

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SELE SCHOOL

Hertford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117535

Headteacher: Mr Nick Binder

Lead inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Dates of inspection: 7 – 9 March 2005

Inspection number: 268986

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	431
School address:	Welwyn Road Hertford
Postcode:	SG14 2DG
Telephone number:	01992 581455
Fax number:	01992 500408
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robert Wilson
Date of previous inspection:	10 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Sele School is an 11-18 comprehensive school. There are 381 pupils in the main school and 50 students in the sixth form. This makes the school much smaller than most other schools with sixth forms. The pupil population is relatively stable. Currently there are about 60 more girls than boys on the school roll, this difference being most marked in Years 9 and 10. The school provides for pupils across the ability range, though attainment on entry is below average overall. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements. Pupils with the highest levels of need mostly have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. About four per cent of the pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds. Several different minority ethnic groups are represented in the school and so there is no significantly large sub-group. While many of these pupils are bilingual, none are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of the pupils who claim their entitlement to free school meals is close to average. Socio-economic census data for local wards are not favourable. The school has specialist Performing Arts and Sports College status and holds Artsmark, Sportsmark, Healthy Schools and Investor in People awards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3390	Ken Thomas	Lead inspector	Physical education
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	Citizenship
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
1240	John King	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History Sociology (sixth form)
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Religious education
11300	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Special educational needs Geography
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English as an additional language English English as an additional language English (sixth form)
28028	Philip Wood	Team inspector	Mathematics

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Ltd

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 subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22
WORK RELATED LEARNING	24
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	48

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This effective school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are average and achievement is good. Leadership and management are good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has excellent community links and is at the heart of the community it serves.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science, at the end of Year 9, have risen sharply and standards at the end of Year 11 are rising at a faster rate than results nationally.
- In most subjects, the standards attained by boys at the end of Year 11 are well below those of girls.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress in most lessons.
- Attendance is below average even though procedures for promoting regular attendance are good.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities and specialist Performing Arts and Sports College status enriches provision.
- The range of courses in Years 10 and 11 does not provide enough opportunities for pupils more suited to vocational studies.
- The good attitudes of the vast majority of pupils make a significant contribution to the positive ethos of the school. However, in some lessons in all years immature behaviour makes too great demands on teachers' time.
- The school benefits from the strong support and high level of expertise offered by governors.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards, the quality of education provided and school management have all improved. Teaching and learning have improved and there is now much more good and better teaching. The school has achieved Performing Arts and Sports College status. Almost all of the shortcomings identified in the last report have been tackled successfully. Attendance remains below average and there are not enough vocational opportunities in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Standards are average and **achievement is good**. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have risen. The 2004 Year 9 National Curriculum test results are significantly higher than those obtained in 2003 and in line with the 2003 national results (the latest year for which national comparisons are available). Standards at the end of Year 11 are rising. The GCSE examination results rose to be average overall. Results in the GCE A-level examinations in 2004 were well below average; however, when standards on entry to the sixth form are taken into account, achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have positive attitudes and most behave well in lessons and around the school. However, progress in some lessons in all year groups is adversely affected by the

immature behaviour of a minority. Attendance is below average. Most pupils are regularly punctual to school and to lessons. The attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are good. Their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good with some that is very good and on occasion excellent. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory in the main school but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Provision to enrich students' learning outside lessons is very good. Support and guidance, and links with parents are good. Good links with other schools and colleges enhance provision. Links with the community are excellent. Accommodation is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The recently appointed headteacher, with excellent support from the chair of governors, is providing good leadership and a clear vision for the future development of the school. The successful and innovative bid for Performing Arts and Sports College status has considerably enhanced provision and resources at the school. Effective use is being made of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Middle management has been strengthened and subject leaders are now more accountable for standards in their areas. Governance of the school is good. Governors are very supportive and keen for the school to improve. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are largely happy with the school and what it provides for their children. They judge that expectations are high and that their children like school and are making good progress. They do not always feel fully informed about how well their children are getting on, a matter not substantiated by inspection evidence. Pupils feel that this is an improving school and are proud to wear their school uniforms.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the attainment of boys at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- Continue to implement strategies to improve attendance and behaviour.
- Provide more vocational opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- Provide more opportunities for sixth form students to develop independent learning skills.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Examination results, although well below average, represent satisfactory achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Because of very small student numbers the sixth form is not cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students have positive attitudes and want to succeed. They are smart in appearance and make a very good contribution to the life of the school.
- Students are very well known by their teachers and relationships are very good.
- Teaching is good. However, most teaching groups are small and students are too dependent on their teachers.
- The wide range of opportunities for students to take responsibility strongly supports their personal development.
- The range of courses offered is not well suited to the needs and abilities of many students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English literature. Students achieve well to reach, and in some cases exceed, their predicted grades. Teaching is good and offers a high level of support.
Humanities	Satisfactory in sociology. Teaching is good but students lack of confidence and independence in their knowledge and understanding prevents achievement being better than satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art. Good teaching and learning enable students to achieve well. Good use is made of research and experimentation in the development of students' ideas.

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

Sixth formers are provided with satisfactory advice, support and guidance. Good procedures have now been established for monitoring and supporting their academic progress and personal development. These are in the early stages of implementation. Action is being taken to tackle the difficulties that students face in operating between the schools in the consortium. Provision for students with special needs is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is good and management is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of sixth form has a clear vision for the development of sixth form provision. Improving links with other schools in the consortium are increasing opportunities for a wider range of students. Assessment and other management information are now being used more effectively to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students are very happy with the school. Most value the support and guidance they receive and feel their views on a whole range of issues are welcomed. They appreciate the opportunities that they are given to take responsibility and to support younger pupils. They feel that they becoming a much more positive influence in the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 have risen to be close to average. GCSE examination results are average overall and achievement is good. These results are rising at a faster rate than results nationally. Standards, from work seen during the inspection, are consistent with the test and examination results. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory although A-level results are well below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are making increasingly good progress and standards are rising.
- Weaknesses in the performance of boys hamper the raising of standards.
- Pupils of all backgrounds and prior attainment achieve equally well.
- Assessment information is being used more effectively to raise achievement by identifying where pupils might be falling behind so that action can be taken rapidly.
- A-level examination results are well below average and students are too dependent on their teachers.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.4 (29.9)	n/a (33.3)
Mathematics	36.3 (34.0)	n/a (34.7)
Science	33.2 (31.3)	n/a (33.3)

There were 84 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Overall results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science show a general rising trend over the past four years. Although in 2003 the results in mathematics dipped to below average and in English and science to well below average, results in all three subjects rose sharply in 2004 to be in line with the 2003 national average (national comparative data are not available for 2004). Taken together, the results were average in comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment (these are schools in which pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 6) and above average in comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances (based on pupils' entitlement to free school meals). These results represent good achievement when the below average standards on entry are taken into account. In the individual subjects, results in English, mathematics and science were also average in comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances the results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. The school did not achieve the targets set for the percentages of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 5 or above in each of the core subjects. This was because the targets set were unrealistically high. Targets are now more closely related to baseline measures of pupils' attainment and include an appropriate element of challenge. Although girls obtain better results than boys in English, there are no consistent differences in performance between boys and girls in mathematics and science.

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	41 (41)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (90)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	272.4	282.8

There were 79 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- GCSE results have been following an upward trend at a faster rate than results nationally. Overall results have risen from being in the lowest five per cent of results nationally in 2001 to be average overall in 2004. Although the school did not meet the target set for the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades, the target for five or more A* to G grades was exceeded and the average point score target was achieved. These results represent good achievement when the below average standards on entry to the school are taken into account. Although in comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades and the average point score were below average, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades was well above average. In comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades was above average, while the percentage gaining five or more A* to G grades and the average point score were well above average.
- The GCSE examination results in separate subjects, in terms of the proportions of pupils gaining A* to C grades, largely reflect the fact that in terms of attainment the school intake is not balanced. It is biased towards the lower end of the attainment range. Because of this the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in many subjects, including English and mathematics, in 2004 was below average. Nevertheless, the proportions of pupils gaining these grades was well above average in physical education and average in art, business studies, religious education and science. Results in information and communication technology (ICT), French, music and history were well below average. It is, however, necessary to be cautious when making comparisons with national figures as in most subjects the number of examination entries is too small to make these comparisons meaningful. Achievement is generally above expectations based on standards at the end of Year 9. Girls have obtained better overall results than boys in all years since the last inspection. In 2004 boys outperformed girls in mathematics and obtained similar results to those of girls in science and business studies. In all other subjects girls outperformed boys and the underperformance of boys is adversely affecting the continued raising of standards. Analyses of performance show that there are no significant differences in the achievement of pupils with special educational needs or from different ethnic backgrounds.
- In work seen during the inspection standards in Year 9 are consistent with expectations in most subjects. Inspection evidence indicates that the improvement in standards in Years 10 and 11 is being sustained. Contributing to this improving trend is more effective teaching and learning and better leadership and management in many subjects. The school is now implementing strategies to raise boys' attainment, particularly in English, and the more effective use of assessment information to set targets, track pupils' performance and to provide additional support has been identified as an improvement priority.

- The school provides a number of extension activities for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. These activities support pupils' achievement and the achievement of all groups of pupils is benefiting from the enriched provision arising from the school's Performing Arts and Sports College status.

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	72.7 (78.1)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	21.6 (15.6)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	144.7 (172.9)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 15 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are well below average. Results in the 2004 A-level examinations were well below average. These results were consistent with those obtained in previous years. Because the number of students in the sixth form have, through the consortium, access to a wide range of advanced courses the number of candidates entered for examination in individual subjects is too small to make meaningful comparisons with national results. Nevertheless, taken overall, while most students obtain grades in the A to E range, the proportion gaining higher A or B grades is well below average. These results generally reflect standards of attainment on entry and represent satisfactory achievement. There are, however, significant differences in the performance of male and female students. While the results of female students are generally around average, the results of male students are consistently well below average.
- Standards seen during the inspection are below or well below course expectations in most subjects. However, these standards represent satisfactory achievement and in some subjects good achievement when the well below average standards on entry to the sixth form are taken into account. Students in art, for example, are achieving well and standards are consistent with expectations for this stage of the course. The few sixth form students with special educational needs are very well integrated and achievement is comparable to that of their peers. Consistently good teaching, based on good subject expertise and a clear understanding of syllabus and examination requirements, supports students' progress and helps to ensue that almost all students achieve their target grades. However, students' progress is constrained because the small numbers of students in some teaching groups restrict discussion and the exploration of ideas from different viewpoints. Because standards on entry are well below average it is also necessary for teachers to fill in gaps in knowledge from previous years. In these circumstances students become too dependent on their teachers and do not develop the independent study skills necessary for success at the higher levels on advanced courses.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes towards school and their behaviour is satisfactory. Attendance in the main school is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is good. In the sixth form, attitudes and behaviour are good, and attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy the time they spend at school and are proud of the way it is improving.
- Good provision for pupils' personal development is having a positive impact on the progress they are making.

- Although most of the pupils are sensible and polite, the immature behaviour of a minority slows progress in some lessons.
- A few pupils have very poor attendance and their frequent absences have a significant impact on the school average.
- Sixth form students display good attitudes in lessons and around the school.
- Many sixth form students have yet to develop the skills needed to become independent learners.

