guided very ably by sixth form mentors. In the Wiseman building, Year 9 students receive additional literacy support to improve their reading and writing. A small number of male students in Years 10 and 11 follow work-related programmes largely outside school. These are individually designed to suit the needs of students not gaining benefit from the full school curriculum. An alternative programme has been provided for a small group of students in Year 10. This is a basic general curriculum in school for three days per week with two days attending a college course. The teaching and support for these students within school are good but the curriculum lacks adequate provision for creative arts, technology and physical education and is not meeting the needs of about a half of those on it.
55. The school has improved its support and provision for students for whom English is an additional language since the previous inspection. Incoming pupils whose home language is not English are now assessed promptly to measure their stage of proficiency in English. All teachers receive a copy of individual education plans that indicate clearly the student's current level of proficiency, prior experience in education and provides helpful guidelines for improvement. Students follow the full curriculum. The specialist teacher supports early stage learners in some lessons. In a few cases, students at an early stage of English acquisition are withdrawn for more intensive small group teaching.
56. The enrichment activities for gifted and talented students are very good. They include problem solving and leadership development activities within school, as well as planned visits to museums and theatres. Students have good access to local summer schools and a special week of activities held in conjunction with several local schools. However, planning for this

provision is less developed in a significant number of departments, notably English and science.

57. The college provides some very good opportunities to support learning outside the school day. Staff give their time generously and organise study clubs across most subjects, especially for students taking GCSE examinations. These take place not only after school in many departments but also during holiday time and weekends in the run up to examination time. There are also some good booster class arrangements for helping Year 9 students prepare for national tests. Homework clubs are readily available each day and are particularly useful for students who do not have access to computers at home. Participation in other extra-curricular activities is good in sport and is satisfactory in the arts, with strengths in drama but weaknesses in art, dance and music in particular. During the inspection, students of all ages were in the final stages of rehearsals for a school production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Most students indicated that there was a good range of enrichment activities. Whilst there has been a good range of trips and school journeys, some of these have been cancelled recently in response to governors' concerns about security in some countries.
58. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 – 11 and the provision of support staff is good. Teachers in most subjects are well qualified and experienced. Good recruitment and retention strategies have resulted in the appointment of some enthusiastic young teachers. However, difficulties in recruitment are having an adverse effect on learning and behaviour in some parts of the curriculum. Staffing in English, science and music has been an issue for some time. Whilst it is now stable in science, there are three vacancies in English and there has been no permanent music teacher for some years. There are currently more than six vacancies across a range of subjects and turnover each year is high. This high turnover of staff and lack of teaching continuity for students is seriously affecting the attitudes of some students in some subjects. In order to address recruitment difficulties, the school is working with a number of teacher training establishments in the greater London area and provides a wide range of placements for students. Some newly qualified teachers are inappropriately on temporary contracts.
59. Resources for learning are generally good. Most subjects have enough textbooks and other resources needed for their courses. Because of the lack of permanent staff, resources are unsatisfactory in music with a lack of instruments and access to ICT. The availability of computers is satisfactory and the school has recently invested in a number of laptop computers to improve students' access. However, computer hardware in some subjects, for example science, is now reaching the end of its useful life. The lack of dedicated provision in many subjects, such as in English and French, is a problem, although computer rooms can be booked. The school is well equipped with interactive whiteboards, although the full potential of this technology has not yet been exploited in most subjects. Library provision is limited on both sites, although a new library is due to open on the upper school site. Whilst the book-stock is limited in the libraries, book-boxes with a range of good quality texts are available during tutor periods. Display around the school is varied. All English rooms are rich learning environments with imaginative displays of students' work.
60. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school is located on two sites about six minutes walking distance apart. School buildings on both sites are a mixture of very old listed buildings and modern blocks. Recent improvements to accommodation have included two new computer rooms, a new chapel, remodelling of the science laboratories and refurbished tennis courts and toilets on the Wiseman site. During the inspection a new performing arts block was completed. However, despite all efforts to alleviate problems associated with the split site, the cumulative effect of lost lesson time and the need to teach some lessons in inappropriate classrooms has an adverse effect on the quality of education provided.
61. For example, physical education has poor indoor and outdoor facilities and along with history, loses considerable lesson time as a result of teachers needing to travel between sites. Modern foreign languages, geography and history lack designated curriculum bases and some lessons are taught in rooms that are too small. Some drama lessons take place in inappropriate and unsuitable locations such as the school library and dining room. Only information and communication technology and design and technology have good accommodation, where lessons are taught in spacious well-equipped rooms. The split site is also costly in terms of resources. The new performing arts block will significantly improve

accommodation on the Wiseman site, with drama studios, music and media studies rooms, as well as provision for special educational needs and a library. The arrangements for disabled access at the Wiseman site do not meet statutory requirements.

Sixth form

62. The breadth of the sixth form curriculum is satisfactory, although most courses are at advanced level and cater mainly for those interested in higher education. A wide range of subjects is offered, including new subjects like business studies, government and politics, psychology and sociology. Currently the only intermediate level courses offered are a vocational course in business education and resits in GCSE English language and mathematics. The only advanced level vocational course offered is in information technology. Provision in the arts is confined to art and drama, with the lack of a permanent teacher curtailing possibilities in music. The sixth form has increased significantly in size since September. However, the large number of subjects offered results in very small classes in some subjects, particularly in Year 13. These small groups, and a few over large classes in Year 12, do not support effective learning. This is exacerbated, in a few cases, by students being allowed to follow subject combinations which clash on the timetable. The school promotes the size of the sixth form, with small classes, as one of its strengths. However, this has been sustained through significantly subsidising sixth form provision from funding allocated for the main school.
63. Insufficient courses are currently offered below an academic advanced level to meet the needs of many who are now opting to stay into the sixth form. In Year 12, a significant proportion of those studying AS-level courses are only doing three subjects, the others four, rather than the five envisaged when AS-levels were introduced. The breadth of curriculum studied by many students is too narrow. There are no key skills courses, no general studies and no physical education except for those studying it at AS-level. There is also no regular religious education, although this is covered through conferences every half term. Enrichment activities specifically for the sixth form are satisfactory. There are theatre trips and journeys linked to some courses. The sixth form actively supports the education of younger students in the school, by acting as mentors and giving reading support. Many main school extra-curricular activities, such as the school play, are open to sixth form students, but in interviews students stated that they would prefer to have more of their own, including sports teams.
64. In the sixth form, the qualifications and experience of teaching staff support learning well across the full curriculum and this is reflected positively in the achievements of students. However, some courses have been affected adversely by successive changes in teacher. Learning resources are good in most subjects, but arrangements for private study are inadequate. There is no sixth form library and limited access to ICT outside subject rooms. Accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The common room and facilities for private study are too small for the larger sixth form numbers. Some subjects are not taught in specialist rooms and a significant amount of time is lost travelling between sites.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care and welfare is very good. Arrangements for the oversight of health and safety are satisfactory. Provision of support, advice, and guidance is good. Procedures for taking students' views into account are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a very caring institution. Effective pastoral systems provide support for the personal development of students. Students indicate that there are adults in the school they would trust to help them.
- The extent to which the school seeks, values and acts on students' views is limited. Students do not feel that their views have much effect on how the school works and develops.
- Induction arrangements for Year 7 students are very good and help them settle into school very well.

- Support for students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good. Sixth form mentors provide very effective reading and literacy support for Year 7 students.
- The school maintains good relations with outside agencies to enhance the quality of care.
- Students receive good careers education and guidance. However, support on preparation for higher education is more uneven.
- There are some health and safety concerns, mostly regarding the unsatisfactory accommodation.

Commentary

65. The school is a very caring institution and pays very good attention to the welfare of its' students. The arrangements for the induction of new students are a very good feature of the care programme. Visits to the main contributory primary schools by the head of Year 7 and opportunities for incoming pupils to spend time in the school in the summer term prior to their transfer help to make the transition an easy one. Students recall their introduction to the school as a pleasant and exciting experience.
66. The school's pastoral system works well. Students of all ages also indicate that there are adults in the school they can go to for advice or help should they need this. Communications between tutors, heads of year and the assistant head (pastoral) are good. Essential information about students' arrivals or changes of circumstances is communicated effectively. Child protection procedures are good. Further training has been undertaken this year to increase the awareness of all staff of the need for vigilance in protection matters. Most students are content with the pastoral support and guidance they receive, but a significant minority do not feel that all staff always treat them fairly or with respect. The school maintains good relations with outside agencies, such as education social workers, to enhance the quality of care. In addition to the school pastoral support system, a trained counsellor visits the school for one day each week. Some students are unaware of this potentially valuable service.
67. Guidance and support by tutors has improved since the last inspection. Heads of year indicate that it has contributed to the improvement of academic results. The introduction of 'academic review days' in the summer term has increased the role of tutors in monitoring the achievement of individual pupils. However, whilst much data about students is available, it is generally left to departments to monitor progress. The school is aware of the need to create opportunities for further involvement of form tutors in the academic monitoring of students.
68. The school provides good support for students with special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language. Much of the help given to Year 7 students to improve literacy skills is of a very good standard, as is some of the support given to those with multiple disabilities. However, only one site has been adapted satisfactorily to accommodate pupils with mobility difficulty. Annual reviews of statements are carried out efficiently at appropriate times. A good feature is the practice of encouraging students to carry out their own self-review before the meeting. However, parents, carers and students could be more fully involved in framing the targets for Individual Education Plans. Two learning mentors give helpful individual guidance to students of all ages needing support. In addition, many of the current Year 12 students act in a very valuable role as learning mentors to Year 7 students who benefit from having support with regular reading and phonics practice. Some Year 10 and 11 students have been trained to act as peer mentors on the upper school site, but there are mixed views about the effectiveness of this scheme, with some feeling that the age gap between the mentors and those they mentor is too narrow.

69. Support for gifted and talented students is effective within the school, although this support is in the early stages of development in some departments. In successful departments, students are identified and given more challenging tasks accompanied by the highest expectations. The school has embarked on these strategies to increase the size of its academic sixth form. This it has achieved.
70. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of students and staff are satisfactory. Appropriate safety checks and risk assessments are carried out at correct intervals. The governing body is preparing to carry out improvements to the existing fire alarm system and is seeking ways to improve accessibility to the 'Wiseman' building for students with mobility difficulties. Some issues in the technology area, which need attention, have been identified. First aid and minor medical complaints are recorded appropriately and the school has a good accident safety record.
71. Students receive good advice and guidance about careers and possible routes forward in education from the age of 16. Guidance forms part of the personal development programme throughout the school. A careers advisor visits the school regularly to interview students and to be available for general advice. The school uses assemblies effectively in Year 11 to give information about routes forward. The head of the sixth form speaks to pupils about the school's courses and entry requirements and information is provided also about alternative courses, particularly those of a vocational nature. Relatively few students go directly into employment at 16.
72. The school's arrangements for seeking and acting on students' views are unsatisfactory. Some students do sit on an awards committee, where they decide on who should receive the regular 'Jack Petchey' awards, but this is a rare example of student involvement in decision making. The recently re-introduced school council has not yet made an impact on school life. Some students spoken to are unaware that it exists. A very recent meeting had resulted in a short list of complaints and suggestions being forwarded to the school senior management meeting. Most students interviewed were uncertain about what would happen next. This is a pity because all students indicate the belief that they belong to a good, well run school and most are very willing to discuss ways of making it even better.

