

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TORPOINT COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Torpoint

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112041

Headteacher: Mr David J Farmer

Lead inspector: Mr J Plumb

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 268996

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	980
School address:	Trevol Road Torpoint Cornwall
Postcode:	PL11 2NH
Telephone number:	01752 812511
Fax number:	01752 815014
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Morton
Date of previous inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> January 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized 11 – 18 community comprehensive school. There are 980 students on roll including 147 in the sixth form. Boys outnumber girls but not significantly so. There are deficiencies in the accommodation for the number on roll but planning is in place for a new sports hall. The headteacher, in post for just over a year, has managed significant change. Attainment on entry is broadly average but a significant proportion of higher attaining students leave Torpoint at the end of Year 6 to attend grammar schools in Plymouth. Students also cross the river from Plymouth to attend the school. This cross river movement results in the school having to work with the protocols and procedures of two different local authorities. This unique position presents the school with a number of challenges which it manages skilfully. At 9 per cent the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average but this must be considered with caution because the school serves families from a local Naval Base (although not eligible for free school meals, low incomes are not uncommon). Overall, the socio-economic position of the students is broadly average but a proportion of students come from the Stonehouse ward in Plymouth, which is one of the most deprived wards in England. The proportion of students with special educational needs at 21 per cent is above the national average as is the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs (4 per cent). The range of special educational needs is more complex than at the time of the previous inspection reflecting Cornwall's inclusion strategy and the desire of parents / carers of children with special educational needs to choose the school because of the quality of the provision it makes for their children. The range of needs includes: specific learning, moderate learning, social, emotional and behavioural, speech and communication, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical and autistic needs. There are few minority ethnic students and none have English as an additional language. There are four students in public care.

Although on one site, two off-site industrial units are being developed to provide vocational courses. School initiatives include: Young Enterprise and the Network Learning Community. In recent years it has gained a Schools Achievement Award, Sportsmark and the Investors in Education Business Partnership. Currently, it is seeking specialist status as a Humanities College.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16930	Mr J Plumb	Lead inspector	Special educational needs
9052	H Barter	Lay inspector	
32865	J Shackleton	Team inspector	English
18967	B Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
18453	C Lower	Team inspector	Science Physics in the sixth form
25778	A Hicks	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
25377	L Brown	Team inspector	Music Art and design in the sixth form
15127	W Goodall	Team inspector	Design and technology Performing Arts in the sixth form
33738	M Parvez	Team inspector	Geography
13122	S Matthews	Team inspector	History Sixth-form co-ordinator
23512	P Fisher	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
3832	J Ayerst	Team inspector	Art and design
15312	K Lord	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
12179	L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International  
Upperton House  
The Avenue  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN21 3YB

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Torpoint Community is a **good** and improving school with a **very good** sixth form. Being a very inclusive school it provides a good quality of education for its students and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good and often very good teaching based on very good subject knowledge and high expectations leads to good achievement in most subjects.
- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is very good.
- Results in most subjects at GCSE and A-level are good.
- The provision for science, design and technology and drama is very good.
- Student guidance and welfare is very good.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation impedes learning in physical education, art and design and music.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Tracking of students' progress is good.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good and this is a very inclusive school.
- Opportunities to raise students' spiritual awareness and to promote their awareness of cultural diversity are too often missed.
- There is a lovely balance between working hard and having good fun because of the good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Non-permanent exclusion procedures are in need of review.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy across the curriculum is significantly better. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. But there has not been sufficient improvement in the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE).

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

***Because of gaps in the 2004 data at the time of the publication of the report, 2003 data has been benchmarked. Whenever possible to do so, the 2004 data has been used in subject reports.*** Achievement is good. In the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2003, results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics and above in science. Compared with similar schools, results were in line in English, above in science but marginally below in mathematics. Results in 2004 were significantly better in mathematics and similar in science. Because comparative data for English in 2004 is not yet published no judgement can be made. GCSE results at A\* - C in 2003 were in line with the national average but below compared with similar schools. This was a glitch and results are much improved in 2004. GCSE results in geography, science, religious education and music were above or well above the national average in 2003. They were below in French, art and design and history. A-level results were above the national average in 2003 and they improved in 2004. Achievement in the sixth form is very good.