Commentary

8. During discussions, pupils speak highly of their teachers and they are enthusiastic about the many opportunities the school provides. They are optimistic about the future of their school and older pupils feel that morale has significantly improved in recent years. They say that the atmosphere is now much more positive and teachers' encouragement and commitment have helped to improve pupils' attitudes. Pupils are very loyal to their school and are keen to play an active role in its future development. Their social development is good and most develop a very good understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community. Many contribute to the mentoring of younger pupils and participate in worthwhile activities within the community. Pupils readily use their initiative and raise significant sums for charity. In the last school year, for example, pupils raised about £1,000 for 'Comic Relief'. During the inspection, pupils were eagerly planning how to again raise funds for 'Comic Relief' and displaying considerable originality in their ideas. Pupils like the fact that their school lies at the heart of the local community and that it is much smaller than most other schools. They feel that this helps teachers to know them very well as individuals. They enjoy taking part in the many inter-house competitions and nine out of ten participate in extra-curricular sport. Pupils' out-going attitudes make a significant contribution to the school's positive atmosphere and the ongoing improvement in the standard of their work.
9. Pupils' cultural development is good. They develop an understanding of the traditions and values of other faiths and cultures through work in lessons. In mathematics, for example, the patterns found in Moorish tile work are investigated. Pupils develop an understanding of different faiths in religious education and of various cultural influences in the work of prominent artists. Pupils' cultural development is also enhanced through a large number of visits abroad and to art galleries and theatres. The spiritual development of pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the spiritual understanding of the pupils, where they are expected to consider their own views as well as show an understanding of the views of others. In lessons in virtually all subject areas there is an emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem and pupils are encouraged to show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. These make a good contribution to pupils' moral development, as do assembly themes that promote reflection and consideration for others.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.6	School data	1.5
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

10. The previous report highlighted shortcomings with the attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Improved monitoring procedures have helped to raise attendance in Year 10, although attendance in Year 11 remains unsatisfactory. Many of the pupils who have poor attendance have transferred from other schools and have a record of irregular attendance. The amount of education welfare officer support the school receives to promote regular attendance has been significantly decreased. Nevertheless, the school continues to work hard to improve the

attendance of these pupils. A committed team of teachers and other staff has managed to reduce the number of unauthorised absences by almost 50 per cent. Although they strongly discourage parents from booking family holidays during the term, an increasing number of sessions are being lost for this reason. These absences mean that the pupils involved miss out on the work undertaken by the rest of the class and this could well place them at a disadvantage in the future.

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	406	56	3
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

11. Classroom relationships are generally good. Most pupils show respect and consideration for others and this underpins the positive atmosphere that pervades the school. Although girls tend to be more careful in their approach to work, most of the pupils are keen to make good progress. During lessons, most pupils are pleasant and co-operative and the majority behave well. There are, however, a number of pupils in all years who lack this motivation and display immature behaviour. These pupils find it hard to concentrate during lessons and their immature and attention-seeking behaviour can monopolise their teachers' attention. In addition, some lessons are slow to get started because pupils' restlessness wastes time. A few pupils demonstrate more challenging behaviour. This behaviour is often linked to pupils who have been admitted to the school having already been excluded from other schools. Although teachers usually manage these pupils well and classroom management is generally good, a few are less successful. The school recognises these difficulties and is receiving ongoing advice and support from a behaviour consultant as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. This is helping teachers to become more consistent in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and in the application of the school code of behaviour. Pupils have noticed the positive impact that this is having and say that the standard of behaviour is gradually improving. The school tries hard to keep all pupils in full-time education and it provides good support for those at risk of exclusion. The challenging behaviour of some pupils, however, inevitably results in the use of this sanction. The number of exclusions has increased over the last year and the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is above that found in most other schools of similar size. However, over half of the fixed period exclusions last year involved the three pupils who were later excluded permanently.

Sixth form

12. Students display positive attitudes both to the school as a whole and in their lessons. They have very good relationships with their teachers and appreciate the support they are given to pursue their studies. They are offered many opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility. These include the head boy and girl and their deputies and sports and house captains. Students are attached to subject areas where they support younger pupils in lessons, help on out-of-school visits and help with administrative tasks. Some students are trained to be mentors for younger pupils who are in need of additional support. The sixth form committee is an active body and meets regularly with the head teacher and the head of sixth form. Although the small size of the sixth form restricts its influence, nevertheless, by their smart appearance and good behaviour students provide good role models for younger pupils.
13. The active role that students play in the school is not always demonstrated in lessons, where many tend to be passive and too dependent on their teachers. This indicates that they have yet to understand the increased demand on sixth form students to be independent and to show initiative in their studies. Attendance and punctuality are improving because monitoring is more rigorous and students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good because teaching and learning, very good opportunities for enrichment and good support for learning outside the school day, promote good achievement. Curriculum provision is satisfactory but does not provide enough opportunities for vocational studies. Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of students are very good. Good links with other schools and colleges enhance provision. Links with the community are excellent.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and in the sixth form. Satisfactory use is made of assessment information to help to raise standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good lesson planning underpins good teaching and learning.
- Effective use is made of new technology to stimulate pupils' interest in many lessons.
- Progress in some lessons is slowed because the attention-seeking behaviour of a few pupils wastes too much of the teacher's time.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported.
- Teaching and learning in most sixth form lessons are good, but there is not enough emphasis on the use of strategies to encourage sixth form students to develop independent learning skills.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	28 (28%)	51 (51%)	18 (18%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

14. A considerable amount of management attention has been devoted to the development of teaching and learning over recent years. This has involved changes in middle management with more consistent monitoring of teaching by senior managers and subject leaders. This has been linked to increased opportunities for the sharing of good practice both within and outside the school. Firm action is being taken to tackle any weaknesses in teaching. As a result there has been a significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last

inspection. At the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching was good or better in just over a half of lessons; it is now good or better in four-fifths of lessons. There is also considerably less unsatisfactory teaching.

15. As part of the school strategy to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, much attention has been given to lesson planning. The work done on this has been very successful and lesson planning is now a particular strength in teaching. Effective lesson planning enables teachers to make the best use of their good subject expertise to build up pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in a systematic way. These were particularly good features in much of the teaching in English, mathematics and science, for example. In most lessons teachers use a variety of methods to explain new ideas and to ensure they are fully understood. Lessons generally begin with a clear explanation of the learning objectives, which helps to focus pupils' minds on the task ahead. These objectives are reviewed at the end of lessons in order to consolidate learning and to evaluate the progress that they have made. These were particularly strong features of the excellent lesson seen in ICT. In most subjects this learning is further consolidated by the use of homework. Resources are used imaginatively and particularly effective use is being made of the increasing number of interactive whiteboards that are available in classrooms. This was seen in the best teaching in French, for example. Very good use is also made of ICT to analyse performance in physical education. However, in English, mathematics and science, because of difficulties in access to computers, not enough use is made of ICT to support learning. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from the enthusiasm and generally high level of expectations available to all pupils and are also offered a good range of enrichment activities.
16. Pupils generally respond well to teachers' high expectations and try their hardest in lessons. They contribute well to class discussions and work effectively in small groups. Most teachers exert firm but friendly control of their classes, resulting in a productive working atmosphere in which learning can thrive. However, some pupils in all year groups display immaturity in their behaviour. These pupils are slow to settle at the start of lessons or demand too much of the teacher's time during lessons. As a result, even though teachers have good classroom management skills, the pace of the lesson is slowed and progress in learning does not match the quality of teaching. However, in a small number of lessons, not enough progress is made because teachers do not exert enough control or plan learning activities that fully engage pupils.
17. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, whether taught in withdrawal groups in the learning support unit or in mainstream lessons, is good. Small groups of Year 9 pupils, withdrawn for literacy support, make good progress because they receive challenging teaching in a supportive atmosphere and effective use is made of well-produced learning resources. The Successmaker programme is used well to improve a range of pupils' ICT skills, while developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils in mainstream lessons.
18. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The school is making more effective use of a wide range of information from a variety of sources to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. Teachers mark work regularly but there is some variation in the quality of assessment information available to pupils. In English, religious education and science, the good quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work, by which strengths and weaknesses are noted and targets for improvement are set, contributes well to pupils' progress. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in French, mathematics and physical education, where marking does not always provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve. The school is in the process of implementing the assessment for learning strand of the National Strategy. This places emphasis on familiarising pupils with the relevant assessment criteria so that they are able to evaluate their own and their peers' work as a precursor to raising achievement. Very good assessment practice in English is now being shared with other subjects.

Sixth form

19. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. No teaching seen during the inspection was less than satisfactory. Examples of very good teaching were observed in ICT, drama, French and art. In these lessons teachers offered the good balance of support and challenge that encourages independence of thought and opinion. This was not the case in all lessons, however. Opportunities for independent learning are missed for a range of reasons. In lessons in several subjects teachers reacted to relatively passive students by doing too much of the work and the talking themselves, thereby making students even more dependent on their teachers. Many students lack the confidence to air and explore their ideas openly in the lesson and have yet to develop real intellectual curiosity. Sociology teachers are not specialists and feel they lack the expertise to tackle the coursework option. This further restricts opportunities for independent learning. On the other hand, consistently good teaching in English, based on teachers' expertise, with good opportunities for discussion, leads to good independent learning. Students use each other's ideas well and rise to the challenge these lessons offer.
20. Students generally feel that the marking of their work is helpful and they know their predicted and target grades. New procedures for tracking and monitoring their progress through regular reviews and interviews with their tutors are being implemented.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Enrichment through extra-curricular provision is very good. Staffing and accommodation are satisfactory. Resources for learning are good. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist Performing Arts and Sports College status has led to a significant improvement in curricular provision.
- The very good range of enrichment activities enhances the experiences of large numbers of pupils and students.
- The range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is too narrow.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The sixth form curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the needs and capabilities of most students.

Commentary

21. Curricular provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. Additionally, dance and drama are included for all pupils and higher attaining pupils are able to take Spanish as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. The National Strategy for Key Stage 3 has been effectively implemented in most subjects and is having a positive impact on teaching and learning in all years. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum consists largely of academic courses leading to GCSE accreditation. The school has found it difficult to increase the range of vocational courses offered in these years. Courses in manufacturing and business, for example, have been withdrawn because of low take-up. The achievement of specialist school status has enhanced provision in sport and the performing arts, and is leading to innovative collaborative practice between several subjects.
22. Arrangements for review are effective and curriculum development is well managed. Consequently, there has been good progress on issues raised in the previous inspection report. Time allocations have improved for art, music, religious education and physical education. All pupils now study ICT. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has improved significantly and includes good provision for citizenship education. Schemes of work are now formulated to an agreed model, and PSHE and citizenship

provision are effectively monitored. All statutory requirements are now met, including a daily act of collective worship. As at the previous inspection, the size of the school imposes restrictions on how subjects organise teaching groups, but there are now fewer instances of classes shared between teachers, and fewer difficulties caused by timetabling. The school plans to offer vocational courses in art, sport and ICT. Account is taken of the views of Year 10 and 11 pupils in the planning process.