Sixth form

73. Students receive good advice and support from both subject teachers and form tutors. They feel that they receive good advice on how to achieve higher standards and to cope with the greater pressures of a sixth form course. Most students feel they have an adult who knows them well and they trust for care and advice. They are prepared well for the transition by having the opportunity in Year 11 to talk to current students and to enjoy 'taster' lessons. However, not all feel they received sufficient impartial advice on subject choices.
74. Careers education and guidance for students are uneven, mainly because it occurs in personal development lessons which not all students can attend, because of timetable clashes. Students are able to meet with the careers advisor for advice regarding modern apprenticeship schemes or full time employment. Most students, however, apply for university admission and some Year 13 students have experienced difficulties, particularly in applying online and in completion of personal statements and references. A revised procedure for Year 12 will bring the statement writing earlier into the summer break after a university entrance day and after a visit to a higher education fair. Advice on choice of higher education courses is variable. Some students seek and obtain helpful advice, but others feel there is a lack of impartial guidance, particularly when they are unsure of their eventual career paths.
75. In interviews during the inspection, students confirmed that they would like to have greater opportunity to express their views and to contribute more fully to the school's development. Most feel the school council has yet to make much impact.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. Parents hold the school in high regard. Links with the local community are good, as are links with other schools and colleges. There are good links with partnership schools as part of the school's commitment as a technology college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and are highly satisfied about most aspects of its work.
- Good links with local parishes and the community enrich students' learning and personal development.
- There are some exciting and creative learning experiences with a technology focus with other local educational establishments.

Commentary

76. Parents confirm high levels of confidence in the school in almost every area and feel part of a strong and welcoming family community. Parents feel a true sense of partnership based on good communications and mutual trust. The quality of information parents receive about the curriculum is very good and the booklets and evening meetings for each year group set out some clear expectations for the year ahead and give parents some very good guidance on how they can help and support their children.
77. Other formal consultation arrangements are good and school reports give some clear indication of students' strengths and weaknesses but little written detailed information on progress. Other information, like newsletters, the school's website and other information booklets are very good and keep parents fully in touch with news and activities. The school maintains regular contact with parents and carers of students with special educational needs. Most parents are active participants in annual reviews of statements and are encouraged to visit the school to discuss progress or problems. However, they could be more involved in identifying targets on Individual Education Plans.
78. There is an effective partnership with other local schools and organisations to support students identified as gifted and talented through involvement with the Excellence in Cities programme.
79. Parents support the school well and come in large numbers whenever they are invited. They are particularly supportive of extra-curricular activities, such as drama productions and sporting activities. There is an active Friends' Association and parents are generous in their support of the busy programme of activities that raises large sums to benefit learning. There is a good amount of contact with parents when issues arise and the joint approaches to address concerns are very effective.
80. Community links are good and extend learning effectively. Links with local parishes are very good and enhance personal development, especially the spiritual and moral aspects. Local clergy and a nun are regular and welcome visitors and form a strong Chaplaincy team. Links with the 'Jack Petchey Foundation' are very good and the school has received a substantial donation towards a building project, as well as regular funding for an awards scheme. There are good links with the Waltham Forest Education Business Partnership, which help to secure work placements for students in Year 10. Local employers support the "technology week" enabling all year groups to meet and work with people from businesses to enrich their learning and careers education.
81. There are very good technology links with the "family of schools," where effective staff training for ICT and technician's time is funded to support ICT development. Links also involve technology based projects that teach pupils in primary schools about strategies and processes in technology to give them an excellent foundation in technology, prior to moving up to Holy Family College. Links with secondary schools are good and they share good practice and

staff professional development. There are some effective curricular links with the local further education college, providing placements on college courses for some less motivated students in Years 10 and 11. Pastoral links with feeder primary schools are good and ensure a smooth transition.

Sixth form

82. Links with the community are good and some local companies have been used as good sources for coursework for business studies, ICT and design technology A-level work. The personal development programme and religious education days often involve local speakers from a range of local groups and organisations. There are many worthwhile opportunities to do community service and enhance personal development, like helping at local schools, hospitals, residential homes for the elderly and the local homeless and disabled groups. The school takes advantage of many opportunities, especially in English and drama to visit London theatres.
83. Links with other schools, colleges and universities are good. The links with two local sixth forms helps to share expertise in mathematics and science. There are good links to St Mary's College where students are able to get some good first hand knowledge of higher education. The Higher Education Fair planned shortly is an exciting prospect and has enables some good links with some top universities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, overall. The head provides good leadership, supported well by senior managers and curriculum and pastoral leaders, which has secured very good improvement since the last inspection. Satisfactory management ensures the school runs smoothly. Governance is good, overall. Governors are effective and share actively in the vision for the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is well led by the head and senior managers: as a result there is a strong ethos that is focussed on students' learning and achievements within a Catholic, caring community.
- The head has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
- The leadership and management of middle managers, including curriculum and year team leaders, are good, although communication between different layers of management could be improved.
- Governors support the school well and effectively hold it to account for its work.
- Induction of new staff, continuing professional development and a good contribution to the initial training of teachers are good and have resulted in the school's accreditation, twice, as an Investor in People.
- The commitment of all to inclusion and concern for the needs of individuals is good.
- Financial management is good, but aspects of best value, particularly related to the efficiency of the sixth form, and costing of the development plan have not been addressed fully.

Commentary

84. Governors are effective and share actively in the vision for the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play an active role in planning for improvement. The governing body has changed significantly in recent years. It has a new intake of young and active members, who are gaining experience in the skills of governorship. Parents are enthusiastic to become governors; recent appointments were made after a keenly contested election. Those who can, visit regularly during the school day. They bring a range of expertise and professionalism to the governing body. For example, the chair of the finance committee, a chartered accountant, brings his professional skills and understanding to the role. Governors act as the critical friends to the school, challenging and supporting the management team. In the near future, it is planned to link a governor to each curriculum area. Governors have ensured that their statutory duties are discharged well, although recent

requirements over the implementation of work-related learning and reporting on citizenship have not been fully met.

85. The head has led the school's improvement since the last inspection, raising standards of GCSE results to above national averages, the best in the school's history, and steering the move to technology college status, currently awaiting re-designation. He has a high level of aspiration for the school and has a very clear vision of a school on a single site, aspiring to greater success at GCSE and A-level and a broadening vocational curriculum. However, the vision is not only about students' academic achievements: the development of broader skills and personal achievements as part of a Catholic community is also central to the school's work.
86. The head has worked hard to recruit and retain good staff in the face of the recruitment problems confronting schools in London, although some difficulties remain. Amongst these is the inability to appoint a literacy co-ordinator, which leaves the planning, monitoring and implementation of a vital whole-school programme without a co-ordinator. The recruitment procedures, along with good induction and good continuing professional development of staff have resulted in the school's accreditation as an Investor in People. The school also makes a good contribution to the training of teachers, through partnerships with colleges and specific training programmes for graduates and overseas teachers.
87. The head is well supported by a team of senior managers, who have a range of experience and skills. Within this group, there is a strong team identity, mutual support and shared decision-making. However, this is not as evident between the senior team and middle managers, many of whom feel that lines of communication and understanding of their problems are not strong enough. The management of the timetable is unsatisfactory, and adds to the difficulties of the split site. Much learning time is lost, when teachers have to change sites outside programmed breaks. Similarly, the arrangements for physical education in Years 10 and 11 result in students spending more time on changing and moving between sites than they spend on physical activities. The planning for the 14-19 curriculum and the embedding of a range of vocational courses is overdue, although these are now in the early stages of discussion.
88. Management of the school is satisfactory. School self-evaluation is in place, based on sound monitoring but some of the evaluation outcomes, as recorded in documentation provided for the inspection, are inaccurate and inconsistent with the evidence provided. Monitoring of and within departments varies significantly. Whilst in some areas, the quality of teaching and learning is rigorously monitored, other areas would appear to be neglected. There is a well-structured school development plan, correctly focussed on raising achievement, whilst addressing students' personal development and premises and resourcing issues. However, it lacks detail in a number of areas. Planning lacks clear timescales and is not costed in detail. Consequently, its links to the school's financial planning are unsatisfactory.]
89. Leadership and management of curriculum areas and year teams are good, with particular strengths in design and technology, history, drama, geography and modern foreign languages. Leadership and management arrangements in music are poor, as there has been little continuity of staff and no opportunity to develop planning, team working or to raise standards. Almost all curriculum areas have development plans in place, which relate to the whole school plan. Curriculum leaders act as good role models and lead effective teams, but teamwork has been hindered when there has been much turnover of staff and a reliance on temporary teachers, as in English and science.
90. Leadership and management of the special educational needs team are good. There is very good communication and collaboration between the co-ordinator, other teachers, support assistants, parents and pupils. Management of the team is effective but without adequate clerical support. Individual Education Plans are of good quality. There is a nominated governor with responsibility for the area. Leadership and management are also effective in relation to provision for students with English as an additional language, ethnic minorities and the imbalance between boys and girls.

91. The leadership and management of the enrichment provision for those identified as gifted and talented are very good with an enthusiastic co-ordinator well supported by senior management. All departments have identified and adopted strategies for challenging these students. Some like mathematics, history, geography, drama and physical education have managed very well. Others have still to develop effective challenges for these students.
92. Financial management is efficient. The financial monitoring information provided regularly to budget holders, governors and the senior management team by the bursar is clear and concise. The audit report of January 2005 confirms good practice in financial management, making a small number of recommendations. The governors' finance committee has minuted that the recommendations of this report are addressed by management action. However, governors have not addressed all aspects of best value, although they do have a purchasing policy. The expenditure of specific grant is monitored to ensure that it is used for the intended purposes. However, governors and management demonstrate insufficient awareness of issues related to the efficiency of the sixth form. The school has built up a substantial surplus. It is planned to use this money to cushion the transition towards a reduction in the school's admission number, and a consequent reduction in student numbers. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,447,128	Balance from previous year	471,509
Total expenditure	4,352,882	Balance carried forward to the next	565,755
Expenditure per pupil	4,095		

Sixth form

93. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, overall. The head of sixth form has a clear vision for its development and places opportunities for average ability students as a priority, probably through the development of vocational courses. Curriculum leadership is sound. There are currently 20 A-level courses offered but the curriculum offers insufficient variety for many students in Year 12. The process of transition from Year 11 to Year 12 is smooth. Students are guided and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Monitoring is carried out in surveys to teachers, students and parents. The school reacts to the outcomes. Sixth form students have their learning outcomes monitored and reviewed by tutors using target data as a baseline.
94. Governance of the sixth form is satisfactory. Development proposals are presented to governors, who receive an annual report and show interest in the standards achieved by students. However, they have not visited sixth form activities for some time. The school does not sufficiently involve students, systematically or regularly, by seeking and valuing their views on whole school issues. The cost of the sixth form courses cannot be met from the income generated by student numbers and is substantially subsidised by income generated from students in Years 7-11. It is accepted that the sixth form is developing and that numbers of students and courses are growing. However, despite increasing standards, the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is only satisfactory.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is current good practice in advice on subject choices, careers guidance and for work experience in Year 10
- The development of skills for employment for all students within subject lessons has not been addressed.
- Work experience makes a good contribution to students' personal development in Year 10.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from vocational courses at college.
- Some lower attaining students, including some with special educational needs, benefit from a coherent programme that includes personal development, work experience and linked courses with the local college