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

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

Achievement is good or very good in almost all subjects across the school and standards are in line or above the national average in all subjects except for history by Year 9 and art and design by Year 11 which are below national averages. There are good reasons to explain this attainment related to time allocated in history and the prior attainment of the students in art and design. Very good achievement in design and technology and for students following the full GCSE course in religious education results in above average attainment in these subjects. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve well. Achievement is good for minority ethnic students. Standards are rising rapidly in French and mathematics because of the positive changes made by the school. Achievement in citizenship and work related learning is satisfactory. Insufficient attention is paid to raising students' spiritual awareness and to promoting their knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. Students' moral and social development is good. Students' attitudes to learning are good as is their behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. There are examples of excellent teaching and very little unsatisfactory or poor teaching. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, cracking pace and flexible planning to ensure that the needs of the students are met. The unsatisfactory and poor teaching is characterised by weak behaviour management and a pedestrian pace. The teaching of students with complex special educational needs in the resource base is very good. However, their experience when integrated in main school classes is more variable. It is good overall but, on occasions, the learning support assistant input is not effective. The quality of teaching for minority ethnic students is good. The single sex groups are taught well as are students identified as gifted and talented and those students in public care. The curriculum is good except for the lack of secure provision for the delivery of personal, social and health education. Students' care and welfare are very good. Links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership is good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Management is good and some aspects are very good. There is a clear and shared vision which focuses on raising achievement for all students. All managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work together effectively as a team. Governance is satisfactory. The new committee structure bodes well for the future. The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities well except for ensuring that all students receive a daily act of collective worship and that sixth-form students receive religious education.

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

Parents are positive about the school. They consider that the leadership and management style of the new headteacher is very good and that this is an improving school. They state that communication with them is improving and inspectors agree with their view. Students enjoy school and consider that their teachers are approachable and go out of their way to support them. Year 11 students consider that they are under considerable pressure because of timetabling difficulties this year (they lose some of their free time at lunch times). Students enjoy the range of clubs. They know that they have an adult they can turn to for help. They are proud of their school and pleased that they chose to come. Both parents and students are frustrated about the unsatisfactory accommodation, particularly for physical education.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- in partnership with the local education authority, improve the accommodation for physical education, art and design and music;

- raise students' spiritual awareness and develop their knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity;
- ensure that the provision for personal, social and health education has a secure place within the curriculum;
- review exclusion procedures;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and ensure that students in the sixth form receive a programme of religious education.



## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Provision in the sixth form is **very good**. Very good and sometimes inspirational teaching and learning result in good and very good achievement and above average standards in almost all subjects. Attainment on entry to the sixth form for some students is below average because it is a fully inclusive sixth form. Lower attaining students succeed on well-developed courses alongside more academic students. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and are proud to be members. They consider that they are treated as mature adults. Leadership and management are very good. The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good and excellent teaching and learning result in very good achievement.
- There is a rich, exciting and relevant curriculum.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students do not receive their entitlement to religious education and not enough is done to raise their spiritual awareness or to prepare them for living and working in a culturally diverse society.
- Accommodation for private study is cramped and the room used for teaching art and design is unsatisfactory.
- The atmosphere in the sixth form is terrific: the right balance is struck between enjoyment and hard work

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is good. Very good teaching and learning lead to good achievement for students.
Mathematics	Provision is good and improving. Achievement is good because of the very good teaching, and standards attained are above average.
Physics	Provision is good. Good teaching and learning result in good achievement and above average attainment.
History	Provision is very good. Achievement is very good as are teaching and learning. Standards attained are above average.
Art and design	Provision is good. Achievement is good and standards are in line to be above average.
Performing arts	Provision is very good. Standards are well above average. Students' achievement is very good because the teaching and learning are very good.