23. Because careers guidance is carefully planned and involves local businesses and the Connexions service, pupils receive good advice in Years 9 and 11 on choices for the next stage in their education or for work. The Connexions service provides pupils with careers interviews and guidance on writing job applications. Through local business pupils in Year 11 are provided with mock employment interviews. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils are able to benefit from appropriate work related studies in an alternative curriculum, which includes the Sele XL programme. This programme is supported by the Prince's Trust and accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Statutory requirements for provision as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs are met. The reviews of pupils' statements and individual action plans are regular and involve teachers and pupils.
24. The school makes good provision for gifted and talented pupils, in particular for those with aptitudes in the performing arts and sport. As part of the strategy for raising standards the school is keen to ensure that the needs of these pupils are met. Pupils compete regularly in the UK Mathematics Challenge and Rotary Youth Speaking competitions. Many subjects offer opportunities for pupils to further their interests or boost their learning in lunchtime or after school clubs. Many pupils take advantage of the very good range of other enrichment activities that the school provides. In 2004 the school became the first in England to be awarded joint specialist status in the Performing Arts and Sports. Participation rates in the excellent range of sporting activities are high, with most pupils being involved in a variety of inter-school and inter-house competitions. Opportunities to participate in the arts are also very strong with dance and drama featuring alongside music. The quality of the schools' provision is recognised in the holding of the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards. The positive impact of cross-curricular collaborative activities was demonstrated in the recent highly successful production of *Grease*, which not only involved drama, music, dance, art and design and technology, but also several other subjects in which activities related to the era in which the musical is set were used as a stimulus for lessons. Further enhancement to the curriculum is provided through a large number of educational visits. These include a residential week for all pupils in Year 7, visits to the National Space Centre, the Globe theatre and art galleries as well as numerous visits abroad.
25. The overall quality of the accommodation is satisfactory for teaching the curriculum. There is an ongoing programme of refurbishment and redecoration many areas. The art, modern foreign languages and design and technology rooms, provide stimulating learning environments. The new ICT suites are well equipped and provide very good accommodation. There are, however, several weaknesses. Although many of the classrooms are bright and cheerful some are too small for large teaching groups of Year 10 and 11 pupils. Many of the science laboratories are in need of refurbishment to bring them up to present day standards. This was identified as a weakness in the last inspection report. Although the accommodation for music and physical education is satisfactory for the teaching of the curriculum it is not in keeping with the school's specialist Performing Arts and Sports College status. The indoor facilities for physical education are inadequate. This again was identified as a weakness in the last inspection report. The gymnasium is heavily used and in need of refurbishment and the floor is unsuitable for gymnastics. The floor of the hall is unsuitable for dance.
26. Resources for learning have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now good. There has been a significant improvement in the computer resources and data projectors and interactive whiteboards are used effectively in many subjects. However, because heavy demand it is sometimes difficult for some subjects to have access to ICT resources. This situation will be eased as the new computer suites become fully operational.

The school is now fully staffed and the match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum overall is satisfactory. Although there has been a fairly high turnover of teaching staff over the last two years, this has largely been planned and new appointments have strengthened teaching. Special needs support staff are effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. However technician support in science is inadequate and this results in some loss of teaching time. The school is welcoming, clean and tidy and the administrative, caretaking and cleaning staff make important contributions to the day-to-day operation of the school

Sixth form

27. The curriculum in the sixth form is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the needs and capabilities of many students. Currently, Level 3 AS and A-level courses are offered and only one of these has a vocational bias. This means that because many students want to stay in an environment in which they are well known and feel well supported they stay on and take courses for which they are not well suited, rather than move to other institutions where more appropriate vocational courses or Level 2 courses are available. However, the headteacher and the head of the sixth form have recognised this weakness in provision and are committed to increasing the range of vocational courses available. Curriculum plans for the 2005 to 2006 school year show clear vocational and academic pathways for students who cannot access AS and A-level courses but who wish to remain in the school.
28. Enrichment opportunities are very good, with a particular strength being the many ways in which students can contribute both to the life of the school and to the wider community. The school runs training for the Community Sports Leadership Award (CSLA) and the Higher Sports Leadership Award (HSLA) and students are also involved in the Step to Sport initiative with local sports clubs, encouraging younger people to become more active. Year 12 students were taken on a cultural and social visit to Strasbourg in the summer term 2004, and a repeat of this is planned for 2005. There is a good PSHE programme that encompasses the requirements for religious education, including plans for students to complete community service in the summer term. For example, they will retell Bible stories to primary school children. The lesson on pre-driving and road safety seen during the inspection was well taught and was effective in preparing students to become sensible members of the community.
29. Accommodation for the sixth form is good. A recently refurbished sixth form centre provides attractive and suitable facilities for private study, relaxation and teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Support, advice and guidance are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The school involves pupils and students very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mutually respectful and trusting relationships underpin the school's very effective arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils.
- Very good induction procedures help incoming Year 7 pupils to settle quickly.
- The school is very interested in pupils' views and is keen to involve them when planning for the future.
- Pupils receive good guidance on opportunities for further study and career opportunities and this helps them to make informed choices.
- Sixth form students make a good contribution to the life of the school. They are ready to accept positions of responsibility and help younger pupils.

Commentary

30. The strengths in care, support and guidance noted in the last report have been maintained and improved further. The standard of care provided is now well above average. Close liaison with a wide range of external agencies ensures that pupils with particular health or social needs enjoy ready access to suitable advice and guidance. Child protection procedures are very thorough and well-trained members of staff ensure that the needs of pupils with medical conditions are met in full. Governors contribute a high level of expertise to health and safety matters and arrange for specialist advice as and when the need arises.

31. During discussions, pupils say that they like their teachers and are confident they would feel able to ask for help or advice, should the need arise. Tutors and heads of year stay with the same year group as they move through the school and this helps everyone to get to know one another very well. This familiarity enables tutors to monitor pupils' academic and personal development effectively and puts them in a good position to be able to spot any emerging difficulties and deal with them promptly. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils' individual educational plans containing clear information and targets, and are used effectively by teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils who have particular problems may be referred, or refer themselves, to the learning support centre. Specialist support is also available from two trained counsellors. Pupils feel that the standard of care is high and say that this reassurance helps them to concentrate on their work and make good progress.
32. Very well planned transfer arrangements ensure a smooth transition when pupils join at the start of Year 7. All Year 6 pupils have one full transfer day during the summer term and, at the start of the academic year, new Year 7 pupils come into school one day before the older pupils. Supported by sixth form students, they are able to become more familiar with the layout and routines of their new school before everyone else arrives. During the inspection, pupils say that they had plenty of opportunities to make new friends and get to know their new teachers before they actually joined the school. Through the Performing Arts and Sports specialism, links with contributing primary schools are being considerably strengthened. Teachers regularly visit their primary colleagues to collaborate on curriculum matters and to share expertise in, for example, the teaching of music, mathematics and dance. Pupils attending nearby schools make very good use of sports facilities and the computer suite. Primary pupils also attend sports events and school productions.
33. The school is keen to involve pupils in its future development and pupils are encouraged to make their views known. Pupils do so through the year and school councils have recently reviewed the anti-bullying procedures. They have also successfully lobbied for the redecoration of the toilets and completed questionnaires on possible changes to the school name and school uniform. Pupils receive good guidance on the options that are available to them at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All pupils have individual interviews with a Connexions personal adviser and some have additional interviews arranged by the business studies department.

Sixth form

34. Sixth form students receive a satisfactory level of support and guidance. Although some students are allowed to start courses that are not really suitable for them there are plans in place to provide a more appropriate range of courses next year. Once they are settled in their courses, advice and guidance for the future are successful. Connexions staff interview Year 12 students in the summer term to plan for the future. Last year a representative from Hertford University spoke about UCAS applications and an admissions tutor gave practice interviews. All students who applied for courses in higher education were able to gain a place. The 15 students who have applied this year have also all been offered places conditional on their A-level grades.
35. However, opportunities to support students' development through use of the tutor period are not being taken. The thought for the day programme is not well used and the opportunity this provides to involve students in intellectual discussion is not taken. This time could be used much more effectively to encourage independent thinking, broaden students' horizons and improve their confidence and communication skills.
36. The involvement of students in the life of the school is good and due notice is taken of their views. Students are good ambassadors for their school. Senior students take assemblies on occasions. They have weekly meeting with the headteacher to discuss sixth form and school issues, and are currently working on a travel plan to encourage pupils to walk and ride bicycles to school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links other schools and colleges are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Links with parents are good and links with the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has extensive links with, and receives outstanding support from, the local community.
- Strong links with other schools and further education providers provide pupils with many diverse opportunities and help them to make informed choices at the end of Year 11.
- Parents receive good information about the progress their children are making and the day-to-day life of the school.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and incorporates them into plans for the future whenever possible.
- Sixth form students make an excellent contribution to the local community.

Commentary

37. This school stands at the heart of its community and it has nurtured excellent links with local organisations and their representatives. During the recent successful bid to become a specialist school, several local businesses and other organisations made very substantial contributions to the fundraising effort. The very active parents' association, the 'Friends of Sele School' raised £10,000 towards the fund. This made it possible for the school to raise the considerable amount of money required in a very short period of time. As well as working hard to maximise the educational and social opportunities for pupils, the school is improving the facilities provided for local people. Subsidised lettings are available for arts and sports events and, through the excellent knowledge of the local community of the director of performing arts and sport, increasing numbers of clubs are making use of the school's extensive playing fields and indoor physical education facilities. To increase the opportunities available to the school and the community, a bid is being made for a much needed sports hall and outdoor playing all-weather playing area. These opportunities will be extended further in September 2005 when the school will become the hub site for the government sponsored 'Physical Education, School, Community and Club Links' project, for which the school is to receive £600,000 of additional funding. As part of the extensive 'Selections' programme of adult education, over 70 community groups use the facilities outside the school day. The school recently played a major part in the 50th anniversary of the Sele Farm Estate and the school has played a major part in the formation and development of The Sele Youth and Community Forum.
38. There are close links with numerous primary and secondary schools and these are improving further as the school extends its specialist activities. Teachers regularly visit contributing primary schools and resources are also made available in several subjects. The school regularly hosts inter-school sporting events and these enable individual pupils to get to know each other and to develop their talents. Some of the older pupils visit a nearby special school and this interaction helps them to develop their physical education leadership skills as part of an award scheme.
39. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire and the views expressed at the pre-inspection meeting with parents, show that parents are pleased with most areas of the school's work. They think members of staff are very approachable and there is little they would like to change. Most parents provide good support for their children's education and the overwhelming majority attend the termly review meetings. Detailed annual and interim reports also help to keep parents closely informed about their children's progress. However, one in five of those who responded to the questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the level of information provided. Inspection evidence does not support these concerns. The school provides several booklets that contain comprehensive information about the secondary curriculum and ways in which parents can support their child's education. Parents can also

obtain general information through the school website and through the circulation of the 'Sele School Messenger' news booklet, which is distributed twice a term. Links with parents of pupils with special education needs are good and there is a high level of attendance at the annual review meetings. The school is keen to strengthen this partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs in order to further enhance the progress their children are making.