Commentary

95. The school has not started to address the wider aspects of the new statutory framework for work-related learning. It has previous good practice in careers guidance, subject choice in Years 9 and 11 and for work experience in Year 10 but these have not been built into an effective continuous programme of work-related learning that permeates systematically into lessons across all subjects.
96. Teachers have been insufficiently trained for the introduction of work-related learning. This aspect of the curriculum should have been in place at the beginning of this year, and too little planning in subject lessons has been done. Management has been ineffective in implementing this initiative and, consequently, students do not get the systematic learning experience they should.
97. Systems for tracking individual progress in work-related learning have not been started, but there is some good self-evaluation going on using the work experience programme diary. The school recognises the importance of work experience, which is organised successfully in Year 10 and is valued by students.
98. Many students have part-time employment and this is referred to in their curriculum vitae. Some, who would receive most benefit, are encouraged to attend vocational craft courses at the local college. Some low attaining students, and those with special educational needs, are given a special programme in Years 10 and 11, which matches their needs and aspirations. It includes social education that equips them with life skills as well as a focussed set of craft based activities at the local college. Work experience is an important feature, and these students are given an additional two days to prepare, building up their confidence and enabling them to maximise the benefit.
99. There are close and very effective links with 'Connexions', the careers service, who provide careers guidance and resources for making choices. Students use computers to identify their possible careers and the higher attaining students are given special tests to identify higher education possibilities. All students have access to quality materials and advice from the school's careers library, specialist teaching staff and the local careers advisor. There are too few outside speakers and focussed visits to industry are insufficiently developed.
100. Although the school management has made work-related learning part of this year's development plan, as yet too little has been done. Leadership, with clear roles and responsibilities and priorities, is not changing outline policy into actual practice.
101. Although there are many existing areas of good practice, the current impact of work-related learning on the lives of students is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

102. The degree to which students in the sixth form experience work-related learning varies according to the courses they choose. Those studying on the vocational course in information technology experience a strong work-related element, but most other courses do not. Students do not follow a general studies course, but do have a personal development lesson each week, which addresses some aspects of careers guidance and preparation for higher education. Overall, work experience in the sixth form is limited and this is a weakness, although some students' work in local primary schools, some science students work at the local hospital and the school is able to organise holiday internships in a leading accountancy firm.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of English are good.
- The significant number of staff changes and regular use of supply staff have an adverse effect on the quality of teaching.
- Most lessons are well planned and teachers are knowledgeable.
- The pace of most lessons is good, enabling most students to acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory in a minority of classes.

Commentary

103. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. In 2004, results in national tests were in line with the national average. This was below the levels attained in 2003, when results were above average compared to all schools nationally and well above average compared with similar schools. GCSE results in English language in 2004 were marginally above the national average with 60 per cent attaining grades A*-C. This was a little below the level attained in 2003, when results were above average. In both years, results in English literature were above the national average. Whilst girls attained better than boys in both subjects in 2004, boys attained better than boys nationally in both and the gap was narrower than nationally. There were no significant differences between the attainment of different ethnic groups.
104. Current standards by Year 9 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Standards seen in lessons and written work indicate that students feel reasonably confident to write accurately and effectively for a variety of different purposes including, for example, limericks and autobiography. Reading time is given during lessons and in registration.
105. The school is putting in extra resources to support students in English and a range of different strategies has been introduced for this purpose. These include catch-up sessions to support Years 7 and 8, booster lessons and clubs in Year 9 and a specific initiative, RAISE (Raise Standards in English) in Year 9. These have all contributed to the improvement in standards since the last inspection. However, the significant number of regular staff changes means that teachers are not always familiar with students, some students are disgruntled and boys, in particular, use the opportunity to misbehave. By Year 11, students' standards have improved, they are above average and achievement is good. Writing skills have developed well and many students are able to argue logically and succinctly using examples to support their ideas.
106. In all years, students benefit from knowledgeable teachers, the majority of whom plan carefully. The pace of most lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is brisk and there is a range of activities so that almost all students are engaged and interested in their work. In the best pair and group work, students are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves.
107. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are satisfactory. One very good session was observed with a group of Year 7 boys. This was part of a sequence of lessons on the study of poetry with a particular focus on rhythm. The planning, the pace and the inspirational teaching

meant that the boys sang and tapped out rhythm and wrote their own limericks using the five basic rules that they had all learnt. However, there are less successful lessons in these years where planning is thorough but not consistently matched to students' needs. Here the students misbehave, particularly when they are being moved to different activities, and teachers do not include all students in the learning process. In some lessons support staff give satisfactory help and there are different work sheets available for students with special educational needs and for those for whom English as an additional language. Teachers include reference to matching work to students' needs on lesson plans but it is not always evident in practice.

108. In Years 10 and 11, most students have good language skills and they are able to express themselves effectively both orally and in writing. Reading is perceived as a focus and most students are confident about reading aloud in class particularly where the teacher creates an effective learning environment. In one Year 10 class, individual students read extracts from '*Macbeth*', commented on character and responded to 'hot seat' questioning with fluency and maturity.
109. Leadership and management of English are good. The head of department has a clear vision and has spent considerable time with the team developing resources, for instance completely revising schemes for Years 7-9 and the department handbooks. These clearly state standards expected from students, teaching assistants and staff. There is a regular monitoring and evaluation programme that includes the observation of colleagues' teaching. There is also a clear marking and assessment policy. In the best examples, students are provided with helpful guidance on ways to improve their work but the marking of written work is inconsistent across the department. This is primarily because of the regular staff changes that have occurred. There have been twelve temporary teachers over the last two and a half years. This has adversely affected students' learning and attitudes. The continuing support and the regular induction of new staff also influence the amount of time the head of department can give to leading the department forward and to ensuring that support staff, in particular, are confident in their partnerships with teachers.
110. Apart from the strategies to raise standards, particularly of written English, there are extra-curricular activities in most years, including visits from theatre groups and to the theatre, for instance a Year 7 visit to see '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*'.
111. There are interactive whiteboards in all English classrooms. These were used effectively, although not always interactively, in almost all the lessons observed. There are no computers designated specifically for English although there are opportunities for teachers to book computer rooms. All English classrooms are rich learning environments with imaginative displays of students' work and subject specific terms. Other resources, for instance in the library, are very limited but it is understood that many of these are stored ready for the new library.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

112. In the core subjects in Years 7-9, literacy is satisfactory and for the most part students are able to use key words and to do information searches and they are learning to write essays independently. In science, students write in sentences and key words, such as 'crystalline' and 'grainy', are displayed. There is a focus not just on technical terms but also on descriptive language. In other subjects, such as geography, students in Year 9 are encouraged to write poems from the perspective of someone evacuated from a volcanic eruption. In ICT, there is a variety of reading material and students are encouraged to read aloud and to comment on the work of other students. There are other examples of literacy being developed in the performing arts, history and in physical education. The emphasis on literacy is further supported by the use of Year 12 mentors, who work with students in Years 7 and 8. All the students involved feel that their confidence in their own reading abilities is strengthened by the scheme. There are pockets of good work and also a literacy policy but, because there has been no co-ordinator in place for at least a year, literacy is not being effectively developed further.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing are good.
- Standards in speaking are below those in attained in listening, reading and writing.
- Girls' attainment is well below the standards they attain in their other subjects.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is insufficient breadth in the curriculum because only one language is offered to students.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the students are good

Commentary

113. Standards in French, as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were well above average. Standards seen during the inspection are above average. Students' standards in writing are particularly good but they do less well in speaking.
114. In 2004, results in GCSE French were well above average, representing a significant improvement on 2003. Boys did very much better than boys nationally, and did as well in French as in their other subjects. Girls also did better than the national average for girls but less well than in their other subjects. Standards in Spanish, by a group consisting mainly of girls, were below average and a small number of students gained average results in German. Standards seen in French in Years 10 and 11 were average, overall. The standards of the highest-attaining students, especially in writing, are very good. Speaking and the overall standards of many others are average.
115. Students' learning is good overall: good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Good learning is the result of good teaching, in particular, the emphasis on accuracy and style in writing, and the planned variety of activities in the classroom. However, this emphasis on writing is affecting speaking standards in many lessons, when teachers spend too little time on listening and speaking before students write. As a result, students can be unsure what to do when spoken to in French, read aloud when they should be speaking and sacrifice good accent and fluency. Students' concentration and enthusiasm play a major part in good learning. Pupils from all ethnic groups learn equally well; pupils with English as an additional language learn best when French is used extensively in the teaching and learning. Year 7 classes find learning French fun and make good progress as a result. Students' achievement is good overall; good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Progress up to the end of Year 9 is good. At this stage girls do very much better than boys. By the end of Year 11, boys have caught up and equalled the girls' attainment levels.
116. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is now unsatisfactory. Last year's Year 11 were the last group who had the opportunity to study more than one language, with French, German and Spanish available. Now students only study French. There is a need to offer students the opportunity to study another European language. The school is aware of this and plans to make an additional language available in the near future.
117. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Despite good display, rooms on the upper school site are unattractive, particularly for sixth form teaching, have difficult access and much curriculum time is lost, at some times of the day, when teachers must transfer from one site to the other. The lack of dedicated provision for ICT is a problem and no ICT work was seen during the inspection.
118. To be effective learners of French, students need the opportunity to visit France and experience the culture and language in the country. The school's current reluctance to approve visits abroad is denying students this opportunity and the motivation which would result.

119. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has established a good team, based on mutual support, high quality policies, planning, monitoring and schemes of work. She had been responsible for raising standards by taking and implementing challenging decisions. This has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. Furthermore, her leadership inspires confidence in the capacity for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and appreciation of common misconceptions.
- Hardworking teachers with high expectations are determined to increase standards.
- There is insufficient direct students' involvement in their own assessment.
- Methods to track students' progress are under used.
- There are good relations between students and teachers.
- There is inadequate planned use of the library to support learning.

Commentary

120. Achievement is good, both by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Standards are in line with those found nationally. In 2004, the Year 9 national tests and the GCSE examination results were at the national average. By Year 9, boys tend to reach a slightly higher standard than girls, and whilst the trend in girls' results is close to the national, boys are improving at a slightly greater rate. Boys' GCSE results in 2004 were higher than girls', the reverse of the situation in 2003.
121. By Year 9, less competent students confidently use elementary formulae; the competent set up and solve simple equations and the more competent construct formulae for complex number sequences. By Year 11, less competent students are able to describe how number patterns are built up and begin to use letters to represent numbers. Both the competent and more competent students sometimes find remembering how to manipulate algebraic expressions a challenge – especially when negative numbers are involved. To varying degrees students of all capabilities tend to find recalling how to manipulate and calculate with fractions difficult.
122. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers are aware of each individual's particular needs. The support provided by classroom assistants is very good. They have very good relationships with their students and work closely with teachers, providing challenge as well as support. Gifted and talented students make the same progress as their peers, as do the students from the various ethnic groups. The most capable Year 10 students now have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics a year early. In 2004 about 40 students did so, and over half gained the two highest grades. In Year 11 these students are taking the additional mathematics GCSE. This gives them a good grounding in post-16 mathematics. All ethnic groups appear to be proportionally represented in these two 'express' groups.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The vast majority of teaching is good or better. Lessons are harmonious and characterized by high levels of challenge; teachers expect the best from their students. Satisfactory lessons have relatively less pace and tend not to "pull students along", resulting in only satisfactory learning. Homework is set regularly for students of all capabilities. Marking is regular and positive. Students are aware of their standard set against national results and of their own targets but do not always know precisely what they need to do to reach these. Assessment overall is satisfactory, but limited use is made of standard methods to probe achievement. Negligible planned use is made of the library to enrich students' mathematical diet. Students' literacy development is well supported, they are encouraged to read aloud, justify and explain their working. Teachers take care over

the introduction of new mathematical vocabulary and use is made of word lists displayed on classroom walls. Satisfactory use is made of ICT; students' attainment is judged with the support of the ICT department.