*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

Students in the sixth form receive very good advice, guidance and support. Year 12 students state that they were given very good advice about which courses to opt for when they were in Year 11. Students consider that the head of sixth form and their tutors listen to them and support them well. Their progress is tracked very well and as required they are given additional help. Students planning to go on to higher education state that they are given good advice about the courses on offer and they appreciate the range of visits to colleges and universities. Those on NVQ courses consider that they receive good training to equip them for adult life in the work place. However, some students

consider that they do not access Connexions (the careers service) until after they have decided upon their course at university or career direction and there is an element of dissatisfaction about this. Students consider that they have an effective way of making their views known.

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

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of the sixth form has given a very good steer on developing a creative and innovative curriculum. The flexibility within the curriculum successfully meets the wide range of needs amongst the students. It is all inclusive and embracing, enabling the student who desires to become an electrician the same opportunity to succeed as the student who has her / his sights firmly fixed on gaining a place at Cambridge University. The head of the sixth form has successfully developed a strong team of tutors. Management systems are very good.

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

Students interviewed echoed the view that they enjoyed being in the sixth form. All are proud to belong to the sixth form. They consider that consultation with them about the quality of provision made is very good and that they are listened to as mature young adults. During the inspection it was evident that they saw teachers after school about their work. They consider that they are challenged to succeed and that they are told clearly about what is required to improve their work and so reach a higher grade. They, alongside the rest of the school community, are frustrated with the deficiencies in the accommodation. Through the school council they have played an active part in managing effective change which has resulted in improvements in the quality of provision in the sixth form. The high retention rates on almost all courses and the very good examination results in a wide range of subjects are testimony to this being a very successful sixth form.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

*Because of the timing of the inspection there are gaps in the published data for 2004. Comparative data for English in Key Stage 3 in 2004 has not yet been published and the national comparative teacher assessment data for the foundation subjects for the same year are not available. Comparative data for the GCSEs in 2004 was published on the last day of the inspection after a number of inspectors had left. No published comparative data for AS and A-level available for 2004 is available. **Consequently, for consistency, comparisons made are against 2003 data but where the 2004 data is available the appropriate comparisons have been made.***

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Achievement is good overall. Attainment by Year 9 and Year 11 is average overall. In a number of subjects, achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. In these subjects (outlined in detail below), attainment is above the national average by Year 11. Achievement for students with special educational needs and for those who are gifted and talented is good. There are few minority ethnic students and they achieve well. GCSE results at A\* - C are better in 2004 than in 2003.

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

- GCSE results in science, geography, design and technology, music and religious education are above average.
- Achievement in drama is very good.
- Standards of attainment are rising in mathematics and French and are now in line with the national average by Year 11.
- Achievement is at least good in most subjects.
- Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve well.
- Standards are above and well above the national average in a wide range of A-level subjects.

#### **Commentary**

1. Attainment on entry in Year 7, although broadly average, is skewed by the fact that a significant proportion of higher attaining students leave Torpoint at the end of Year 6 to attend grammar schools in Plymouth. Detailed analysis of the attainment of the current Year 7 students indicates weaknesses in writing on entry to the school. In the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2003, results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics and above in science. Compared with similar schools (measured by prior attainment), results were in line in English, above in science but marginally below in mathematics. Results in 2004 were similar in science but significantly better in mathematics. Because the data for English is not published and because the school's test papers are being remarked, no judgement for 2004 can be made. GCSE passes at A\* - C in 2003 were in line with the national average but below compared with similar schools. This was a glitch as results at A\* - C in comparison with similar schools were well above the national average in 2002. In 2004, GCSE results at A\* - C have improved significantly in many subjects but because of the timing of the inspection the overall proportion of A\* - C grades has not been benchmarked against the national comparative data. Over time, GCSE results compared with similar schools are consistently above the national average and given the above average proportion of students with special educational needs this is a commendable achievement. Trends over time by Year 9 and also by Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.0 (33.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.1 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.9 (34.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 176 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Because comparative data for English in 2004 is not available the 2003 data has been used.**