40. The school is keen to involve parents as much as possible and encourages them to voice any concerns or suggestions. Parents' opinions were recently sought about the acquisition of specialist school status and about possible changes to the school's name. To involve parents further, the school recently asked for volunteers to set up a parents' forum. Although few parents responded to the request the school is using questionnaires to obtain their views on how parents would like to be more fully involved in their children's education.

Sixth form

41. Sixth form students have very strong views about the importance of the school as a focus for the local community and are very active in the community. Some serve on the Sele Farm Community Council and others work with local sports clubs to encourage young people to develop a more active lifestyle. Students recognise the importance of the school as a community resource. They are very loyal to their school and disagreed with a recent proposal to change the name of the school, recognising that that the school needs to be seen as an important part of the community. They feel strongly that the improving image of the school is not only having a positive impact on the local community but also reflecting the improving image of the local community itself.
42. The sixth form's consortium links with other schools are improving. The recent Learning and Skills Council review of post-16 education in the area has focused attention more clearly on post-16 provision and given fresh impetus to collaboration between post-16 providers. Increased collaboration with other schools and colleges has been given a high priority by the recently appointed headteacher and is being pursued by the head of the sixth form. Some progress has already been made. For example, following its new status as a specialist school, Sele School will be the only school that offers drama and sports studies in the consortium's common option blocks. In addition, there are plans for the sharing of the teaching of textiles and dance with another consortium school. However, there are still issues that need to be tackled, including the common timings of lessons and more structured support for students joining groups in other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher and that of other key staff is good. The school makes good use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is providing good leadership with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments are becoming more effective and helping to raise standards.
- Performing Arts and Sports College leadership is highly innovative and having a significant impact on provision.
- The chair of governors provides the school with a particularly high level of educational expertise.
- The sixth form is not cost effective.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and the consortium is now beginning to increase the range of options open to students.

Commentary

43. The headteacher, who joined the school in September 2004, is providing the school with good leadership. He is highly visible around the school and has very quickly set about identifying the school's strengths and areas in which improvement are needed. The headteacher's clear vision for the future development of the school is shared by other senior managers and governors, and supported by rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This is having a positive effect and contributing to the improvements seen in teaching and learning. The school improvement plan provides a clear agenda for raising standards further and to improving the quality of education the school provides for all groups of pupils. A major element in this is the school's specialist work in the performing arts and sport, which is enhancing provision not only for the pupils and students but also for the community as a whole. A significant factor here is the exceptional quality of leadership being provided by the director of performing arts and sport. In a 2003 LEA review of the faculty of performing arts (dance, drama, music and physical education) it was noted that there was a need to unite the separate subjects so that they work more closely together and to develop a stronger team ethos. With the full support of the present subject leaders and the headteacher, the director of specialism has achieved this and the faculty now operates as an innovative and dynamic team, highly committed to the school's specialist activities.
44. The management of the school is good. There have been significant changes in middle management over the last two years as a number of new appointments have been made. These changes have strengthened subject leadership. Line management roles and responsibilities, from the leadership team to the other levels of management, are well understood and subject leaders are now more responsible for monitoring and evaluating work in their areas and more accountable for performance. The vast majority of teachers have welcomed the opportunity to review their practice and consider new approaches. Performance management is fully implemented and support is being provided for those who are finding it more difficult to embrace change. This is helping to increase the effectiveness of the school and making a major contribution to school improvement.
45. Planning for improvement in subject departments is generally good at all levels. Very good leadership in science, music and citizenship is having a significant impact on standards and the quality of provision. Good leadership in English, modern foreign languages, mathematics, art, geography, ICT and design and technology is also having a positive impact on standards. Work in several of these subjects has been revitalised by new subject leadership. At the time of the inspection temporary leadership arrangements were in place in physical education. These arrangements were very effective in promoting improvement in the subject. In history, the only subject specialist, a newly qualified teacher, is providing satisfactory leadership and increasing the popularity of the subject. In the absence of a specialist teacher of religious education, arrangement for the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordination of special educational needs is good. The recently appointed co-ordinator works closely with the head of the support unit and an assistant head, and together they make an effective team.
46. Governance of the school is good. Governors are well informed and highly supportive of the school. Their professional expertise, and in particular the extensive knowledge of education of the chair of governors, enables them to make a valuable contribution to the work of the school. They provide both support and challenge. In 2003, for example, the governors, being concerned about the length of time since the last inspection, were actively involved in securing LEA reviews of each subject to establish priorities for improvement. Governors are closely involved in the school improvement planning process and are aware of current strengths and areas for improvement for the school. Governors manage the budget with considerable skill and financial management is good. Best value for money is sought both in purchasing goods and services and in educational outcomes. All of the school's income is spent for the intended purposes and in accordance with the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

47. With around 50 students the sixth form is small with many teaching groups below the size necessary to make the sixth form cost effective. Also, the predominantly AS and A-level courses the school offers are not well matched to the needs and attainment levels of students. The headteacher and head of sixth form share a common vision for the future of the sixth form and recognise that a wider range of courses is essential if they are to increase the opportunities for more students to pursue post-16 studies. The recent Learning Skills Council review of post-16 provision in the area has helped to revitalise the consortium and the group of schools has, for example, considered the joint funding of a consortium co-ordinator. The head of sixth form, who is relatively new to the post feels that she has had outstanding help and support from other heads of consortium sixth forms. She has a very clear view of where she is leading the sixth form.
48. However, the head of sixth form has other major responsibilities in the school and the lack of a clear job specification for her deputy means that she is not adequately supported. She also has to spend too much of her time supporting on a day-to-day basis the Year 12 tutor who has 29 students to support and guide. Consequently, she does not have enough time to monitor tutor time and this time is not well used.
49. However, despite these weaknesses, the sixth form offers much to its students. Through the PSHE and enrichment programmes and the many ways in which they are encouraged to take responsibility, students are being given the opportunity to develop into mature young people with the desire to help others and to repay the school for what it has done for them. In addition, although standards are well below average, attainment data demonstrates that students generally achieve results that are at least in line with predictions and enable them to pursue studies in higher education.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,293,337	Balance from previous year	270,357
Total expenditure	2,352,915	Balance carried forward to the next	210,779
Expenditure per pupil	5,459		

WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

What is the effectiveness of work related learning?

50. The school's provision for WRL meets statutory requirements. This judgement is based on discussion with the co-ordinator for WRL and an overview of curricular provision. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has conducted an audit of how WRL is provided, largely through PSHE and work experience, and has a clear agenda for expanding provision through the option choices for 2005 and through the auditing of provision in subjects. This will give WRL a firmer basis and enable assessments to be made. At present all Year 10 pupils engage in one week's work experience towards the end of the year, monitored by school staff, with good arrangements for preparation and debriefing in PSHE lessons. Pupils following an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11, including ASDAN silver and gold qualifications and NVQ courses in either administration or engineering, are making good progress, and their inclusion on these courses has improved both their attendance and their predicted grades in GCSE subjects. There is a work related element in the Sele School XL

course provided for lower attaining pupils. Additional work experience is provided for pupils following the GCSE leisure and tourism course. The Connexions service provides good support, which is valued by the school. It provides individual careers interviews for Year 11 pupils, guidance on job applications, and offers advice at parents' consultation evenings. The school intends to offer further WRL courses in future, and hopes to convince parents of the relevance and value of such courses.

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

- Teaching is good and standards are rising.
- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 11, although results remain below average in GCSE examinations.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

51. The 2004 results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average for 2003 (the most recent year for which national statistics are available). The 2004 results were above average in comparison with schools in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Year 6. These results represent good achievement and a considerable improvement over 2003, when standards were well below average. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that attainment is close to what is seen nationally and pupils in Year 9 are on course to attain average standards in the national tests.
52. Pupils enter Year 7 with well below average standards and they achieve well to reach standards that are in line with the national average. Those with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. In their response to literature pupils develop an understanding of plot and character and begin to use textual references and quotations to justify their opinions. The accuracy of written work is generally satisfactory, although some pupils are careless with their spelling and do not check or make corrections. The quality of presentation is inconsistent and some pupils, across the attainment range, do not take enough care over this.
53. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were below average and very similar to results in 2003. The percentage of A* to C grades was well below average, while the percentage of grades A* and A, while still below, was closer to the national picture. A larger percentage of pupils than nationally was entered for the English language examination and all attained a pass grade. The attainment of boys was well below that of girls. Results in English literature were also below average. A full range of evidence seen during the course of the inspection indicates that attainment, while still below average, is closer to what is seen nationally, although the gap between boys and girls remains.
54. Pupils started their GCSE course in Year 10 with well below average attainment and all groups of pupils achieve well, even though standards are below course expectations. Pupils who are currently in Year 11 are making good progress in response to teaching that offers good support in meeting examination requirements and are on course to meet the targets set for them. Year 10 pupils, whose attainment at the start of the course was average, are also making good progress. Pupils develop a thoughtful response to literature, which enables them to write about their texts analytically. For example a lower attaining group in Year 11 made good use of discussion to analyse the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* and identify the events that were crucial to its development. They make developing use of evidence and explanation in their response to literature, although lower attaining pupils do not use this sufficiently or

consistently. Nearly all pupils write their ideas clearly, although many find it difficult to express more complex ideas when writing formally, since they rely too heavily on colloquialisms and imprecise expressions. Higher attaining pupils make increasingly good use of drafting and editing in order to improve the structure of their written work.

55. The quality of teaching is good overall, although some unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Most teaching demonstrates a number of strengths that have been instrumental in the recent rise in standards. Teachers make use of a good range of tasks and activities to engage all pupils and to maintain concentration levels. Pupils respond with interest, enthusiasm and hard work. The quality of questioning is good, because it makes pupils think hard and allows teachers to assess how much progress is being made. There are effective strategies to offer additional support to those who require it. Teachers offer a range of activities and resources in order to make tasks accessible to all pupils. However, because of difficulties in accessing computers, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. There are good opportunities for group work, in response to which pupils make good progress by listening and responding to the ideas of others. Teachers prepare pupils rigorously for their tests and examinations by making them familiar with the test requirements and the way in which these will be marked. A particular strength is the quality of marking and assessment, which is very informative and tells pupils exactly what they need to do in order to improve. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, too much time is wasted because pupils are not fully engaged and there is an inappropriate tolerance of inappropriate behaviour.
56. The quality of leadership and management of the department is good. The requirements of the National Strategy for teaching English are now being met. Teaching is more focused as a result, and standards in Years 7 to 9 have risen considerably. Strategies are being implemented to raise the attainment of boys. However, the impact of these strategies has yet to be seen on GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising and are now closer to course expectations, although the gap between boys and girls remains. Because the monitoring of teaching and learning is effective there is a good awareness of the strengths in the department and weaknesses are being tackled. There has been good improvement overall since the previous inspection. Standards are rising because the quality of teaching has improved and there has been very good improvement in the quality of marking of pupils' work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Pupils enter the school with below average standards of literacy but because of the emphasis placed on the development of these skills, by the end of Year 7 most pupils are able to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Staff development activities have focused on recognising how strategies for raising standards of literacy can become an integral part of all lessons. However there is some inconsistency between subjects and in the attention paid by teachers to the development of literacy skills. There is good practice in history, religious education and in physical education and music pupils' speaking skills are enhanced through the evaluation of the work of their peers and the use of specialised vocabulary. In general, pupils' reading is at least satisfactory and adequate to carry out independent research. The library is well stocked and inviting. Pupils choose to use the library at lunchtimes and after school, and are very well supported by the librarian, who makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in French were well below average in 2004. However, standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are much improved.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of some good teaching and their positive attitudes.
- Inconsistencies in teaching and marking in Years 7 to 9 mean that pupils' experiences and rates of progress vary too much.
- The subject is well led and very well managed, improving the learning environment and pupils' views on learning languages.
- A very good range of visits to France and Spain contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development.