124. The present leadership is good. It is democratic and self-critical, with a strong awareness of the need and the means to improve standards. The management of the subject is good. The pace of improvement since the previous inspection has been good; standards have risen which is a result of the improved quality of teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

125. Standards in mathematics are those expected nationally at Year 9 and Year 11. Students, including the less competent, have a satisfactory recall of basic number facts, including multiplication tables. Students' numeracy skills acquired in mathematics support their progress in other subjects. They have opportunities to practise some of their mathematical skills across the curriculum, particularly in science, geography and history, where graphs and statistical information are used. Measurement skills are practised in several subjects, including physical education and food technology.
126. Not all subjects' schemes of work make clear references to numeracy opportunities, so some students may miss these opportunities. At present, there is no named whole-school numeracy co-ordinator to monitor the planned support of numeracy within subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers are enthusiastic and keen to help students learn; they make effective use of praise to encourage effort and to reward achievement.
- Students are not given enough opportunity to think independently, especially in designing experiments.
- Teachers make insufficient use of questions to stretch students of all abilities.

Commentary

127. Standards attained in the 2004 national tests, taken at the end of Year 9, were below average when compared to all schools, but average compared to similar schools. They indicated unsatisfactory achievement from the levels obtained in Year 6, especially for the more able students. This was strongly influenced by the difficulties that the school was having with recruiting and retaining staff and changes in the nature of the examination. Girls perform better than boys. Standards had been rising up to 2003, when they were above average compared to similar schools; but declined last year. Examination of students' work and observations of lessons shows that the present Year 9 is working closer to the better levels seen in 2003.
128. At GCSE, double award, in 2004, attainment was average when compared with all schools and very good against similar schools. The students' achievement was satisfactory; they gained the grades expected from their Year 9 tests. Girls do better than boys. The trend has been one of rising standards in recent years; there was a sharp increase in 2004. Examination of students' work and observations of lessons indicate that standards in the present Year 11 are sound. This year some students will take the single award science; their standards are lower than those of the double award candidates.
129. In all years, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, which often becomes good when they can be supported. They have effective Individual Education Plans, whose strategies are implemented by the teachers. Students from ethnic minorities are well integrated and their needs understood, consequently they do as well as their peers. More

able students have some good out of school activities arranged for them; but in lessons, although they receive more demanding work, because classes are set by ability, they are seldom stretched with extension work within these higher ability sets.

130. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and it is leading to satisfactory learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to help students learn; they make effective use of praise to encourage effort and to reward achievement. Most lessons are well prepared, they have clear objectives and start with checking what was learned last time. Sometimes poor timing means that the new learning is not well tested at the end. In the best lessons, skilful questions lead the students to develop topics for themselves. However, they seldom have an input into the design of 'practicals'; consequently whilst all can successfully do the experiment, from the recipe provided, few know why they are doing what they are doing. Teachers make insufficient use of questions to ensure that they stretch students of all abilities. Whilst, in general, students behave well, are attentive and work hard, there is often a background of chatting from some of them, which degrades the learning environment for the others. A minority of less successful lessons was seen; in these, the problem was inability to manage students who were disinterested and only wanted to chat or to disrupt if asked to work. The quality of marking is good, giving students guidance on how to improve. Teachers pay good attention to developing literacy and numeracy by integrating and emphasising it in every day work. The use of information and communication technology for teaching has started, with the advent of electronic whiteboards, but many teachers are not confident in their use and so their proper potential is yet to be realised. However, students are taught to use ICT well in areas such as data logging and Internet research, despite some shortcomings in the availability of good equipment.
131. The department is well led and managed by an enthusiastic head. She has coped well with severe problems in recruiting and retaining good staff; nevertheless these have had an unfavourable impact upon standards. The curriculum is well planned and enhanced by a programme of visits to bring the subject to life. Whilst marking is good, the use of assessment, to provide students with knowledge of where they are and targets, is an area that is still under development. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is the problem of having a split site and, although the laboratories are good, some are too small for the numbers in the classes, so restricting the practical work that can be undertaken. Some chemical storage areas are also only just adequate.
132. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Most notably standards have improved especially at GCSE, teaching is better and the use of ICT, by the students, which was poor, is now good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7–9 and standards are improving.
- Accommodation and resources are good and encourage students' learning.
- Behaviour of some students in some year groups acts as a barrier to learning.
- Subject leadership and management establish an appropriate learning ethos.

Commentary

133. In 2004, the results attained by students in Year 11 were average and similar to those obtained in 2003. Overall, the result of teacher assessments of Year 9 students was above national expectation. This reflects an improving trend over the past two years.
134. The standards attained by students now in Year 9 are above national expectations. They make good progress from Year 7, where they begin with a wide range of prior ICT

experiences. In Years 10 and 11, some students follow a vocational course, equivalent to four GCSEs. The remainder receive ICT through their other subjects, in particular, design and technology. Such provision has not yet been mapped in detail to record the applications being covered. Achievement overall is good in Years 7–9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 for students of all abilities.

135. Lessons are well planned and have short activities that alternate between whole class teaching and time for students to work on their own and get individual help. For example, in Year 7, students undertake work associated with researching the relative merits of websites giving information on tourism. Team teaching is effective where there is close pre-planning to target those students who may be underachieving. Lessons have good challenge, as for example in Year 10 work on spreadsheets and financial forecasting. Normally time is used well but plenary sessions could be more rigorous to ensure that learning is being consolidated by all students, particularly in larger groups. Coursework is well marked and students generally know the level of their work. They speak positively of the teaching support that is given, especially when being introduced to a range of software. Teachers' knowledge is good and staff set expectations clearly and effectively in relation to external accreditation requirements.
136. Behaviour is generally good but in Years 7 and 8, behaviour does not always support learning, for example, in some all-male classes. In lower ability groups in Years 10 and 11, students of both genders do not always accept the high expectations placed on them. For this reason, learning in lessons is satisfactory rather than good, but overall learning is good because many students take advantage of learning opportunities provided in non-timetabled sessions at lunchtime and after school.
137. Leadership is good and the head of department is a good role model, demonstrating strong support for the subject. Through her enthusiasm, teaching and non-teaching staff give freely of their time outside lessons. This has supported learning with all age groups and encourages independent learning. The subject is well managed. There are regular departmental meetings and information sharing is good and ensures that students receive an equal entitlement in their teaching and learning. Planning is thorough though accreditation opportunities in the subject are limited, particularly for pupils in Years 8 and 9. Assessment of the quality of students' work is rigorous, though target setting and reporting within the school year are underdeveloped. The department is aware of the limitations of self-assessment as conducted via student diaries in an externally funded pilot project.
138. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The number of dedicated rooms available for ICT has increased and major deficiencies in relation to ICT provision in Years 10 and 11 have been addressed, although access to suitable texts remains an issue.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

139. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, overall. The availability of computers is satisfactory and the school has recently invested in a number of lap-top computers to improve students' access. Whilst the ratio of modern computers is currently satisfactory across the curriculum, computer hardware in some subjects, for example science, is now reaching the end of its useful life. The school is well equipped with interactive whiteboards, although the full potential of this technology has not yet been exploited in most subjects. Good use of the interactive features of these devices was observed in English during the inspection. Some subjects find difficulty in accessing sufficient use of dedicated ICT facilities, for example, in geography. Students have good access to modern technology in subjects, such as design technology, with a range of computer -controlled devices being used in project work. This was evidenced in applications for both design [decoration of jewellery box lids] and manufacture [production of routed finishes in timber]. A number of subjects make good use of digital photography, for example in physical education where digital images are used to assess and review individual performance. Access to and use of ICT in music is poor with little evidence that the existing curriculum enables students to learn and apply appropriate skills. Intention but not use of ICT across the curriculum has been mapped. No

formal structures are in place to ensure that the curriculum time allocated is used and this means that some students, who have not studied ICT as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11 and proceeding to post-16 study, are less confident in the use of some software than is appropriate.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students achieve well in all year groups.
- Good teaching and very good leadership have led to higher standards being attained.
- There are very good opportunities for students to do field work.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory because it has a negative impact on standards.

Commentary

140. In both the 2003 and 2004 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was above the national average. It has been increasing over recent years. Students obtained better grades in geography than they did in most other subjects. There are no significant differences in the results obtained by boys and girls or by students from different ethnic groups.
141. When students enter the school their geographical skills vary considerably and are often below the levels expected. This is particularly evident in the low standards of presentation of many students in Year 7. By the age of 14, standards are in line with those expected and students reach levels which are appropriate to their capabilities. They achieve well because of good teaching and because of the emphasis placed on enquiry skills, field work and the interpretation and presentation of data. By the end of Year 9, most understand that they can use statistical methods to show links between, for example, gross national product, literacy and access to clean water. Students have a good understanding of physical and human processes. They appreciate that, for example, knowledge of the processes causing volcanic eruptions enables early warning to be given. They also develop good understanding of the impact of natural disasters on humans.
142. By the age of 16, students attain above average standards. They have clear understanding of the differences between primary, secondary and tertiary industries. In their study of tourism, they show their ability to synthesise information by successfully interpreting graphs and tables and by giving reasons for the increase in the number of tourists travelling abroad. Most express themselves articulately when discussing the impact of tourism on a community. They are able to apply the skills they have learned to new topics.
143. Students in all years achieve well because teachers have high expectations of them and because lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are usually given good support by teachers and support staff. However, in a few lessons, these groups achieve less well because they are not given clear instructions and materials are not adapted to their needs. This applies mainly when students in this small number of classes have weak literacy skills. Students who have been identified as gifted or talented make good progress because they are given appropriate extension work and additional challenging tasks.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection some very good practice was observed in most lessons. Teachers plan their lessons well. In doing so, they provide interesting and challenging tasks which reflect their high expectations of the students. The lessons move at a brisk pace and effective classroom management ensures that students are kept on task. In a small number of lessons, the resources are not sufficiently adapted to the ability of lower-attaining students and this sometimes results in confusion about the task in

hand. The students are generally enthusiastic and their learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes to the subject. Occasional instances of inattentiveness are effectively dealt with by teachers.

145. The geography department is very well led and managed and this has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. This strong leadership is reflected in the commitment and high expectations observed in the teaching. The schemes of work provide for a broad and balanced curriculum and ensure that there are good opportunities for students to carry out field work, both in the immediate area of the school and further afield. Students make satisfactory use of information communications technology to support their learning in geography. The department has made very good provision for pupils who are gifted or talented. The accommodation available for geography is unsatisfactory. On the site used by students in Years 9-11 there is only one dedicated room, which means that resources have to be transported to other subject areas. Another consequence of this is that there is insufficient space for displays. In addition, the logistical difficulties caused by the split site result in lessons frequently being reduced by up to fifteen minutes.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE are above average, because of the challenging teaching.
- Assessment data is used sensitively to match learning closely to the students' needs.
- Teaching helps students to building their language skills effectively to support their learning.
- Students lose a significant amount of lesson time because of timetabling arrangements.
- Teachers compensate very well for the shortage of suitable dedicated rooms, and for a vacancy filled by temporary appointments.

Commentary

146. GCSE results for 2004 were above the national average. Standards are confirmed by evidence from the inspection. Results in 2003 had been well above average, with over four-fifths attaining grades A*-C and a third A* or A. Standards are high because of the informed and sensitive teaching that expects high standards. As a consequence, boys attain as well as girls. Standards at the end of Year 9 are also above those expected. Above average standards have been maintained over the past three years.
147. Students enjoy the challenge of learning and numbers opting for the subject in Year 10 have increased. They show respect for their teachers and for each other. Consequently they achieve well across Years 7 to 11. Students' behaviour is good. Students with special educational needs are well supported both by teachers and other staff in Years 7-9 and by teachers in Years 10-11. Students for whom English is an additional language also achieve well, because of the strong emphasis teachers' place on developing language skills to support learning. Gifted and talented students are challenged well in lessons and an increasing number of students enter the sixth form.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Much of the teaching is very good. Teachers establish a strong sense of purpose in their lessons and use assessments very effectively to match learning closely to the needs of the students. Teachers expect students to be thoughtful in their learning and this enhances students' understanding of complicated issues. Students are well supported and effectively challenged in their learning and they are expected to achieve highly. For example, effective use is made of interactive whiteboards (ICT) in Year 8 to help students use their language skills in examining bias in historical evidence on King John. In Year 9, students improve their presentational skills by sharing their research findings on the origins of World War 1 with the class.