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	53 (49)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36.6 (36.8)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 173 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Because the 2004 GCSE data was published on the last day of the inspection, and because of a very significant gap in Key Stage 3 data in 2004 and because it is not available at all for the sixth form, tables for 2003 are included in this report (including the GCSE table).**

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.8 (87.5)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	49.7 (17.9)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per student	285.1 (169.5)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 69 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Achievement for current students in English, French, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, art and design and physical education is good across the school. In history, achievement by Year 9 is impeded by the fact that students only have one period a week and so their attainment is below average. In history in Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good and attainment is in line with the national average by Year 11. In religious education, standards are above those expected by the agreed syllabus by Year 9, in line with expectations in the short course at GCSE and above average in the long course. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Attainment in design and technology is above average by Year 9 and well above by Year 11, reflecting good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11. In art and design, standards are as expected nationally by Year 9 but below by Year 11 because lower attaining students opt to take up art and design at the beginning of Year 10. Achievement in drama is very good in Years 10 and 11 and standards are well above average by Year 11. Because drama was only recently introduced in Years 7 to 9 it is too early to make judgements on standards. Throughout the school, attainment is in line with the national average in English, French, mathematics, ICT and physical education. It is above in science and geography by Year 9 and also by Year 11. In music, standards are average by Year 9 because achievement is satisfactory but above average by Year 11 because achievement throughout Years 10 and 11 is good. Achievement in citizenship and work related learning by Year 11 is satisfactory and standards by Year 11 are average.

## Sixth Form

3. A-level results were above the national average in most subjects in 2003 and the results in a number of subjects in 2004 are even better. Lower attaining students in the sixth form following NVQ courses achieve very well and gain worthwhile qualifications. Achievement in the sixth form is very good. In all of the sixth form subjects inspected at depth, achievement is good or very good and standards are mainly above average or well above average. Lower attaining students following NVQ course achieve very well and enjoy a significant measure of success.

### Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Overall provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good attitudes contribute well to their achievement.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around the school, although a few are disruptive.
- Although students' personal development is satisfactory, their spiritual and cultural awareness is underdeveloped.

### Commentary

4. Students' attitudes to school are good. They want to learn, try hard with their work and respond well to their teachers. This has a good effect on their achievement. Students are very positive about the range of extra-curricular activities available to them during and outside the school day, such as the Ten Tors group and the current production of 'Oliver'. They make good use of opportunities to study outside school in homework clubs and revision clinics.

5. Most students know what the school rules are and are clear about sanctions that are used if they misbehave. They behave well because they enjoy learning but a few students are disruptive and noisy particularly when lessons are not interesting or challenging enough. Other students find this irritating, but generally they feel that behaviour in the school is good. They say that some bullying takes place but that members of staff deal well with all incidents. Students with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties respond very well to the support they receive from the learning support resource base, the school's counsellor and the school based youth worker and as a result many gain in confidence and self-esteem and so are able to work more effectively and achieve well.

6. Students' moral development is good. They understand the need for rules in the school and community, get on well and work co-operatively. Their social development is promoted well through their participation in activities such as fundraising for the school's specialist status bid. Opportunities for their spiritual development, however, are unsatisfactory. There are too few planned occasions in lessons, tutor times and assemblies for them to reflect collectively and personally on their own and others' lives and achievements. There is wide variation in the use of tutor times to promote students' personal development and little use is made of the '*Thought for the Week*' to promote thoughtful discussion and reflection. Although race relations within the school are good, students' awareness of cultural diversity is limited. They have little understanding of the cultures and values of others outside their immediate locality.

### Attendance

7. Students' attendance is satisfactory and has remained in line with the national trend for the past three years. The appointment of an attendance officer has resulted in improved monitoring of unexplained absences. The education welfare officer supports the school's work very well. Students' punctuality is satisfactory.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002 - 2003

Authorised absence	
School data	8.5
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

**Note:** Attendance figures for the last academic year 2003/04 are not available due to a failure in the school's computerised attendance system which has now been rectified.