Commentary

58. Teachers' assessments for 2004 showed that standards were below expectations at the end of Year 9, with girls doing better than boys by more than the national difference. The 2004 GCSE results were well below average. However, given that these pupils started French in Year 9 because of disruption of their German course, the results were commendable. Girls did better than boys, but by less than seen nationally.
59. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are below expectations by the end of Year 9, because pupils have insufficient grasp of tenses and grammatical accuracy. However, they achieve satisfactorily, judged against their levels of attainment at the start of Year 7. Higher attaining pupils use French descriptively in written and oral work, but produce little accurate extended language from memory. Pronunciation is often poor. All pupils have better comprehension skills. Most understand details in what they read, but average and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, struggle to follow extended spoken French. Higher attainers in Years 8 and 9 study Spanish as a second language. Their progress is satisfactory in the very limited time made available for the course. In Years 10 and 11, comparatively low numbers of pupils choose to continue French. These pupils have positive attitudes and participate more willingly, so that oral confidence increases and they progress to lengthier written accounts, for example of past holidays or part-time jobs. Weaknesses in pronunciation and accuracy continue to impede communication, but they reach average standards overall, and achieve well.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but inconsistent in many respects, from subject knowledge to the quality of marking. The best lessons, mostly in Years 10 and 11, feature good use of French to conduct lessons, well-integrated use of ICT through computers and an interactive whiteboard, and a wide range of tasks to engage pupils actively. Pupils enjoy these lessons and learn well. In some lessons these features are missing. Pupils hear too much English, so that good pronunciation and listening skills are not reinforced and they concentrate poorly. There are also weaknesses in planning in these lessons. Slow pace in the early part of lessons means that later activities are rushed and do not improve learning as planned. Teachers match work to individual needs effectively and target work and questions well, so that all pupils make similar progress. Homework usually complements classwork well, and sometimes provides extension for gifted pupils.
61. Subject leadership is good. The head of department provides a good model in her own teaching and works hard to improve the image and appeal of the subject. The range of courses has been extended to include Spanish and early entry to the GCSE examination. Attractive resources and very good accommodation provide a stimulating learning environment. The very good range of trips, residential visits and improving links with foreign

schools involve a good many pupils, and contribute significantly to their social and cultural development as well as improving their attitudes to languages. Management is very good, especially in basing development planning on rigorous self-review and analysis of data and monitoring, and in the extent of support for other teachers. Consequently, both standards and attitudes are improving, and improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership promotes high expectations and consistency across the department.
- Assessment is used effectively to raise standards.
- Good teaching is raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' good attitudes contribute to their progress.
- The lack of access to ICT resources limits learning opportunities.

Commentary

62. Results in the National Curriculum test, taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004, rose sharply to be in line with the 2003 national average (the latest year for which comparative National Curriculum test information is available) in comparison with all schools and with similar schools based on prior attainment. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, results were well above average. The results were above those obtained in both English and science. These results represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls, or between different groups of pupils. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations was below average. These results represent satisfactory achievement from the standards attained at the end of Year 9. Contrary to the national picture, boys' results were above those of girls. This was because a small number of higher attaining girls left the school before taking the GCSE examination.
63. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well and that by the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils make good progress because their levels of attainment are assessed on entry and work is then well matched to their needs. This is supported by the good quality of teaching and learning and the successful implementation of the National Strategy for mathematics. Progress is also good in Years 10 and 11 and standards seen are, overall, consistent with course expectations. All groups of pupils achieve equally well because they are provided with appropriate levels of challenge. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Appropriate enhancement activities are provided for gifted and talented pupils and these include the opportunity to take statistics as an extra GCSE subject.
64. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of teaching strategies that provide appropriate levels of challenge. Learning is enhanced by the effective implementation of the National Strategy. Short starter sessions provide opportunities for pupils to develop their mental arithmetic skills and to consolidate previous learning. In the best lessons, these activities are followed by short, timed tasks that keep the pace of the lesson brisk and help to maintain pupils' concentration. The effective use of teaching resources, especially the increasing use of a data projector and interactive whiteboards, engage pupils' interest and also help to sustain concentration. However access to computer suites is difficult due to the high demand on these facilities and this limits pupils' learning opportunities. In a few less successful lessons, because the starter activities were too long and the learning objectives not clear enough, pupils lost concentration and drifted off task. As a result, managing pupil behaviour took too much of the teacher's time. However, most lessons are well planned to ensure that pupils develop their mathematical skills and

understanding effectively. Pupils are given opportunities to work independently and collaborate well in pairs and in small groups. The attitudes of most pupils are good, enabling effective learning to take place. However in a few lessons a small minority of pupils displayed immature behaviour and slowed the learning of the other pupils. The effective use of assessment information is helping to raise standards. Pupils are set targets that include an appropriate element of challenge and progress towards these is reviewed on a regular basis. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, there is some inconsistency and marking does not always provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve.

65. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department is characterised by good teamwork, hard work, high expectations, the sharing of good practice and continuous review to raise achievement. Effective monitoring ensures that weaknesses are identified and tackled quickly. As a result, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The new head of department has initiated many positive improvements and the mathematics team shares the drive for improvement. The National Strategy is fully in place and visible in the work of the department. The use of assessment is seen as central to raising standards and achievement and is now being used more effectively by both teachers and pupils. The potential exists to maintain progress and further raise standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Consistent practice among teachers in the mathematics department in the development of pupils' numerical skills enables pupils to cope effectively with the demands made in most other subjects. The implementation of the numeracy policy throughout the school is well co-ordinated and pupils apply and develop the key skills learned in mathematics lessons effectively in other subjects. There is, for example, good practice in English, modern foreign languages, design and technology, ICT and physical education. Although in science some pupils have difficulty with the basic numeracy demands of the subject, the application of pupils' mathematical skills in most subjects provides a firm basis for reinforcing these skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Good teaching is having a positive impact upon achievement.
- Assessment is used well to guide teaching and learning.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Standards are rising but the proportion of pupils gaining higher A* or A grades in the GCSE examination is well below average.
- Whilst the number of laboratories is adequate, their poor condition is having a negative impact upon teaching and learning.

Commentary

67. The end of Year 9 National Curriculum test results rose sharply from well below average in 2003 to be in line with the 2003 national average (the latest year for which national data are available) in 2004. Achievement relative to pupils' attainment on entry to the school was good. Boys' and girls' results were similar. The 2004 GCSE examination results, including the double and single awards, were average, and above those obtained in English and mathematics. Achievement relative to attainment at the end of Year 9 was satisfactory. Girls' and boys' results were similar. However, the number of pupils achieving the higher A* or A grades, was well below average for both boys and girls. When compared with similar schools based on socio-economic circumstances and prior attainment the GCSE results were above average.

68. As a result of good teaching, pupils currently in the school are making good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Standards, overall, are consistent with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to use symbols and formulae for chemical substances and understand how convection currents transfer heat. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Whilst standards in Year 11 are, overall, consistent with course expectations, the standards of higher attaining pupils are below expectations. However, there is evidence that the standards of higher attaining pupils are rising. For example, pupils in Y10 already have a good understanding of geotropism and hydrotropism, can use chemical equations and use Fleming's 'left hand' rule. Standards throughout the school are rising because pupils are being provided with greater challenge and the sequence of learning is improving. Pupils are now achieving well and making good progress. Whilst the standards of literacy and numeracy are generally satisfactory there is a significant number of pupils, even in Years 10 and 11, who have difficulty in reading technical terms and who have difficulty with basic numeracy.
69. Teaching is good overall, with teaching in a few lessons being very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Pupils learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching were the use of good subject knowledge by teachers, their high expectations of pupils, good well-focused planning and, in many lessons, a range of methods which maintained interest and engendered learning. In most lessons pupils are fully engaged, work hard and at a good pace. In the few less effective lessons, teaching was too teacher centred and there were not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently. Homework is set regularly and used to extend or consolidate classwork. Assessment is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress, to identify underachievement, and guide teaching and curriculum planning. Day-to-day marking has improved and now provides clearer information to pupils about the standard of their work. Pupils have clear targets, know their attainment levels and what they need to do to improve. The identification of appropriate learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts.
70. Subject leadership and management are very good. The newly appointed head of science has a very clear vision of what is needed to improve. She has already made a significant impact upon the effectiveness of the department and standards are improving as a result. Development planning, which is in line with school development planning, is effective and manageable, but planning for long-term development with longer-term targets, costing and precise criteria for success has yet to be carried out. Procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and support of teaching and learning are very good. These are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst there is an adequate number of well qualified and experienced teaching staff, technical support is inadequate. This reduces the effectiveness of teachers, because there are not enough technicians to provide appropriate support. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, are good, and the imminent provision of a new computer suite will provide additional support for cross-curricular ICT. Whilst the number of laboratories is adequate, they are out dated and in urgent need of refurbishment. This hinders the effectiveness of the teaching of modern science. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The potential for further improvement is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are well below average.
- New subject leadership is having a positive impact on standards.
- Difficulties in access to computers are restricting the development of pupils ICT skills in some subjects.

- Teaching and learning are good.