149. Very effective support is given to temporary teachers to ensure that teaching standards are maintained. However, lessons often start late because staff are travelling between buildings and in some cases students take advantage of this. In Years 7 and 8, the lack of sufficient dedicated rooms places extra organisational burdens on the teaching staff.
150. Leadership and management are very good. Very effective teamwork, a shared vision of high achievement and very good administrative practices maintain high standards in difficult working conditions. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This is a very good department in which teachers and support staff co-operate effectively as a team.
- Standards are high because of very good teaching.
- Performance in food, graphics and textiles are considerably above national standards.
- There are some weaknesses in relation to the range of the curriculum offered in Years 7-9. The systems and control aspects of the subject are not effectively embedded within the schemes of work.
- Both the leadership and the management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

151. Standards are well above average throughout the school. By age 14 students are performing above national expectations and by age 16, in 2004, just under three-quarters attained grade A*-C in a design and technology subject compared with just 55 per cent nationally. Performance in food, graphics and textiles was considerably above the national norms whilst in resistant materials standards were in-line. This overall performance represents an improvement over the previous year and the trend of improvement since the last inspection is significantly better than the national trend. Almost everyone attained grade A*-G in design and technology in 2004.
152. Almost all students achieve highly and progress at a good rate in relation to their capability and their earlier attainment. Work is demanding and nearly all students engage effectively. Students in all year groups demonstrate very good knowledge, skills and understanding. Girls perform better than boys in Years 10 and 11, but the evidence suggests that both are fulfilling their potential. Students with special educational needs are effectively supported and achieve well. The department analyses results by ethnicity and uses this information effectively in planning work programmes.
153. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic, well organised and focused upon students' learning. There are excellent relationships in the classroom. Teaching methods are appropriate and time is used productively. Well-directed questioning by teachers ensures that learning is well matched to the needs of students. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and over four-fifths of lessons were judged to be good or better. Teachers give freely of their time to support students in achieving success in GCSE coursework.

Example of outstanding practice

A lesson where students' enthusiasm results in exceptionally good progress.

This is an excellent lesson in which both students and teachers converse using technical language – net, plan, elevation, first angle orthographic projection. Students ably demonstrate expertise in the use of drafting equipment. Students' work demonstrates flair and imagination yet shows attention to detail when considering the position of 'tabs'. Students clearly understand conventions and bring to bear enthusiasm through their application to task. The pace of the lesson is brisk due mainly to purposeful intervention by the teacher and the superb response by students. The lesson is to be developed by using a computer aided design package and the model generated using computer aided manufacturing equipment. Students are excited by this and work with enthusiasm in order that they are adequately prepared. Exceptionally good progress is made because of this motivation. Standards are above those attained nationally because of the care and pride exhibited by students, who are well motivated by a very talented teacher.

154. The effectiveness of leadership and the efficiency of management of the department are very good. There is a purposeful commitment to improvement and a clear focus on raising standards of education through performance management and continuing professional development. A well-integrated team has been forged which has improved leadership capacity and resulted in secure systems of support, which benefit students.
155. There are very good links with other schools developed through 'The Specialist Schools Programme'. This is part of the remit of an advanced skills teacher within the department. The curriculum offered appropriately covers the areas of food, textiles, graphics and resistant materials. The department also contributes to the information and communication technology programme, which is delivered through all subjects by offering modules of work in Years 8 and 9. Despite this contribution, control systems and electronics are areas of omission in the curriculum in Years 7-9 and are an area for development.
156. Since the last inspection, standards have risen considerably and this is, in large part, due to an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and improved task analysis by students when applying a design process. The setting of homework tasks is now more consistent and integrated into lesson planning. Health and safety was identified as an issue in the previous inspection and, whilst the school took action, a number of concerns have been reported in this inspection, which require action.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students, especially boys, are not performing as well in art as they do in their other GCSE subjects.
- Students do not benefit from visits to art galleries.
- Work is well displayed around the school.

Commentary

157. Teacher assessment of Year 9 students indicates that the proportion of students gaining a Level 5 or above is greater than the national average, with girls significantly outperforming boys. However, standards seen during inspection in Year 9 are more in line with the national average. Girls' work is better than that of boys but not as significant as teacher assessment reported last year suggests. By Year 9, students have a good knowledge and understanding of the basic elements of art and confident use of colour is a strong feature of much of the work seen.

158. At GCSE, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C has been consistently around the national average over the last ten years. In 2003, however, results fell sharply and were well below the national average. There was a recovery in 2004, but the figure remains below the national average. At this age, girls are outperforming boys significantly with the gap bigger than that experienced nationally.
159. Students do not perform as well in art as they do in their other GCSE subjects. The proportion of boys opting for the subject is increasing with some current GCSE classes having very few girls. This is having an adverse effect on standards. The standard of the current work in Year 10 varies from group to group but is generally below the national average. Insufficient use is made of sketchbooks to develop ideas, practise skill and experiment. Year 11 work shows a significant improvement and standards are more clearly aligned with the national average. This indicates that the achievement of all students currently on GCSE courses is good and standards are continuing to recover. Much of the work is very individualistic and contains good levels of personal expression. Effective use of colour and paint are also clearly evident in much of the finished work. However, standards are adversely affected by a lack of preparatory work and the development of initial ideas. In Year 10, below average standards of drawing is also lowering attainment. In part, this is due to previous staffing difficulties.
160. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most lessons were judged to be good with no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and teach with authority. Lesson objectives are made clear and in most lessons, skills to be acquired are demonstrated to the whole class. Individual support is given throughout lessons and learning support assistants are deployed effectively. Consequently the achievement of students of all abilities is good. In lessons judged to be less than good, there was insufficient emphasis on the development of ideas and preparatory work before moving on to finished artwork. Some lessons are not reviewed thoroughly enough.
161. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The departmental handbook contains a comprehensive range of policy documents. Schemes of work closely linked to the National Curriculum, ensure a broad and balanced curriculum. Individual teachers enjoy considerable autonomy to develop their own lesson ideas to reflect personal interests and strengths. Teachers benefit from regular in-service training and have a good range of artistic skill. Information on the performance of individual students is used to help target specific support. However, data on overall GCSE performance is not used to compare the performance of the department with others. Very few girls are opting to study the subject at GCSE.
162. Work is well displayed around the school. Sketchbooks used in Years 7-9 are too small and contain poor quality paper. This adversely affects the quality of work, especially drawing with pencil. The split-site does not help communication between staff and liaison between the head of department and senior management is too infrequent. The newly qualified teacher feels she is receiving good support from colleagues.
163. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching, accommodation and resources has improved. However, the performance of boys is still less good than it should be and recent GCSE results have been less consistent than previously. Visits to art galleries are no longer organised.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures all students make very good progress.
- Students have very good attitudes and behave very well in drama.
- Drama makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The quality of learning is impeded by unsatisfactory accommodation.

Commentary

164. In 2004, GCSE examination results were well above average, with nearly a quarter of the entry attaining grades A* and A, and four-fifths attaining grades A* to C.
165. Standards in Year 9 are above average and represent good achievement since students enter the school with little prior experience of drama. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and represent very good achievement. Throughout Years 7 to 11 there are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender, ethnicity or special educational needs. Those identified as talented in drama achieve very well.
166. Throughout Years 7 to 11, students develop confident skills in physical drama. In a Year 9 lesson, students demonstrated very good group negotiation skills devising pieces to explore mechanical objects. Techniques of mime, improvisation and freeze frame were skilfully used. In a Year 10 lesson, students sensitively explored themes of loss and the family, and expressed their findings effectively in gesture, movement and tableau. In Year 11, students' preparations for final theatre pieces revealed thoughtful directorial skills. Students evaluate each other's performance with growing insight and maturity. The quality of students' vocal projection is often less secure than their other acting skills. GCSE written work is well prepared and reflects secure understanding of the context, narrative and language of the texts studied. In all years, students are highly committed to drama and work with very good attitudes.
167. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students progress very well because teachers possess an excellent command of their subject. This enables them to provide a stimulating and imaginative curriculum that engages and inspires students' to learn. Class management is excellent. Students benefit from clear ground rules for purposeful drama lessons. They aim high because of the challenges made of them. Teaching methods ensure students increasingly take ownership for their own learning. Lessons are very well planned to provide progressive activities that accelerate learning. In Years 9 to 11, lessons begin with focused physical exercises, which move to improvisation on given themes. These in turn are explored using texts - poetry, dialogue or drama - from which students extract meaning and express it through group performance. Where the themes include family loss, for example, students' development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is significantly enhanced. Teaching is highly inclusive. Lessons contribute well to students' oracy. Students have a secure understanding of how well they are achieving because of rigorous and accurate assessment.
168. Leadership and management of drama are very good. Both teachers provide excellent role models to students in their conduct and professionalism. There is a clear vision for the subject based on achieving the highest personal standards. Development planning builds effectively on incisive evaluation. Students' learning is marred currently by unsatisfactory accommodation, although there are new drama studios in the new arts block, which will be opened after the inspection. External noise inhibits concentration in both halls and some rooms are too small for physical drama. The requirement for teachers to move between sites often curtails the amount of teaching time students receive. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment through regular theatre visits are very good. The subject has made very good improvement since the previous report, especially in the quality of teaching.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of a permanent specialist teacher has resulted in students' underachievement.
- Good teaching by the current temporary teacher is motivating students to learn.
- Students behave very well in music lessons and are eager to participate.
- The use of ICT in music is unsatisfactory.
- Poor leadership has restricted students' entitlement to music.

Commentary

169. In 2004, GCSE examination results were well below average for the small cohort of students entered.
170. Standards of work in Year 9 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement, since students enter the school with some musical experience. Standards of work in Year 11 are below average and also represent unsatisfactory achievement. There are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender, special educational need or ethnicity. No evidence was provided to indicate the progress of talented students.
171. Throughout Years 7 to 9 students develop modest performing skills. Students can perform simple melodies on keyboards and select appropriate sounds for their improvisations. Composition work lacks imagination and few students fully understand the musical structures they are attempting to use. Students' appraisal skills, knowledge of a range of music, composers and styles are weak. By Year 11, those students who take instrumental lessons perform with confidence, especially on voice and guitar. However, composition work, listening skills and general musical knowledge and understanding remain a weakness. In all years, students show very good attitudes in lessons, co-operate effectively in group work and behave very well.
172. The quality of teaching and learning is currently good. The temporary teacher demonstrates very good class discipline and sets clear ground rules for learning. This enables students to settle to serious work after a long period of staff instability. Students are encouraged to work hard because teaching is highly enthusiastic, good humoured and well planned. The teacher possesses good subject knowledge ensuring clear and concise explanations of set tasks, supported by skilled musical demonstrations. This enables students to be productive and understand how to develop their practical skills. Discussion of GCSE assessment criteria is cogent and provides students with a secure knowledge of how to improve their projected grades. Expectations are high and the teacher endeavours to challenge students to do their best. However, over the past few years, students have underachieved because of weaknesses in teaching from a succession of temporary teachers. Students' performance and composition skills are underdeveloped because teaching has been mainly limited to uninspiring written work. Students have lacked formal targets to show them how to improve. Assessment has not been accurate.
173. Leadership and management are poor. There is no vision for the subject because there has been no permanent subject leader. The array of temporary staff has sent a negative signal to students about the relevance of the subject in the school. There have been no developments made in the curriculum and no incisive evaluation of the department's needs. The curriculum misses opportunities to develop students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through music. Students are not provided with a coherent assessment of their progress. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Students have no access to computers in either room in order to develop their compositions and one classroom is too small for GCSE performance work. However, a new arts block has been built and will open after half-term. This includes some new accommodation for music. Students lack a tradition of regular, quality, extra-curricular music activities to enrich their experience of music. Improvement since the previous report has been unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor curriculum provision by the school results in unsatisfactory progress being made by many students between Years 9 and 11.
- Students on examination courses achieve well.
- Improvement since the last inspection in some key curriculum and accommodation issues has been unsatisfactory.