### Exclusions

8. The number of fixed-term exclusions is higher than would be expected in a school of this size. Most are used properly when students have behaved unacceptably or contravened school rules. However, some students are excluded too quickly before support strategies within school have been fully explored. The school needs to review its exclusion procedures.

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	943	65	3
White – Irish	1	1	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	6	1

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

### Sixth Form

9. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and their behaviour is very good. Attendance is good and is an indication of the value that they place on the education provided for them. Students participate very well in extra-curricular activities. They are very good at taking responsibility and participate willingly in schemes such as the reading support groups. They are active in the local community, for example some train as lifeguards, and participate fully in the school's charity work. They provide very good role models for the younger students in the school. Students speak highly of the very good opportunities that the school provides for them to achieve well, both as learners and as people. They are proud of their sixth form because it is very inclusive and students of all abilities are very well provided for.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good. Student guidance and welfare are very good. Partnership with parents and the community is good.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in Years 12 and 13. Assessment procedures are good in Years 7 to 11 but there are a few inconsistencies within and across departments. Assessment is very good in Years 12 and 13.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good and excellent teaching in the sixth form in English, mathematics, history, the performing arts and the NVQ courses.
- There is a little unsatisfactory and poor teaching in English, physical education and French.
- Lack of teaching time for history in Year 9 adversely impacts on achievement.
- Throughout Years 7 to 11, good and very good teaching results in good achievement.
- Although the teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall, learning support assistants are not always effective.
- Assessment procedures are good but there are some inconsistencies in the use of assessment across some subjects.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 136 lessons

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (5%)	40 (29%)	61 (45%)	25 (18%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)

*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.*

10. Teaching and learning for students in Years 7 to 11 are good. For many, in a range of subjects, teaching is very good. There is some excellent teaching. Unsatisfactory or poor teaching is rare. The best teaching was observed in religious education and drama throughout the school. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning were consistently very good in history and design and technology. Excellent teaching was seen in history, religious education, science, French and ICT. A very small amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching was seen in French, physical education and English. Teaching in English, mathematics, science and ICT is good throughout the school. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good with examples of excellent teaching in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching and learning is better than at the time of the last inspection.

11. The best teaching is characterised by thorough and detailed planning of lessons and very good subject knowledge. Flexible planning results in the needs of all students being met and contributes very significantly to their productivity in learning. In the best science lessons, stimulating starters and exciting activities contribute to good learning and achievement. High expectations and challenge, for example in drama, contribute well to the development of students' understanding of techniques such as 'still image' and 'thought tracking'. Effective use of assessment in the best lessons is the key to the good achievement students make. Very good relationships between teachers and students contribute to very good learning. For example, in religious education lessons, students' learning is enhanced because they are confident to ask deep and profound questions of their teacher because they trust their teacher to value their contributions. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good but the quality of teacher assistant support is variable. Because the Key Stage 3 Strategy is well embedded most teaching in Years 7 to 9 is delivered at a cracking pace to ensure that there is a very effective ending to lessons.

12. On the rare occasions when teaching and learning are unsatisfactory the activities are not planned to meet the needs of the whole group and because the pace is pedestrian the students become restless and are off task. This adversely affects their learning. In these lessons, learning support assistants do not intervene quickly enough to support the class teacher to manage

disruptive behaviour. Even in some satisfactory lessons, behaviour management is not always as good as it should be.

13. Assessment procedures are good. Test results are analysed well and good use is made of the information gained from this exercise to set precise improvement targets for students. This effective process contributes to the good achievement students make. The progress students make towards their set targets is carefully tracked and student targets are regularly reviewed and revised. This approach enables students, for example in English, to enjoy considerable success. However, there are inconsistencies between and indeed within departments in how assessment data is used to inform teacher planning and monitor progress. Although assessment in mathematics is good in Years 7 to 9 and comes close to being very good in Years 10 and 11 the use made of assessment data by teachers to inform their lesson planning ranges from excellent to satisfactory. Procedures for assessment in science are good but not all students are yet sufficiently clear about exactly what they need to do to improve their work. The school plans to improve target setting by empowering heads of department to be more directly involved in the target setting process at an earlier stage. Marking of students' work is good overall but there are some inconsistencies across and within departments.