Commentary

71. The 2004 teacher assessments show the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 at the end of Year 9 to be average. This is not confirmed by inspection evidence, which shows that standards in Year 9 are below expectations. Difficulties in staffing over a prolonged period have had an adverse impact on standards. For example, some groups have had as many as five different teachers in a school year. However, staffing has been stabilised by recent appointments and the quality of teaching has significantly improved. As a result standards are rising and, although at present below expectations, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are establishing a good work ethic and skills based teaching is helping to ensure pupils are able to use apply their ICT skills in a variety of contexts. Special needs pupils have access to specific programmes that allow them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through the use of ICT. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with appropriate extension work in lessons and have opportunities to attend extra classes,
72. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have taken a short GCSE ICT course. The course has not attracted many pupils and pupils' attitudes towards the subject have been fairly negative. As a consequence, GCSE examination results have been well below average and achievement unsatisfactory. However, the improvements in standards now being seen in Years 7 to 9 are also being seen in Years 10 and 11. Although standards are below course expectations, achievement is now satisfactory relative to standards at the end of Year 9.
73. Teaching and learning are good across the department. One excellent lesson was observed in Year 10. In this lesson, pupils made rapid gains in their understanding of the use of computers for modelling because expectations were high, the learning activities were very challenging and built effectively on work done on-line in previous weeks. Lessons are well planned to engage pupils in a series of interesting and challenging tasks. The impact of good teaching is now seen in pupils' willingness to engage in independent learning activities and the pride now being taken in their work. In discussion pupils talked about the more challenging nature of the learning activities and all expressed a sense of achievement they had not previously experienced in ICT lessons. Because of this, relationships, attitudes and behaviour are good. Assessment procedures and monitoring systems are good and are having a positive effect on the quality of coursework and pupils' progress.
74. Leadership and management of the new head of department are good with clear indications that rapid improvement is going to be made. The head of department brings extensive experience to the post and, together with an advanced skills teacher, provides an excellent teaching model for other members of the ICT teaching team. Following a complete review of provision a very good development plan has been constructed that includes new courses in Years 10 and 11 that are better suited to pupils' needs and attainment levels. Enough progress has been made since the appointment of the new head of department to judge that improvement is satisfactory. The potential for further improvement is very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. Pupils' competence in the use of ICT across the curriculum is below expectations. This reflects the difficulties in staffing that have been experienced in the subject over recent years and a lack of resources. However, there have been recent improvements in the provision of ICT resources and in particular in the development of new ICT suites. Increasing use is being made of ICT to support teaching and learning in several subjects. In physical education and dance, for example, effective use is made of ICT and camcorders to record and analyse performance. Particularly good use is being made of the many interactive whiteboards installed in classrooms and this is making a positive contribution to raising standards. However, not enough use is made of ICT in some subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This comparative weakness is largely because of difficulties in access to the

computer suites. Although the school has made a considerable investment in computer resources over the last two years, the more widespread use of ICT across the curriculum has led to a substantial increase in demand.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well because teaching is good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Assessment is used well to support pupils' learning.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

76. Teachers' assessments indicate that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or above at the end of Year 9 in 2004 was close to average. The standard of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection is consistent with these assessments. These standards represent good achievement when the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school is taken into account. In Years 7 to 9 basic geography skills are put in place and pupils learn to measure, use plans and read maps. Enquiry work is encouraged and good examples are seen in Year 9 projects on Japan. Most work is well presented and some is improved by use of ICT, but overall there is not enough use of computers to enhance teaching and learning in lessons.
77. In the 2004 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils obtaining A* to C grades was well below average. These results were below those obtained in 2003. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the present Year 11, an all boys group, although below course expectations are above the standards indicated by the 2004 examination results. The number of pupils who are taking the subject in the present Year 11 is small and does not include the highest attainers from Year 9. However the subject was a popular option for the present Year 10 and the group is much larger. Two-thirds of the group are girls and inspection evidence indicates that standards are in line with course expectations. Achievement in the current Year 11 is satisfactory and in Year 10 achievement is good. In Years 10 and 11 pupils produce coursework based on local fieldwork in Hertford. Much of it is of good quality and the work of lower attainers reflects a good commitment and high level of perseverance. Pupils develop the ability to recognise key geographical terms, gather and analyse data, and draw reasonable conclusions.
78. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons well and all lessons have a clear structure. Work is regularly reinforced through good questioning and pupils grow in confidence and this is reflected in the accuracy with which they use geographical terms. Lessons include a variety of activities to engage and interest pupils, are full of good humour and offer high levels of challenge and expectation. As a result relationships are very good and pupils respond positively to their teachers. They concentrate well and work productively, both individually and when working in small groups. In a few lessons not enough time is allowed at the end to review and consolidate the learning that has taken place. Pupils' work is marked regularly and good use is made of National Curriculum levels and GCSE examination criteria to inform pupils of the standard of their work and what they must do in order to improve. Boys and girls work equally well in lessons, but the standard of girls' work is above that of boys. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from well-prepared materials and the attention of learning support assistants.

79. Subject leadership and management are good. Geography teachers work as an effective team and provide good support to the faculty head. Through effective monitoring and evaluation of work in the subject, strengths and weaknesses are well known. There are firm plans to tackle the issue relating to the use of ICT. Standards are rising and improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is strong commitment to further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Boys' GCSE examination results are well below those of girls.
- Consistently good teaching results in good learning.
- There are weaknesses in pupils' source analysis and evaluation skills.
- Classroom relationships are good.

Commentary

80. Teachers' assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 to be close to the national average with little difference between the standards of boys and girls. Inspection evidence shows standards to be below expectations but nevertheless reflect good achievement as many pupils enter the school with well below average attainment. There has been a considerable emphasis on improving literacy and many pupils complete good quantities of extended writing in largely accurate English, although lower attaining pupils still make many errors in spelling and grammar. Source handling and analysis skills, although weak, show signs of improving.
81. In 2004 the proportion of candidates gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examination was well below average. This was largely the result of differences in the performance of boys and girls. While girls' results were close to the results of girls nationally, the results of boys were well below boys' national results. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 11 to be below course expectations. However, these standards represent satisfactory achievement when standards at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. Pupils understand the significance of chronology in analysing sources, but they do not automatically consider elements such as the purpose of a source in assessing its reliability. There are some gaps in pupils' knowledge of historical events and do not always read with understanding. For example, even after reading source material, many pupils did not appreciate why Krystallnacht was so called. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similarly to other pupils.
82. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are well planned with challenging learning objectives and conducted at a brisk pace. Pupils learn well because expectations are high and classroom management is good. As a result the climate for learning is positive and pupils respond positively to the teacher's skilful questioning which is used well to probe and extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and, where necessary, additional support is provided. This ensures that all groups of pupils make equally good progress. Although pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in independent learning, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers to carry out individual research.
83. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The recently appointed specialist teacher is having a significant positive impact on the subject and in collaboration with the head of faculty is helping to raise the subject's profile and popularity. A programme of trips and visits has been introduced, staffing is now stable and there is a clear vision for further progress in the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and a good foundation has been laid for further improvement.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is contributing to a steady rise in standards.
- Pupils are confident in expressing views on a variety of issues.
- The thorough assessment scheme enables pupils to monitor their progress.
- At times the teachers provide answers rather than using probing questioning to develop pupils' understanding.

Commentary

84. Pupils join the school with variable knowledge and understanding of religious topics, and standards are below expectations. Teacher assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above expectations in terms of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Based on the evidence of work seen in books and lessons these assessments appear to be slightly generous. Pupils are stronger on the consideration of ethical issues and weaker in their knowledge of world religions. This partially accounts for the unduly high teacher assessment because there is a greater emphasis on issues in Year 9. Inspection evidence shows the standards of pupils presently in Year 9 are broadly consistent with Agreed Syllabus expectations. During Years 7 to 9 pupils make good progress and achievement is good.
85. In 2004, all pupils were entered for the short GCSE examination in religious education and the percentage obtaining grades A* to C was average. Being able to take the GCSE examination at the end of Year 10 increases pupils' achievement opportunities. These pupils are then able to take AS sociology or the full GCSE religious education examination in Year 11. Pupils presently in Year 11 are following a mixture of the short and full course and standards are consistent with course expectations. This represents good achievement from the end of Year 9 and an improvement from the last inspection when the standards at the end of Year 11 were below average. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented pupils achieve equally well.
86. Teaching and learning are good. The best teaching is challenging, has a good pace and a vitality that stimulates pupils' interest. Pupils are encouraged to express their views, give reasons for their answers, apply their knowledge and give examples to show their understanding of issues. Current events, such as the recent Tsunami, are used effectively to stimulate discussion of religious beliefs in the light of human tragedy. Resources are well matched to pupils' attainment levels to ensure that all, and particularly those with weak literacy skills, are fully engaged in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and good teacher-pupil relationships ensure that all pupils feel confident in expressing personal views. This contributes to the good progress pupils are making. In less effective lessons, the pace drops because teachers provide pupils with too much information and do not engage in probing questioning to stimulate their thinking. Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. The marking of pupils' work is regular and constructive comments inform pupils of how the work improved.
87. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. Although there is no religious education specialist teacher, under the guidance of the head of faculty there is a clear vision to move the department forward and teachers work well as a team. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are rising, assessment is now good, resources have been improved and the school now meets the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all pupils.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning have improved because the department has responded positively to monitoring reviews.
- More stable staffing and higher expectations are helping to raise standards.
- Improved behaviour management and schemes of work are contributing to better learning progress.
- Pupils lack the confidence to work independently, which limits creativity.

Commentary

88. The 2004 teacher assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 to be average. The standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. On entry in Year 7, pupils' design and making skills are below expectations. However, good progress is made through Years 7 to 9 and so the standards reached at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement. Pupils use computers well in designing and to improve the presentation of their work. However there is a wide variation in the quality of design drawings and flow planning in the making process. Literacy and numeracy skills improve because of the emphasis given to the use of subject-specific terminology. Good assessment procedures help pupils to see how to improve their work. However, although National Curriculum levels are used in the monitoring of pupils' progress, pupils themselves are not aware of the content of the different levels and this restricts the setting of personal targets and independent learning.
89. The accumulated 2004 GCSE examination results in design and technology were below average. The results of girls were close to average, while those of boys were well below average. Food technology results were stronger than in graphics and textiles, while results in resistant materials were well below average. Standards in resistant materials were adversely affected by serious staffing difficulties in the subject. Inspection evidence indicates that although standards in Year 11 are, overall, below course expectations, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' designing and making skills, with a variety of materials, are improving. Standards in food technology are closer to course expectations and achievement is good. In graphics and textiles, the focused use of examination criteria is helping to raise standards. Standards in resistant materials show improvement since the start of the school year, but standards remain below those in the other subjects because of gaps arising from the earlier staffing difficulties. This has also contributed to a lack of self-confidence in making independent decisions and this is affecting the quality of coursework. Additional support is being provided to tackle this issue.
90. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Specialist teachers, some of whom are part-time, work well as a team and share good practice. This is helping to raise standards. Most lessons begin with the outlining of the learning objectives and clear demonstrations. Good use is made of displays of pupils' work to brighten the learning environment and to stimulate pupils' thinking. The department has recognised the need to raise the performance; attention is given to this in the planning of lessons. This is having a positive impact and in many lessons boys apply themselves well and concentrate for extended periods. However in some lessons teaching does not have the impact that it should because of the immature behaviour of a number of boys. Classroom management is generally good and this attention seeking behaviour is usually handled well. However, progress in these lessons is adversely affected by the time teachers have to spend dealing with this behaviour. Learning activities

are generally well matched to pupils' attainment levels and appropriate extension work is provided for higher attainers. In addition, booster classes are provided to enrich provision for particularly talented pupils.

91. Subject leadership is good. The head of faculty now has a settled enthusiastic design and technology team, which includes effective technical support. The faculty structure, linking design and technology with art and design, is producing creative cross-curricular links between these subjects. This fits in well with the Performing Arts and Sports status of the school. Management is satisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of work in the department have been impeded because of staff illness. However, following a recent LEA review of the department an appropriate improvement plan has been drawn up to tackle the identified weaknesses. Improvement since the last inspection report is satisfactory. Staffing difficulties that have hampered progress have largely been resolved and the department is now in a good position to make more rapid improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

92. Three lessons of **drama** were seen during the inspection. The quality of teaching was consistently very good. Teachers made good use of a wide range of specialised vocabulary and used questioning and discussion effectively to develop pupils' use of technical terms. Effective use was made of group work and lesson time was used productively. Teachers were very sensitive to the varying needs of pupils and offered very good support to pupils who find drama activities difficult. Teachers used their very good subject knowledge and skills to give clear explanations and to demonstrate how tasks should be carried out. Although standards overall are below expectations, pupils respond very well to the high expectations and encouragement of their teachers. They have very good attitudes to the subject, take it seriously and want to do well.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils use a wide range of media.
- Pupils develop strong research skills.
- Standards of literacy are good.
- Teaching is good overall, but some shortcomings exist in behaviour management in a minority of lessons.