- Achievement between Years 7 and 9 is good.
- There is inconsistent use of planning to identify short-term targets for individual learning,

Commentary

174. GCSE examination results have continued to improve every year since their introduction. In 2004, they were well above the national average, representing good achievement of students. The present Year 11 GCSE students are maintaining these good levels of achievement and are improving on their weaknesses in theoretical understanding by applying key concepts in practical demonstrations. Standards at Year 9 are above those expected nationally. Achievement is good because the majority of students attain expected levels or beyond. They do this by improving their games' skills and techniques, and their performance and understanding between Years 7 and 9. They combine and apply these, showing a good understanding of tactics and strategies. Achievement is further enhanced because of their good planning, observational and evaluation skills. These enable students to assess and modify their performances and to confidently give feedback to others to help them assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Restricted curriculum time for some Year 9 students is preventing them from attaining higher National Curriculum levels.
175. There is a poor curriculum offer for the majority of students in Years 10 and 11. The last inspection indicated a lack of time and breadth of studies for these students and this has been further reduced. Students have one hour of physical education every fortnight. This is further reduced for many students who have to walk to a different school site for their provision, resulting in a maximum of 30 minutes provision every two weeks. As a result, the department is unable to maintain earlier achievements and many students who do not choose GCSE courses do not improve appropriately on previous learning and performances. Time restrictions also prevent further expansion of provision into other certificated or vocational courses at this age range. Although many better performers improve through attendance at extra-curricular clubs and participation in competitions, others are denied opportunities because of this poor provision.
176. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers consistently set tasks that make clear what is to be learnt. These tasks are logically sequenced to the final required outcomes and always create a lively pace for learning. For example, in small-sided games, teachers illustrate the important learning points of the lesson well and improve techniques and match them to game contexts and understanding. Teaching and learning are improved by the good use of digital cameras and video to demonstrate relevant techniques and to analyse personal performances. In gymnastics, students are able to view the sequences they perform and use key words to evaluate the quality of performances. Teachers are recording the outcomes of learning well and students are aware of their next stage targets for learning. This is particularly the case for those students identified as gifted and talented. There is good continuity from lesson to lesson in the same week. However, further consideration of the assessed National Curriculum levels of students would allow teachers to identify more clearly the short-term targets and challenges relative to individual ability in each lesson.
177. Good leadership and clear departmental management have enabled the department to respond well to national initiatives. Present action plans are clearly linked to improving standards and achievement. Provision has been improved with the use of more relevant schemes of work for the subject and by the use of some very good teaching strategies for students in Years 7 to 9 and for examination students. The use of practical situations to make theoretical aspects more understandable and the use of literacy strategies to learn key words are notable aspects of this provision. There is a very good ethos for learning highlighted in lessons, where the majority of students seek to improve their work, and by the overall high participation rates. Re-occurring issues mean that there has only been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory, and issues raised at the last inspection have not been resolved. Indoor space is still in need of refurbishment and at times is too small to cater for the demands of the curriculum and student numbers. Timetable restrictions mean that from Year 9 onwards many students are unable to

access local facilities to make-up for the unsatisfactory outdoor provision onsite. As a result, those students who have single lessons do not have equal opportunities for provision compared to those who have double lessons and access superior facilities off-site.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

178. There are no strictly vocational or business studies courses currently taught in school to Years 10 or 11. A small number of students attend vocational courses at a local college as an alternative to their options. These courses are offered to some less motivated students and some with special educational needs. However, child development is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. Results at GCSE in 2004 were well above average. One lesson was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was excellent.

Example of outstanding practice

The skilful use of debate to develop understanding of a controversial issue.

The lesson focused on smacking and how there are alternative and more effective ways of instilling discipline in children. The lesson started with a lively debate on smacking when the teacher made some provocative statements and skilfully turned the statements into questions that aroused some strong feelings amongst students. Students spoke up and said what they believed and were able to share some ancestral African traditions that built a case for smacking, whilst others were vehemently against it. The quality of debate was very good and explored many avenues on both sides of the argument. Students were given some excellent guidance on the new legislation and studied a newspaper article on a case of a father jailed for smacking his child and examined how the law had worked in this case. It helped to make the learning real and much more meaningful. The teaching was inspirational and students were fully absorbed throughout and were able to do some careful thinking and high quality writing about the importance of discipline and how to achieve it through methods that avoid violence and damage to children's self esteem.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught through personal development lessons. During the inspection there was no opportunity of observing these lessons as they took place on Friday, after the inspection was finished. Judgements have been made from interviewing the key staff, analysing the documentation, discussions with students and by scrutiny of work in every year.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Topics of citizenship are provided through a planned programme in personal and social development lessons.
- Citizenship themes can be identified in the overall schemes of work provided for students and in their work but outcomes are dependent on which teacher teaches them.
- Students' work is not assessed and reported on as required.

Commentary

179. No judgements have been made on overall standards and achievement based on the limited evidence in pupils' portfolios because no lessons were taught during the inspection period. Similarly, no judgements could be made on teaching and learning because of the limited evidence available.

180. There is planned provision across some subjects of the curriculum, but the major inclusion of citizenship is within the personal and social development programme, where the three required elements of citizenship are in place. This has one period per week delivered by the form teacher, and is a co-ordinated programme including work-related learning and personal development.
181. The delivery of the programme is dependent on the interest and experience of the form teacher. Students indicate that the quality of delivery is inconsistent. Assessment has started to take place, but some teachers do not mark work consistently enough to give quality feedback to their students. Students' work is now being collected and assessed against statutory requirements, although the reporting to parents of attainment in citizenship, as required, was not done last year. The assessment procedures are now in place and this should enable proper reporting arrangements next time.
182. Opportunities for participation in citizenship activities are limited. There is a school council that gives pupils in all years the opportunity to vote, although this has only recently been reinstated. All students take part in charity work.
183. Leadership and management does not currently ensure that all the elements of the programme of social and personal development, work-related learning and citizenship form a balanced and coherent programme both in the taught time and across the subjects of the curriculum as required. The co-ordinator has provided schemes of work but these do not sufficiently balance the needs of all the different parts of the provision. For example, there is a considerable input into social and personal development through the religious education lessons, and issues regarding self are considered in English, but these have been insufficiently mapped to ensure coherence for the students.
184. The overall provision is barely satisfactory because all the various parts of the personal and social development programme are not co-ordinated effectively enough.

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 2004 by Year 13 students. AS-level results for Year 13 students are only shown if the student did not continue the subject to A-level and mostly refer to examination taken when they were in Year 12.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	66.7	78.3	0.0	21.6	13.3	28.5
Biology	1	0.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	0.0	19.8
English literature	4	50.0	86.2	0.0	17.4	17.5	29.7
Design and technology	3	100.0	72.6	0.0	13.9	23.3	24.3
Geography	4	75.0	75.5	25.0	20.4	25.0	27.0
History	1	100	82.2	0.0	20.8	20.0	29.2
Mathematics	6	0.0	59.9	0.0	14.1	0.0	20.5
Other social studies	8	62.5	67.8	12.5	15.1	21.3	23.2
Religious studies	3	100.0	82.2	66.7	26.1	46.7	31.2
Sociology	6	83.3	72.1	16.7	19.6	25.0	25.9

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	1	100.0	98.3	100.0	50.2	100.0	87.1
Biology	8	100.0	96.6	12.5	40.0	67.5	79.3
Business studies	9	100.0	98.9	22.2	39.4	71.1	81.8
Chemistry	8	100.0	97.7	25.0	50.0	72.5	85.7
Media Studies	5	100.0	99.2	0.0	40.4	68.0	83.5
Drama	2	100.0	99.6	50.0	42.8	90.0	85.1
English literature	15	100.0	99.4	20.0	44.9	77.3	85.5
Design and technology	10	100.0	97.8	40.0	35.0	80.0	77.9
Geography	4	100.0	98.8	25.0	46.4	65.0	85.2
History	6	100.0	99.0	33.3	45.6	93.3	85.1
Mathematics	8	62.5	96.8	37.5	56.6	55.0	89.5
Other languages	1	100.0	97.3	0.0	66.7	60.0	95.6
Psychology	7	100.0	97.4	42.9	42.5	80.0	81.6
Physics	3	100.0	96.7	33.3	45.3	66.7	82.6
Religious studies	11	100.0	99.1	63.6	49.5	89.1	87.4
Sociology	8	100.0	98.5	50.0	45.3	90.0	84.6
Information technology VQ	18	100.0	88.3	36.1	26.9	85.6	67.8

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

185. Courses in English literature at AS and A-level were fully inspected and those in French were sampled. German in Year 13 and a GCSE English language group in Year 12 were not observed. Results at AS-level from two students in 2004 were sound. No student took **French** at AS or A-level in 2004. In 2003, standards at A-level were below average. Standards seen during the inspection in an AS-level group are good and students demonstrate good progress since GCSE, because of very good, lively teaching, using French as a real means of communication. The school encourages students to take examinations in community languages. For example, one student gained a grade A in A-level Dutch in 2003 and one at AS-level in 2004.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and teachers are knowledgeable. The range of activities offered effectively helps students to build their knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of leadership and management is good.
- Students have a sound grasp of their texts and most can make sustained and informed responses.
- Work is not consistently modified to meet the needs of all students.

Commentary

186. At A-level English literature, attainment has continued to improve since the last inspection. In the last two years, all students have passed. However, the proportion of higher grades fell from close to average in 2003, to less than half the average in 2004, with no students attaining grade A in either year. Whilst these results are below the national average, achievement is improving and is good given students' levels of prior attainment. Results at AS-level are similar to those at A-level. In 2004, all but one student entered at A-level was female. In 2003, equal numbers were entered, but whilst female students attained above average standards, those of male students were well below average. At AS-level in 2004, female students attained better results than male students.

187. The observation of work during inspection shows that the standards of written work across both years are above average. Most students are able to use the vocabulary, structures and grammar of Standard English accurately in formal and informal situations. They are becoming familiar with a wider range of literature, including World War 1 drama and poetry and the work of William Blake, as well as modern literature. They are producing good independent research, for instance in an exploration of character in '*Enduring Love*'. This is then presented to the group and then collated into an effective support book for the class. Throughout, students are encouraged to develop and express a personal response. By Year 13, as evidenced in their coursework, they have developed an independent, critical and personal voice in their writing. Students are actively encouraged to draft and re-draft their work.

188. In the sixth form, all teaching is good or better. Teachers' specialist knowledge is impressive and they support students' independent learning and interest in contextual background by a good range of resources, including interactive whiteboards. However, there are no computers in the classrooms and it was not possible to evaluate the library resources since these are all stored away ready for the new library. There is little apparent differentiation to match the needs of individual students in most activities. A strong feature of the lessons, though, is the way that students show an interest in the activities, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Learning is also enriched by visits and trips, some of them residential, to World War 1 sites in France and Belgium and theatre visits to London and Stratford.