14. The needs of students with special educational needs are identified well. However, the assessment data is not always translated into sharp and specific targets on their individual education plans. In most subjects, teachers use the assessment data they have on students with special educational needs to plan flexibly to meet their needs but this is not always the case. The achievement of minority ethnic students and those in public care is monitored well by the school, and subject departments use the data held on these students effectively to inform their planning to raise standards. Overall, there has been good improvement in assessment since the last inspection, particularly in ICT. Examples of very good practice are now found in religious education throughout the school and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. The innovative way in which students are becoming involved in self-assessment is a particularly strong feature resulting in improved confidence and so good achievement in most subjects.

## **Sixth Form**

15. Teaching and learning are very good in the sixth form. There is some excellent teaching in English and mathematics. The very good teaching results in very good achievement and above average standards. Teaching on the NVQ courses is imaginative and prepares the students well for the life of work. The secret to the successful teaching and learning is that teachers combine the breadth and depth of their very good subject knowledge with their understanding of how students learn. Students are constantly challenged to evaluate and improve their work. Very good enthusiasm and a love for their subject by the teachers also engage students and motivate them in their learning. Assessment is very good in the sixth form and contributes to the very good achievement students make.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides students with a good curriculum that meets statutory requirements. However, the school fails to provide a daily act of collective worship. A good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits enriches students' experiences well. Staffing provision and learning resources are satisfactory. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Recent curriculum developments give students more choice and reflect the very inclusive ethos of the school.
- The management of the curriculum in the sixth form is very effective. There is a clear vision for a comprehensive and inclusive provision that fits well within the local community.
- The choice of AS and A-level subjects is extensive. There are many vocational courses which lead to VCE and NVQ.



- The school provides a good programme of enrichment activities that contributes well to learning.
- The statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not met.
- There is good provision for special educational needs (SEN).
- Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Sixth-form students have good common-room facilities but accommodation for sport and private study is limited.

## Commentary

16. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. A clear rationale for development has led to recent changes that reflect well the school's mission statement to '*support all in our school to strive for excellence*'. The national strategy for students in Year 7 to Year 9 has been successfully implemented, improving provision for ICT especially. The school has successfully introduced a number of new vocational and GCSE examination courses. These add much to the curricular diversity and improve the school's ability to meet the needs of particular groups of students in Year 10 and Year 11. The provision for work related learning is satisfactory. Recent curriculum development has been rapid and restructuring of the timetable has generally been smooth. However, teething troubles have resulted in some students and staff giving up part of their lunch break in order to ensure that there is sufficient time to complete work in design and technology, physical education and ICT. This is understandably not popular with some students, but is a short-term difficulty that will be resolved as new courses become established. The provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. Although the planned modules on sex education and drugs awareness are good it is not clear within the new model for the delivery of citizenship who has responsibility to deliver the important threads of personal, social and health education. Students are concerned that the modules are delivered late in their school career and would value inputs to support them in coping with the pressures on them as teenagers much earlier. The curriculum inputs to support students with complex special educational needs through the learning support resource base are good.

17. Students welcome the wide range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits that are on offer and participation is good. Students have particularly good opportunities to take part in a wide range of performances from fashion shows to musicals such as '*Oliver*', which was in preparation during the inspection. These contribute well to students' personal development and self-confidence. Theatre visits, opportunities for sport, master classes for gifted students in mathematics, lunch time surgeries in science, geography field trips and many other activities all add much to students' learning.

18. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Although facilities for ICT, mathematics, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and drama are good with pleasant spacious rooms, the facilities for music, art and design and physical education are unsatisfactory and impede students' progress. For example in physical education, the use of the hall places severe restrictions on students' skill development due to its small size, its use to store chairs and other items and its open access nature. This situation has not improved since the last inspection. There are sufficient qualified teachers to meet the demands of the school's curriculum. Teachers are well supported by an adequate number of committed non-teaching staff to enable the school to function efficiently. Resources are satisfactory overall and good in English and mathematics. Science equipment is in need of some modernisation and there is a lack of text books in religious education. There are also some deficiencies in art and design which constrain what can be taught effectively; however, this does not seriously impede learning because of the commitment and hard work of the teachers. The library has improved since the previous inspection. It is attractive and well stocked but there are not enough books to support learning about other cultures or about living in a multicultural society.