Commentary

93. The 2004 GCSE examination results were average. These results represent good achievement for these pupils. Teachers' 2004 showed standards at the end of Year 9 to be average. These standards also represent good achievement from standards on entry to the school.
94. Pupils' standards on entry in art have risen slightly over recent years and are now in line with national expectations at the start of Year 7. Pupils have basic skills but a limited knowledge and understanding of art. They make good progress and attainment in Year 9 is now above expectations. Pupils' work at this stage shows good skills in a wide range of two and three-dimensional media, they have a sound knowledge of a range of artists and different cultural influences, and display strong research skills. Most pupils maintain these above average standards in Years 10 and 11; pupils' work shows good skills in a wide range of media and research and experimental work is of a good standard. However, some pupils are too dependent on images derived from photographs, reproductions or the Internet rather than

from direct observation. Pupils with special educational need achieve well across all years because of the practical nature of the work and the supportive teaching they receive. Overall, girls achieve higher standards; their work is more painstaking and thorough.

95. The overall quality of teaching is good. The best teaching provides a range of well organised activities including interesting starter activities, thoughtful discussion, and reviews of learning objectives. In these lessons learning is good because pupils' attention is held and lesson time is used productively. Where teaching and learning are less successful, pupils' attention is not always fully secured at the outset; some pupils fail to listen and so do not know what to do. Extended activities fail to hold their attention, they chatter about irrelevant matters and this affects their progress and that of those around them. Occasionally misbehaviour occurs that in some lessons is not well managed.
96. The overall quality of leadership and management is good. Leadership is strong with a clear focus on raising standards and achievement. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a wide range of experiences in two- and three-dimensional media but ICT is not used enough for image manipulation. There are no computers in the art studios. Extra-curricular provision is good, with many opportunities for pupils to undertake additional work. Assessment arrangements are very good; an element of self-assessment ensures that most pupils know the level they have achieved and what they need to do to progress.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards now higher in Year 9 and although the 2004 GCSE results were below those obtained in 2003, inspection evidence indicates that standards in Years 10 and 11 are again above course expectations. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and this has an adverse effect on pupils' learning. Resources have improved and the subject continues to make a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision and determination of the new head of department to provide relevant musical activities for all pupils are improving the status of the subject within the school.
- Very good teaching is helping to raise standards.
- The very good relationships between pupils and staff are promoting good learning.
- Assessment information is used effectively to help pupils to improve their examination results.

Commentary

98. The 2004 teachers' assessments show that by the end of Year 9, the attainment of the large majority of pupils was well below average. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination was also well below average.
99. Frequent changes in staffing since the last inspection have contributed to a lack of continuity in teaching and learning and to a decline in standards since the last inspection. This situation has now been stabilised and inspection evidence shows that although standards in Year 9 are below national expectations, a large proportion of pupils are now achieving standards that are close to expectations. These standards represent good achievement when the very limited musical experiences of the majority of pupils on entry to the school are taken into account. Standards in Year 11 are also improving but are not yet consistent with course expectations. However, as attainment at the end of Year 9 was well below average, achievement is good.

100. Teaching and learning are very good. The very good quality of teaching is having a particularly strong impact in Years 8 to 11 where pupils are making up for the work missed in previous years. It is noticeable that some of the higher attaining pupils in Year 7 are already able to perform to the same standard as their peers in Years 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs are also making very good progress because many find the practical nature of the tasks engaging and well matched to their attainment levels. Higher attaining pupils are given many opportunities to develop their performing skills by a series of well planned, interesting and challenging activities. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the teacher's outstanding music skills and competence in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned to make effective use of an interactive board and other ICT based resources. Tasks are clearly explained and illustrated with musical demonstrations so that performing time is not wasted by the repetition of instructions. As a result, time is used very productively and pupils get the best out of the interesting variety of activities provided in lessons. Pupils' learning also benefits from probing questioning which helps to consolidate their musical understanding. Very good relationships contribute to a very positive learning conducive environment. The increasing number of instrumental lessons available and the many opportunities that are provided for pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities also enhance pupils' musical development. A recent production of *Grease* was performed with acclaim to sold-out audiences.
101. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. New assessment procedures and a new curriculum are being devised and good investment has been made in new resources. These will enable the department to offer a wider range of courses, such as music technology, and provide pupils in Years 7 to 9 with better access to computers in lessons. However there is a shortage of good quality pitched percussion and multi-cultural instruments. The accommodation is satisfactory but not in keeping with the school's performing arts status. However it is being adapted to suit the new resources and also provide better practice rooms for the visiting instrumental teachers and for pupils to practise. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory and the subject has good potential for further improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; teachers are very enthusiastic and very good lesson planning enables all groups of pupils to learn well.
- GCSE examination results have risen to be well above the national average.
- The subject benefits from the very strong commitment of the director of performing arts and sport to improvement and success.
- The excellent range of extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for pupils of all ages to extend their learning.
- The indoor accommodation is very limited and unsuitable for dance and gymnastics.

Commentary

102. GCSE examination results show a significant rise since the last inspection. The 2004 results were well above average and pupils did better in physical education than in their other subjects. These results represent very good achievement when standards at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. Inspection evidence shows the work of the current GCSE group to be close to course expectations, with girls achieving slightly higher standards than boys. Standards at the end of Year 9 have also risen and inspection evidence is consistent with the 2004 teachers' assessments, which show that standards are average. These standards represent good achievement. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not following the examination course is satisfactory and standards are consistent with

national expectations. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Higher attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve very well and are successful in a wide range of sports.

103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and manage pupils well. Teaching is very well planned; lessons include a challenging range of activities that enable pupils to build on previous learning. Work is planned to suit all pupils. For example, in a Year 8 dance lesson, lower attaining pupils developed imaginative dance sequences because learning objectives were made explicit and illustrated by clear demonstrations and the effective use of video recordings. A general weakness in several of the lessons observed was that too much time was spent in discussing learning objectives with the result that pupils were inactive for lengthy periods. Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in independent learning in lessons. In a Year 10 health-related fitness lesson, for example, pupils were able to plan, measure and evaluate performance. In some lessons, however, progress when working independently is restricted because pupils lack the maturity necessary to take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject. Participation rates are high and relationships very good. Very effective use is made of video-analysis facilities to enhance performance.
104. The leadership and management of the subject, under the temporary headship of the director of performing arts and sport, are very good. His very strong commitment to improvement and success is fully supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen and specialist status is having a very positive impact across the school and the wider community. However, the indoor facilities are unsuitable for many activities, and in particular gymnastics and dance, and are inadequate for a school with specialist status.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

105. Teaching and learning in the one Year 11 **business studies** lesson seen during the inspection were satisfactory. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of employment law in relation to the employment of young people. The teacher made effective use of an interactive whiteboard and a video tape recording to stimulate discussion on employment law and discrimination in the workplace. Although some pupils made good contributions to this discussion, the immature behaviour of a few restricted progress. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the 2004 GCSE examination was average.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

106. The programme for **PSHE** is taught by form tutors for one hour each week. The programme meets statutory requirements with regard to careers education and citizenship, and appropriate attention is given to drugs and sex education. Ten PSHE lessons covering Years 7 to 11 were observed during the inspection. Teaching was never less than satisfactory. It was good overall and in four lessons it was very good. Lessons were well planned with a variety of activities and made good contributions to pupils' personal development.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship has been well planned and the strong community aspects of the school have supported effective implementation.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and very good schemes of work result in good teaching.

- Pupils are given good opportunities to participate in practical citizenship activities.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length about personal opinions or controversial issues.

Commentary

107. Standards of attainment are in line with expectations and achievement is good. Citizenship notebooks demonstrate that most pupils have satisfactory recording skills and are able to express an opinion clearly. By Year 9 most are able to understand the difference between the main political parties and in Years 10 and 11 pupils show a sound understanding of the power of advertising and the ethics of cheap overseas labour.
108. Although only the Year 10 PSHE lessons observed had citizenship content, the teaching and learning in these and the other PSHE lessons seen were good. Lessons have clear objectives for learning, and teachers have good subject expertise, which enables them to engage pupils' interest. Good use is made of discussion and other active learning methods. Notebooks are used for pupils to record the work they do, although not enough use is made of these to encourage pupils to explore and reflect on their own opinions about important and controversial issues. Some of these notebooks are very well marked by tutors who set up a dialogue with pupils about the opinions they express and comment on how well they have participated in lessons.
109. Pupils are given good opportunities to engage in practical citizenship. The school has a very strong community ethos and is a focus for much community activity. This has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes. All pupils take part in compiling harvest festival boxes for local elderly people and young homeless people and contribute to the Christmas shoebox appeal for refugees in England and in Eastern Europe. Annual elections are held for the school council and plans are already in place for a mock election campaign to be run parallel to the general election so that pupils can experience democracy in action.
110. The subject is very well led and managed by the deputy headteacher. The curriculum is reviewed regularly, and teaching is carefully monitored by heads of year. Detailed lesson plans support those teachers whose subject knowledge is insecure and assessment procedures are currently being refined and improved.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, three 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.

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	33	78	0	22	6.7	28.5
Biology	2	50	64	0	10	10	19.8
Business studies	3	67	75	0	15	26.7	25.7
Chemistry	3	33	70	0	13	6.7	23
Drama	2	50	87	0	20	15	30.9
English literature	1	0	86	0	17	0	29.7
Design and technology	4	50	73	0	14	10	24.3
General studies	7	57	74	0	17	17.1	25.5
Geography	1	100	76	100	20	50	27
Information technology	3	33	67	0	9	13.3	20.6
Mathematics	2	0	60	0	14	0	20.5
Music	1	100	80	0	17	20	27.5
Other social studies	2	0	68	0	15	0	23.2
Physics	1	0	66	0	15	0	22.4

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	2	100	98	50	50	80	87.1
Biology	2	100	97	0	40	40	79.3
Business studies	2	100	99	50	39	80	81.8
Chemistry	1	100	98	0	50	60	85.7
Communication studies	2	100	99	0	40	60	83.5
Drama	3	100	99	0	43	73.3	85.1
English literature	3	100	99	67	45	80	85.5
Design and technology	3	67	98	33	35	60	77.9
Information technology VQ	2	100	92	100	31	120	72.5
Mathematics	1	0	97	0	57	0	89.5
Music	1	100	98	0	37	80	79.5
Other social studies	2	100	97	50	43	100	81.6
Sports/PE studies	2	100	98	50	31	80	75.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

109. English literature was inspected in detail and French was sampled. This is the first year of an AS course in **French**. Three students are following the course. Standards are well below expectations but students made good progress in the lesson seen because very good teaching stimulated their interest and enjoyment. The course is very well resourced and managed.

English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement of students across the attainment range is good.
- All students attain an A-level pass grade and some gain high grades.
- Teaching is good and offers good quality support to all students.
- Leadership and management are effective and there are many examples of good practice.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and do much to enhance achievement.
- There is insufficient analysis of the high rate of students who do not complete the course.