189. Leadership and management of English are good. They impact directly on the richness of students' experiences and the consequent standards they reach. There is a sense of an active reading and writing community in which the conditions for effective literary study have been established in a mutually supportive environment.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

190. As with the main school, there are pockets of good practice, with Year 12 students giving effective support to younger students and good examples of confident speaking and listening in English. In other subjects, such as psychology, students are good orally but their written skills are not so well developed. The policy for language and literacy is in place but there is no member of staff in post to co-ordinate literacy across the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

The AS and A-level mathematics courses were inspected fully. They involve taking modules in pure mathematics and one each in statistics and mechanics. There is also a timetabled one-year course for Year 12 students retaking GCSE mathematics. About half eventually gain a grade C or above - broadly similar to the national picture. Students appreciate the support and quality of teaching they receive on this course.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge and skills that help students learn effectively.
- Recent examination results have been well below average.
- The quality of help and support that is freely given to students outside normal lessons is very good.
- There is a positive learning atmosphere in classes, which encourages students to contribute.
- Limited use is made of available techniques to measure students' achievement.
- Negligible use is made of the library to develop students' independent study skills.

Commentary

191. The results for the AS-level examination in 2004 were close to the national average, A-level results were well below this. The 2003, AS-level and A-level results were both well below expectations. This is partially the result of the fairly open and inclusive entry policy to post-16 courses, combined with some students taking module examinations before they felt ready. Conversations with students and other anecdotal evidence also suggests that they may have devoted disproportionately more time to their other subjects. It is difficult to compare trends in differences in attainment between male and female students or between different ethnic groups because of the relatively small numbers involved.
192. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows an improving situation. Standards observed are typical of those found nationally, an advance on the examination results. Based on students' attainment at GCSE and AS-level this represents satisfactory achievement. It has been brought about by some staff changes and a more focused attitude of some male students. In addition, there has been a substantial effort by teachers to push up standards. This has involved a great deal of work outside lesson times, and students have stated their appreciation of this. They are making satisfactory progress with the modules they are studying currently.
193. Most students find the pure mathematics modules easier than the other modules, but sometimes the algebra presents a challenge. They enjoy and experience success with calculus. Students feel that they are prepared for the "change in gear" from GCSE to post-16

mathematics. Those who studied additional mathematics in Year 11 felt themselves to be particularly well prepared. Students are pleased with their provision, as indicated by the relatively low dropout rates at both Year 12 and Year 13.

194. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A significant strength of the teaching is the teachers' very good subject knowledge and creation of a mature, hardworking, learning culture in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of their students and lessons have a high level of challenge. Students are often asked to explain and justify their methods. This, together with very good student attitudes, leads to good quality learning. Students are assessed on a regular basis and are fully informed as to what they need to do to improve. There are currently insufficient opportunities for students to use the library to develop their study skills and broaden their mathematical experiences.
195. Leadership of the subject in the sixth form is good. It is knowledgeable, focused on raising achievement and led by example. Improvements in attainment are already becoming apparent. There is a build up in the numbers of students taking mathematics post-16.
196. Management is satisfactory. The day-to-day running of post-16 mathematics is smooth. Results are analysed, but not as much as they might be in terms of students' progress from GCSE. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The numbers taking mathematics shows an upward trend. It is one of the more popular subjects in the sixth form.

Mathematics across the curriculum

197. Students' mathematical competence is satisfactory and supports their progress in their chosen courses. Opportunities to practise mathematical skills are indicated in the specifications of most subjects.

SCIENCE

198. AS and A-level courses were fully inspected in biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. In **chemistry**, in the 2004 A-level examination, standards attained were below the national average, but all the students passed. One very good Year 13 lesson was seen, where the students completed an experiment. Although there was little teaching, the students' purposeful and productive approach, together with their good grasp of the theory behind the experiment that they were doing, reflected some very sound teaching.
199. In **physics**, the standards attained in the 2004 A-level examination were below the national average, but all the students passed. One satisfactory Year 12 lesson was seen, on the topic of 'potential dividers'. This lesson was from a very well informed teacher with plenty of challenge; but it tended to be a lecture, rather than a voyage of discovery.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good subject knowledge of the teachers is effectively used to produce an interesting and challenging course.
- Some poor study skills and failure to check understanding in Year 12 are not allowing students to achieve their potential.
- The warm relationships and readiness of teachers to help students individually with problems improves the performance of those who ask.
- The lack of a sixth form laboratory and the present poor library facilities limit the development of the subject.

Commentary

200. Standards attained in the AS-level examination in 2004 were below the national average and the students did not achieve as well as might have been expected from their GCSE grades. However, there were only four students and so national comparisons are unreliable. The standards of the current Year 12, which is much larger, look similar to those of 2004.
201. Standards attained at A-level, in 2004, were below the national average, but all the students passed. The students' performance was satisfactory relative to their GCSE grades. The standards of the present Year 13, only two students, are higher and show sound progress from their AS-level performance. Numbers opting for biology in the sixth form fluctuate, but the general trend is upwards. Almost all the students who set out on the AS and A-level courses complete them.
202. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The good subject knowledge of the teachers is effectively used to produce an interesting and challenging course. Other strong features of the teaching include clear objectives and the use of probing questions to drive topics forward. In the best lessons these are complimented by effective lesson planning, good relationships and regular checks on understanding. The students respond well, showing a keen interest and asking their own questions, they work hard and make useful notes. Where lessons are less successful, they are compounded by some garbled explanations with poorly used demonstrations and a failure to check understanding. In these lessons, students exhibit a dull and unquestioning response to the poorly explained work; they expect to be told rather than to discover. They do not listen well; some chat and do not bother with notes or thinking. Nonetheless, learning is satisfactory overall, especially for those who ask, because relationships are good and teachers are always willing to offer individual help.
203. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. However, it is weakened by being divided between the head of science and the head of biology. The curriculum is good and enhanced by a field course in Epping Forest and some visits. Assessment is well used and students know the level that they are working at and what to do to improve. There is no sixth form laboratory or, at present, any suitable library facilities, giving access to sixth form books, periodicals and workspaces: consequently students rely on the Internet, which they use very well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent results have been well above average and represent very good achievement for the students taking the course.
- The teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of the subject and communicate this well.
- Students are enthusiastic and apply themselves to work well.
- The flexibility afforded to students in their response to tasks set in Year 12 equips them well in terms of their capacity to select appropriate software, analyse information and communicate effectively but develops different skill sets and knowledge bases among students.

Commentary

204. Students study the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) in information technology. Recent results at advanced level have been well above average. In 2004, all students passed and over a third attained the highest grades A or B. At AS-level, in Year 12, results were very high. Again all passed with two-thirds attaining grade B. The work of students seen in lessons and through conversations confirms that standards are well above national expectations and achievement is very good. All students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When working with computers in lessons, students are good at

helping each other and discussions are always relevant to the task. The good working atmosphere contributes significantly to good learning. No student reported any difficulty in gaining access to the resources they need, though many had not studied ICT in Year 11. Students with experience of the examined course pre-16 demonstrated greater confidence when discussing their work.

205. Teaching is good because teachers make good use of questioning to check on students' understanding. When students are working individually, teachers make good use of their time, discussing work with them by asking them challenging questions or demonstrating further possibilities. In a Year 12 class, students were required to select the most appropriate software tool to communicate information. Some deferred to a 'comfort zone' and used 'PowerPoint', others chose a more challenging activity involving the use of a web publishing package which required knowledge of 'html' programming. The learning experiences of both groups of students were well managed and assessment and recording techniques used by the teacher were good. However the demands on students, in terms of knowledge and skills, differed and it was not obvious how this difference would be accommodated in the context of a common syllabus.
206. Overall, the course is well structured, appropriately resourced and very good organisation indicates effective leadership and management of provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

207. The range of differing pre-16 ICT experiences among students is highlighted in the work of sixth form students and evidenced those among them who confidently apply their knowledge and skills across their studies. Others remain reluctant users, engaging only basic word processing skills to present ideas. Many students have access to ICT facilities at home and clearly enjoy applying themselves to research tasks using Internet searches but they do not naturally use the information gained in the most appropriate way. No evidence was found of the use of, for example, spreadsheets or databases among those students who did not study the advanced vocational certificate in education in information technology.

HUMANITIES

208. AS and A-level courses in history and psychology were fully inspected and courses in geography, government and politics and sociology were sampled.
209. In the 2003 and 2004 A-level **geography** examinations the proportion of students who obtained grades A or B was below average. However, all those who entered achieved a pass grade. A detailed scheme of work is in place, which ensures coverage of the syllabus, including field studies. Students achieve well and attain standards appropriate to their abilities. In the lesson sampled, teaching was good and the students made good progress in their study of population change.
210. The A-level course in **government and politics** involves a very small number of students in Year 13. Standards are high and students are well able to work independently. Students examine the role of the United Nations in East Timor with interest. They explore the issue of UK sovereignty in relation to membership of the European Union. Students use the internet effectively to research their studies. A teaching vacancy, temporarily filled, places an extra burden on the manager of the course who ensures that the teachers are adequately supported to maintain the expected standards.
211. Teaching groups in **sociology** are very small in A and AS-level and predominantly female. Standards seen are above average and this reflects examination results. In 2004, A-level results were well above average. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good. Year 13 students are increasing their capability in applying a wide range of theory to practical situations, for example in work observed on deviant adolescent behaviour. Achievement based on prior attainment is good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high quality of the teaching is responsible for the high standards attained by students.
- Very good language development helps students to increase their understanding of complicated issues and explain them in writing.
- Teachers use assessment very well to match learning closely to the needs of all students.
- Time is lost in lessons as students commute between buildings.

Commentary

212. Standards at A-level in Year 13 are above those expected, based on evidence from the inspection. Results in 2004 were well above average, but with a small cohort. Those in 2003 were very high with all but one attaining grade A or B. Results from AS-level indicate that standards are above average. These standards have been maintained over the past three years, but in the current year the numbers on the course have increased significantly. The high standards reached by students are due to the very highly effective teaching. They represent very good achievement.
213. Students are interested and motivated in their learning and want to achieve well. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students recognise the very effective support and encouragement they receive. There is a significant amount of trust between them and their teachers.
214. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is sensitive and challenging and students respond well to this. Teachers use the assessment criteria well so that students understand what they have achieved and how they can improve on their work. Very good language development helps students to increase their understanding of complicated issues and explain them in writing. For example, students in Year 13 explore the positions of various politicians and officials in President Kennedy's administration to analyse the reasons for his policy on Vietnam in the 1960s. Once the varied positions are clear, students are helped to use this information to produce structured written answers to questions.
215. Leadership and management of the provision are very good. The very effective teamwork between teachers ensures consistency of learning. However, students are often late for lessons because of the need to travel between buildings. This places extra burdens upon teachers who compensate for this very well.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The trend for Year 13 examination results has been above the national average in recent years.
- The department deals very effectively with a wide range of abilities and has a very high pass rate in both AS and A-level examinations.
- Excellent relationships contribute to a very positive learning ethos within the department.
- There is an unsatisfactory accommodation base, which hinders access to primary and secondary research materials.