## Sixth Form

19. Curriculum provision is very good with some excellent features. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of sixth-form students and reflects the school's open policy for admission. The

provision is very good for both academic and vocational courses. A very good range of vocational options are offered. It is highly inclusive. The range of academic courses is extensive and some courses are available as distance learning courses within the consortium. The AVCE courses are taught in three vocational areas. The choice of NVQ courses, taught either at the local college or in the school's own workshops, is unusually wide. The provision for Key Skills is good.

20. Links with the community, local business and industry are very valuable and some students benefit from work placements. Careers guidance is good and students feel that higher education advice is very supportive because of the number of visits arranged. Religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements but students take part in many community activities and fundraising for charities. NVQ students particularly benefit from the personal development encouraged by taking the Gold level of the Youth Award.

21. Students participate in outdoor activities but opportunities for sport are limited by lack of suitable facilities. Accommodation is satisfactory. Students have a comfortable common room and a study room with computers for their own use. Their lessons take place throughout the school and the rooms available are suitable for sixth-form use. Resources are satisfactory. Students have sufficient resources except for in art and design. They have access to the library, careers and computer rooms but they consider that there is limited space for private study. Resources for English, mathematics and performing arts are good. Teachers are well qualified.

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

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. They are provided with good support, advice and guidance. There are good opportunities for students to air their views about the school. The support, advice and guidance given to students in the sixth form are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All students are cared for very well through the established student guidance and welfare system.
- The way in which the school works with outside support and care agencies is very good.
- Students receive good advice and guidance through the academic tutoring process.
- Students feel well cared for although some are critical of tutor times and careers guidance.

### **Commentary**

22. The school cares very well for all its students. The established support teams are very well led and managed and provide very good continuity of care and support for students as they move through the school. All staff have a very good understanding of the needs of students as they grow and develop. Child protection procedures and those for students who are in public care are correctly followed and well documented. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. The overall very good care and support means that students are happy, confident and ready to learn.

23. All support staff work very well together as a team and have the best interests of the students at heart. Liaison with outside agencies such as the educational welfare service, Connexions and the on-site youth worker and counsellor is very strong and used very effectively to support students with individual difficulties. The quality of care for students with special educational needs is very good.

24. Through the academic tutoring process and review days, students receive good advice and guidance on their learning and are helped to identify targets which will help them to improve. This process is particularly effective in identifying students at risk of underachievement and encourages heads of year to be more involved in guiding and supporting students' academic progress.

25. Students say that they consider that they are well supported by adults in the school and that there is always someone to turn to for help. They are confident that their concerns are listened to either individually or through the school council. Most consider that teachers help them to understand how to improve their work and that the quality of individual guidance is good. Students get on well with their tutors but they are critical of some tutor times which they believe are of little use to them. Provision for careers guidance is satisfactory overall, although some older students do not find careers lessons particularly helpful.

### **Sixth form**

26. Very good guidance and support is provided for all sixth-form students. They feel that the head of sixth form and tutors listen and support them very well. Their progress is carefully monitored within subjects and courses and staff are vigilant where students appear to be falling behind with their coursework or attendance. Students say that the sixth-form council is an effective way of making their views known.

27. Students who undertake part-time NVQ courses outside school consider that they are very well mentored and supported in school while receiving training appropriate to their needs. They say this gives them confidence to achieve. Students planning to go on to higher education say that advice on courses is very good and they appreciate the wide range of visits to colleges and universities. Some students, however, are critical of the careers advice provided. Inspectors consider their concern that the advice is often far too late to support them in making informed decisions about their future is valid but the quality of the advice once they access it is satisfactory. This is a resource issue related to the amount of time the personal adviser from Connexions is able to spend in school.