Commentary

111. In 2004 the number of students who took the A-level examination in English literature was too small to allow valid national comparisons. All students attained a grade in the A to E range and all students either met or exceeded the targets set for them. The number of students who take the course is beginning to rise from the very low numbers of previous years. Standards have remained similar to those at the time of the previous inspection.
112. The flexible policy for entry to the course means that it is followed by a very wide range of students and achievement overall is good. Students who start the course with high attainment in English GCSE examinations go on to reach the higher A-level grades, while those whose prior attainment does not form a secure basis for further study in the subject achieve well to attain an A-level pass.
113. All students develop effective note-taking skills, which form a good basis for their written assignments and also for revision. Most students develop a balanced, objective essay style of writing that is well suited to literary criticism, although lower attaining students find it more difficult to achieve and sustain this. All students develop a satisfactory understanding and response to the key features of their texts. Students build effectively on the foundations established earlier in the school to use evidence and textual reference to illustrate and justify their ideas. They make effective use of additional personal reading to enhance their understanding of the social and critical context of the texts they study. The spelling of some students is very careless.
114. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students trust their teachers to help them to resolve uncertainties and difficulties. Teachers plan lessons well, in order to make challenging topics more accessible across the attainment range. Students are expected to undertake independent research and they are not reliant on being "spoon fed" by their teachers. Teachers make good use of questioning to probe and extend students' understanding and in order to assess their progress. Frequent opportunities for students to engage in discussion and to explain their thinking means that they make good progress from hearing the views of others. Teachers make good use of target setting to motivate students. The marking of students' work is very good since it makes extensive use of clear assessment objectives to promote students' understanding of how they can make progress towards higher grades.

115. The leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. The provision of individual support for each student is effective across a wide range of attainment. Good use is made of students' predicted grades and of tracking their progress towards them, so students feel well informed about their own achievement. There is provision for a range of good quality enrichment of the curriculum through theatre visits and attendance at study days. There is a high rate of students who drop out of the course, both after the completion of the AS level and at other times. There has not been a thorough analysis of why this happens and there is therefore no clear picture of how this could be prevented.
116. The students speak very warmly of their experience of studying English in the sixth form. They are very appreciative of the support they are given by their teachers and feel that their relatively easy transition to a new style of working in the sixth form is largely attributable to this. They relish the opportunities they are given to enhance their awareness of the English literary tradition and are very active in supplementing the programme of cultural activities by arranging additional opportunities on their own initiative.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

117. The standard of literacy in other subjects in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, although there is considerable inconsistency between subjects. In art, students write well in their extensive evaluations of the work of well-known artists and when comparing their own work to the work of famous photographers. In sociology, students' writing is weak and this inhibits their progress. The effectiveness of discussion is limited by students' limited vocabulary and their hesitancy in using the specialised subject vocabulary. In geography the flow of discussion is excellent and promotes good progress. In drama students' lack of a more advanced vocabulary and written style makes it difficult for them to reach the highest levels. There is little evidence in science of students reading around the subject independently, while in English this is a feature of the students' positive attitudes to the subject.

MATHEMATICS

118. Provision in **mathematics** was sampled during the inspection. Few students are studying mathematics. In 2004 only one student entered A-level and two took AS-level. Results were very low. In the current Year 12 group there are seven students. Entry levels from GCSE are well below average. In the one lesson seen teaching and learning were good. Students were working hard and keen to learn, although they were relatively passive and very reliant on the teacher. The students who had followed the Intermediate GCSE course were finding work on the division of polynomials difficult, because their basic knowledge of algebra is weak. The teacher had to give them a great deal of additional help to enable them to make progress in the lesson.

Mathematics across the curriculum

119. Overall students' numeracy standards are satisfactory and sufficient to support learning in other subjects. Almost all of the students presently in Year 12 had gained at least a C grade in the GCSE examination and the few that did not are re-taking the examination to improve their skills and grades.

SCIENCE

120. Although science subjects were not inspected in depth, sampling took place in **biology**, **chemistry** and **physics**. There were too few candidates in either AS-level or A-level for national comparisons to be made in the 2004 examinations. However, point scores in each subject were below average overall. In the two Year 12 lessons observed, one in biology and one in chemistry, teaching was satisfactory. Because it was not possible to observe a physics lesson during the period of the inspection, students' work in the subject was sampled. In biology, students showed interest, worked well and were eager to make progress. However, the small number of students in the group limited the level of discussion. Although students

were researching the impact of cholesterol and low and high-density lipoproteins on heart disease, much of the work could have been done as an independent research project at home and the findings discussed during the lesson. Similarly, in the chemistry lesson, students were too dependent on the teacher and were not given enough opportunities to engage in independent learning activities. The analysis of students' work and discussion with students show that standards in biology and physics are average, but below average in chemistry. Nevertheless, achievement, compared with students' attainment on entry to the sixth form, is satisfactory. There are no students who have continued into Year 13 to take A-level in any science subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. **ICT** was lightly sampled during the inspection. The AS and A-level courses are taught in a flexible style with the two groups combined for some lessons. This is an economical arrangement, although one that makes substantial demands on the teacher. Teaching and learning in the one Year 12 lesson observed were very good. The style of teaching places great emphasis on encouraging students to make independent decisions and to take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning. This approach is helping students to make good progress and to raise standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

122. Students have satisfactory access to computers and although their ICT skills are below expectations, they are adequate to enable them to improve the presentation of their notes and coursework and to use the Internet for research. There is also some use of the facilities in lessons in other subjects. In many lessons interactive whiteboards are used effectively to support teaching and learning.

HUMANITIES

123. Sociology was inspected in depth and geography was sampled. Numbers taking **geography** are very small, with four in Year 13 and one in Year 12 who has joined a group in another consortium school. In the Year 13 lesson observed teaching was good and attainment higher than expected at this point in the course.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn well in lessons as a result of good teaching.
- Students lack independence in their learning.
- The range of learning resources for the subject is very limited.
- Students benefit from their teachers' supportive approach.

Commentary

124. There were no candidates for the A-level examination in 2004 as the subject has only recently been introduced; all current Year 13 students passed the AS-level examination last year, albeit with mainly lower grades.
125. In Year 13, standards of work seen are below course expectations, although this represents at least satisfactory achievement, as students' prior attainment was well below the average for entry to A-level courses. In a Year 13 lesson on sociological theory and method, students accurately summarised the main structural approaches and were able to contrast consensus and conflict perspectives well. However, they were very passive and too dependent on the

teacher. This weakness is also apparent in students written work. Written assignments are undertaken conscientiously but many students have difficulty in planning and structuring their essays and make elementary errors in literacy. Because students do not read widely they do not support their arguments by referring to appropriate case studies. Additionally many lack the confidence to use one sociological perspective to criticise another one.

126. In lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was consistently good. Planning is thorough and detailed, although there is a need to secure the more active involvement of students in their own learning. Teachers make effective use of questioning to explore, challenge and consolidate students' knowledge and understanding. They mark work regularly and include helpful comment, although some spelling errors remain unchecked. Students benefit from their teachers' supportive approach and appreciate their ready accessibility. Although all Year 12 and Year 13 students now have their own textbooks the range of learning resources is very limited; for example, the library does not stock either the standard texts or a relevant periodical.
127. The school's arrangements for leadership and management are now satisfactory; the newly appointed head of faculty has assumed these responsibilities but currently the relevant documentation such as a handbook and schemes of work, which would normally inform the work of the department, do not exist. Nevertheless, the two teachers involved work constructively together and students are very well supported. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made since the introduction of the subject.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

128. During the inspection design and technology was sampled. A small group of students opt for design and technology at A-level. One Year 13 lesson in **product design** was sampled. Teaching and learning in this lesson were good. Students are making good progress and standards were broadly in line with course expectations. The number of students opting for the course is increasing and retention is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

129. Art and design was inspected in detail and photography and drama were sampled. **Photography** is a recent and popular addition to the range of AS and A-level courses with the first students currently in Year 13. In the lesson seen good teaching enabled students to achieve well. They produce a substantial range of work and use digital and conventional media with confidence. Their written work is particularly good. Two **drama** lessons were seen, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching in the Year 12 lesson was good but learning was only satisfactory because students lacked confidence and were too dependent on the teacher. By Year 13, students exhibit more independence and teaching and learning were very good in the lesson seen with students willing to experiment and take more responsibility for their own work.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well.
- Research, experimentation and developing ideas are strong.
- Good teaching leads to good learning.
- Students sometimes lack confidence both in their oral work and in their practical work.

Commentary

130. There have been too few candidates entered for AS and A-level examination to enable a meaningful comparisons to be made with national averages. School assessment information shows that students' achievement in these examinations is satisfactory and that the results obtained are consistent with predictions based on their GCSE examination results.
131. Inspection evidence shows that students are presently attaining standards that are in line with course expectations. Given that overall standards on entry to the course are below average, these standards represent good achievement for many students. Students' work shows strong links to the work of prominent artists and their ideas are consistently developed in a wide range of media. Students visit art galleries and museums, frequently in their own time, and write informative accounts of their observations. Their written work shows good skills of critical appraisal. Personal studies include challenging topics, such as 'What is art?' Students' work is often imaginative but is sometimes tentative and lacks the expressive confidence that characterises higher-level attainment. Students use ICT extensively to conduct research but do not use it enough to manipulate images.
132. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good features, and generally leads to good learning. Teachers are encouraging and the use of probing questioning helps to ensure that students develop a good understanding of the main elements of the course. For example, in reviewing their work against assessment objectives, students are obliged to reflect on what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their work. Frequent reference to the meaning of key words ensures that students use technical vocabulary correctly. Though students appear to lack confidence in oral work, supportive teaching eventually draws thoughtful responses from most of the students. However, although students have positive attitudes to the subject they are often too dependent on the teacher for thought and inspiration.
133. Subject leadership and management are good. Because schemes of work are well organised students experience a broad and balanced art and design programme. Assessment arrangements are good and regular feedback provides students with accurate information about their progress. Effective use is made of visits to art galleries and museums to enrich students' knowledge and understanding of art and artists. Students find the course interesting and challenging. They feel they receive useful feedback and know what they need to do to improve. They would recommend the course to others. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; standards have risen, students are now achieving well and resources have improved.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

134. Teaching and learning in the one Year 12 **physical education** lesson observed were satisfactory. In a well planned lesson on the origins of physical education in the curriculum students gained a greater understanding of the link between education and national needs and, through role-playing, what pupils would have experienced in a typical 1902 physical education lesson. However, students were very dependent on their teacher and unresponsive to the teacher's probing questioning. This was partly related to significant gaps in students' historical knowledge, such as not knowing the parties involved in the fighting of the Boer war.

BUSINESS

135. **Business studies** was sampled. Although there were only two A-level candidates in 2004, their average point score was close to the national average. Teaching and learning in the Year 13 lesson seen were good. The teacher made good use of ICT to engage students' interest. Although there are only three students in the class the teacher ensured that they all participated. They showed a good understanding of different styles of management and the way in which these are affected by the size of the company.

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

The effectiveness of management	4	3
---------------------------------	---	---

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