Commentary

216. There is a wide range of ability levels on entry to Year 12, including students who have English as an additional language, but achievement is good across all groups. Recent trends in results of the AS-level examinations have shown an even distribution of grades, with the number of students attaining the higher levels in line with results nationally. There are presently large numbers of students following the psychology AS-level course in Year 12. They are very motivated learners and many are achieving well and working at levels beyond those expected at this stage of the course. The results of the 2004 A-level examinations similarly show an even distribution of grades, with the number of students attaining the higher levels in line with the national average. In 2003, the overall standards attained were well above the national average. Present Year 13 students are making good progress compared to their 2003 AS-level examinations. They achieve well because they are able to confidently evaluate the impact of various theories and empirical evidence on cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic and behavioural aspects of psychology.
217. Teaching is very good, often excellent and is presently undertaken by one teacher. Her planning and accompanying resources cleverly annotate the key issues of all the areas of study and link well with examination question expectations. These aspects are significantly helping students to prioritise evidence and conclusions that aid their writing and, especially, their discussions. In lessons, students effectively summarise theoretical models and apply them to new and empirical evidence. In a particular Year 13 lesson, students made very good progress in using previously acquired knowledge and understanding of the major theoretical approaches to develop their synoptic skills, using newly presented stimuli. They worked very well in groups to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of each model. Teaching is consistently challenging and varied in presentation. Questions are excellently linked to recent learning and the stated aims for the lesson. They are either directed to individuals or used to challenge small groups of students to complete mini research topics and to present their findings. As a result, the majority of students are increasing in confidence to make contributions in lessons. In both years, students use a wide range of texts and source materials to justify the points they are making. In one lesson, a student who has English as an additional language had already studied the piece of research used in the lesson and was able to make an excellent input to the discussion on the findings of the research. The relationships between the teacher and her students are excellent. She is acutely aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses and uses this information very well to influence the next stages of their learning. They respond to these challenges very well and their motivation can be seen in the high retention rates for students continuing into Year 13 from their Year 12 studies and their positive attitudes towards the subject.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent lesson, in which students study a psychological experiment in order to explain the reasons why humans conform to pressure.

A large AS-level group make excellent progress in a lesson that sets out the classical Zimbardo Stanford prison experiment to show why people behave differently to that expected by themselves and by society. By using an excellent range of support resources and excellent questioning and probing techniques the teacher engages the students in a most meaningful debate. As a result, students make excellent progress in understanding the two psychological concepts of 'dispositional' and 'situational' behaviour. By debating these issues, students, who are totally engrossed in the study, acquire very good insights into the psychological concept of 'de-individualising' humans. Subsequently, they have a much better understanding of why social processes are influential and make humans susceptible to doing things that are often viewed as being outrageous. Further debate was well engineered by using a newspaper article on the treatment of Iraqi prisoners that suggested in psychological terms that anybody can be persuaded to be a torturer. This sparked very useful debate and it was clear that not only did the students understand the lesson objectives, they also had a very good understanding of the ethical issues that are an important part of psychological studies and evaluations. They were very clear, for example, of some of the validity issues in the Zimbardo Stanford prison experiment.

218. This relatively new course is well managed by one teacher who is also the deputy head. In her senior manager's role, she is aware of future needs because an appropriate evaluation of provision has happened and a relevant agenda for auditing and future planning is in place.

219. The school is aware that the present Year 12 group is unduly large, part of a fast growing student population. This sometimes restricts the efficiency of learning, because one teacher has to deal with a wide range of needs and cannot always provide all the intervention necessary. Timetabling issues further increase this problem. Every week many students, and sometimes the teacher, are up to fifteen minutes late for scheduled starts to lessons because they have to transfer from one school site to another. In total, this is reducing the time allocation for psychology significantly. For a small number of students this problem is further heightened because their psychology periods clash with their other subject choices and they have to alternate between the two. It is difficult to compensate for this with personal study time because of accommodation and resource issues. There is a lack of an appropriate teaching base, with all lessons delivered in the library, which restricts the necessary access to research and media materials and the use of ICT to enhance teaching delivery.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

220. Design and technology was sampled, with one lesson seen in product design (textiles) and one in product design (resistant materials). Results at A-level in 2004 were above average, but those at AS-level, a smaller group, were below average. In lessons observed, the attitudes of all the students were good, and folders included sound designs that were starting to become a practical reality. Their achievement was good because relationships were very good and students were very well supported in their learning. Teachers use suitably challenging interventions to ensure the development of work of quality.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

221. AS and A-level courses in drama and media studies were fully inspected and courses in art and design were sampled. The quality of teaching in **art and design** is good. Standards are in line with the national average. There is a choice of courses offered. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject is becoming more popular again. A large group in 2003 attained average results at A-level, but only one candidate was entered last year. They attained well.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve high standards because they are very well taught.
- Students demonstrate high levels of commitment and are keen to do well.
- The quality of learning is impeded by unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Excellent use is made of theatre visits to enhance students' understanding of drama.

Commentary

222. In 2004 examinations, the very small cohort of students achieved above average results at both AS and A-level.
223. In the current Years 12 and 13 there has been a small increase in student numbers. Standards in both years are well above average and represent very good achievement. There are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender or ethnicity. The one student designated talented in drama is achieving very well. There are no students with special educational needs in the current cohort. Students demonstrate confident acting skills in the range of video evidence provided during the inspection. Their formal pieces build on careful research, critical self-evaluation and serious reflection. In a Year 13 session, on the role of the director, students could discuss with assurance the sophisticated relationship between the actor and the spectator. In a Year 12 session rehearsing a given text, students' demonstrated fluent ensemble work. Vocal projection was less secure than use of gesture, posture and movement. Students' critical evaluation of drama is insightful and reflects good

research and knowledge of stagecraft and theory. All students work with high levels of commitment and have high aspirations.

224. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge and their expectations of students are very high. Students achieve very well because they receive a significant amount of individual support given the small group sizes. Teaching methods are imaginative and challenging and make students take ownership of their own learning. In a Year 13 lesson observed, the teacher used several radical techniques to enable students to comprehend the impact of physical deprivation on character. This informed their view of how the actor and audience inter-relate. It also helped them understand the issues they had to consider when they took on a directorial function in their next stage piece. Exercises in movement, posture and gesture inform each lesson and aid students' skills and acting confidence. Assessment is rigorous, including regular self-evaluation, and indicates clearly what students need to do to improve further. Marked work misses opportunities to correct students' errors in literacy.
225. The leadership and management of drama are very good. Both teachers provide outstanding role models to students. There is a clear vision for drama based on aiming high through performance and understanding of the self. An excellent range of visits to major London productions is built into the course. All set texts are provided with guided visits and detailed follow up work to develop students' critical understanding. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for A-level work. There was no dedicated drama studio at the time of the inspection, although studios have been built in new accommodation, which will open later in the term. Too much extraneous noise currently inhibits concentrated work in the two school halls used for drama. There has been very good improvement since the previous report, particularly in the quality of specialist teaching.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of practical work involving the production of film is good.
- Some aspects of the syllabus are not taught in sufficient depth.
- The department is making a significant contribution to the development of students' communication skills and promotes effective independent learning.
- There are no outside links with the media industry.

Commentary

226. Results at both AS and A-level have been consistently below the national average although low entry numbers makes national comparisons difficult. Students very rarely achieve either of the top two grades, but no students have ever failed to achieve a pass grade at A-level.
227. Standards of work vary according to which aspect of the syllabus is being covered. There are some good examples of practical video work. This clearly shows above average levels of technical expertise and knowledge of the codes and conventions of film genre. However, both written work and class discussion demonstrate that students' knowledge of media theory and language is below the national average. Results from students' research and essays are often too descriptive. Work lacks sufficient use of media terminology and the application of media theory and language to enable more in depth analysis of the media. Standards of media debate of current issues are good.
228. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Individual student research and regular classroom discussion is employed in most lessons and produces effective learning. The teacher in charge has good facilitation skills and demonstrates a good knowledge of media products and current issues. There is a good atmosphere in lessons and interaction between

students and the teacher is lively and good-humoured. However, more discussion between students would make learning more effective.

229. Lessons are not clearly linked to learning objectives and therefore lack focus. Students are not sufficiently aware of the syllabus and assessment criteria. Some theoretical aspects of the course and areas of media language are not taught with enough rigour. As a result, students' ability to analyse and understand certain aspects of the media is limited. However, good levels of research into aspects of the media are carried out with a sophisticated use of the internet. Information and communication technology is also well used to support classroom presentations.
230. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The teacher in charge is enthusiastic and ambitious for the subject. He is aware of the aspects of current provision that need improving. As a result, schemes of work have been revised to address the current imbalance of curriculum delivery. Liaison with senior management is insufficiently systematic and regular. The subject is making a significant contribution to students' communication and research skills as well as developing good independent learning practice. Practical production resources are limited. However, new accommodation is due to open later this term. This includes a new media studies room and an editing suite. There are currently no links with outside media institutions.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

231. The provision for AS-level physical education was sampled. This is the first year of the course and a small cohort of students was making good progress in a lesson considering how players acquire cognitive and physical skills and use them in a game. Learning is enhanced by individually led student presentations. The department has made a strong case for the introduction of sixth form studies but from one lesson observation it is clear that the majority of the students have considerable challenges ahead because of a lack of prior knowledge and understanding on entry to the sixth form.

BUSINESS

AS and A-level business studies was fully inspected. An intermediate level GNVQ course in business was sampled. Two lessons were seen, in which the quality of teaching and learning were very good and students achieved very well. Results in this course in 2004 were sound. Whilst almost all passed with a full certificate, only one passed with merit.

Business Education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement at A-level is often very good because of the long-term strategic teaching and learning.
- Very good teaching supports the students effectively so that they enter the examination very well prepared.
- Teaching is very demanding so that students learn very effectively and achieve very well within lessons.
- Up-to-date materials are used to ensure that students are interested and learn very effectively.
- ICT is well developed for students to obtain transferable skills and draft and redraft their work so that high quality essays are produced.

Commentary

232. In the 2004, A-level examination, nine students were entered and all passed, however their average point score was below the national average because the proportion who attained the

highest grades A or B was lower than that found nationally. However, in 2003, ten students were entered and results were above national average. However, given students' attainment at GCSE prior to entry to the course, achievement is very good. Attainment at AS-level in 2004 was broadly average.

233. Business studies is a new area of study for all the students. Here the entry standard is relatively modest when compared with many other schools, with many students having only the minimum grade C passes at GCSE and none having prior experience of the subject. Teachers have to focus on enabling students to gather the necessary study skills to cope with higher-level courses, as well as teach the complex subject matter. This they do very well, enabling students to use ICT very effectively to draft and redraft their work and produce model answers to examination questions.
234. Very good teaching supports the students effectively, sets clear targets and expectations and enables them to consolidate their learning effectively so that they enter the examination very well prepared. It is the whole structure of the course that is so effective, building up students' understanding systematically week on week. This ratchets up standards. Teaching takes place in the context of commerce and industry, with regular reference to the stock exchange and current affairs. This brings the subject to life for the students and makes the work relevant to them and their experiences. When considering the variable prior experience when they start the course, and the level all students are now at, students' achievement is very good.
235. Teaching in lessons is always good or better, but its impact over time ensures very good learning, and so it is very good overall. Teachers work well as a team and contribute their strengths to the course. The very good relationships between students and teachers enable very good learning. Teachers are experts and bring their experiences gained in industry and commerce to make the lessons relevant and up-to-date. Very good assessment clearly identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, and identifies how to improve.
236. Leadership is very good, with teachers contributing their expertise. Management is excellent because it focuses continuously on improving standards and maximising achievement, and ensuring that the real world is used as a context for learning, motivating students effectively. Assessment systems and the management of learning are very effective. There have been good developments since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

237. There is no programme of general studies taught to AS or A-level. Personal development lessons are taught by form tutors, but as these occur on Fridays, they were not observed. Religious education is taught through a programme of day conferences, once every half-term.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The effectiveness of management	4	4
---------------------------------	---	---

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