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

The school's links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are good. Parents have good views of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are pleased with the school and appreciate its improvement.
- The school continues to find ways to improve its good communication with parents and to involve them in students' learning.
- The school has good relationships and links with the local community.
- Links with other schools and colleges in the sixth form are excellent.

### **Commentary**

28. Parents say that the school has always been an inclusive place where individuals are cared for well but feel that it is now 'on the up' since the appointment of the headteacher. Although a few are concerned about some students' behaviour, overall they state that the school is a happy place where their children make good progress as a result of good teaching. Parents who attended the parents meeting said that they are concerned that some parents are not as involved in school life as they might be but appreciate the school's work to develop its links with the community which are having a good effect on students' learning.

29. The school knows that some parents have mixed views about the quality of communication with them and is actively seeking ways of keeping them better informed and more involved in their children's learning. Interim 'tracker' sheets and end-of-year reports provide parents with good information about their children's progress and areas for improvement. Parents appreciate the information provided in weekly newsletters. The school is working hard to improve its telephone communication so that parents' concerns are dealt with more quickly. A Year 7 Learning Evening was introduced following requests by parents for more information on how to help their children

learn. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are well supported. The school is very popular with parents who have children with special educational needs.

30. The school has good and improving links and partnerships with other schools and colleges to enrich the curriculum for students, provide staff with good opportunities to share expertise and to raise the school's status in the community. Partnerships with local businesses are developing well to provide students with work experience placements. Through its bid for funding for a sports hall, the school has become linked with a large number of local sporting organisations and, as a result, the use of the school premises by community groups is increasing. The Torpoint School Association is an active group which involves parents and the community well in its fund-raising and social activities. There is a good commitment by the leadership of the school to seek more opportunities to share its facilities and to develop relationships with the community.

### **Sixth form**

31. The school's well-established links with schools and colleges through the Tamar Valley Consortium are excellent. These excellent links provide students with excellent opportunities to take vocational courses and studies beyond those provided by the school. There are good links with local industry which mean that Year 12 students have the option of undertaking further work experience in the sixth form. Students and their parents are provided with very good documentation throughout the sixth form. The weekly bulletin keeps them very well informed about events and activities taking place both in and out of school. Parents are very positive about the sixth-form provision which they say gives their children very good continuity in their education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership is **good**. The leadership of the new headteacher is **very good**. The leadership of other key staff with responsibilities is **good**. Management is **good** with a number of very good features. Governance is **satisfactory** with the capacity for improvement being good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and vision of the headteacher inspire staff and students to succeed.
- Effective management systems result in a school committed to the highest achievement for all students.
- The management of care and welfare is very good and the Key Stage 3 Strategy is very effectively managed.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. They are innovative and creative.
- The management of personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
- Some changes in the construction of the school timetable for the current academic year have caused disquiet amongst Year 11 students.
- The whole-school management of assessment is good.
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation which impact adversely on physical education, art and design and music.

### **Commentary**

32. The governance of the school is satisfactory. A new committee structure has been launched and many of the governors are new. Although too early to evaluate their impact, the clear terms of reference bode well for the future and evidence suggests that the capacity for improved governance is good. The governors are beginning to develop an improved balance between support and challenge. Their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school are satisfactory and improving. The attachment of a lead governor to each department is an exciting development and although too early to evaluate its impact it is already valued by heads of department. Their new committee structure has been developed to ensure that they are all now in a position to be more actively involved in whole-school planning and financial decisions. They are at

an early stage of development in the analysis of examination results but again are becoming increasingly involved in this process. They meet their statutory responsibilities well except for ensuring that every student receives a daily act of collective worship and that all sixth-form students receive a programme of religious education.

33. Leadership is good. The leadership of the new headteacher is very good. He has successfully created a culture whereby leadership is shared by all members of the senior leadership team and middle managers. There is a clear vision of creating an inclusive school focused on a relevant curriculum for all students and the highest achievement for all. This vision is shared by the whole school community. Students and parents consider that communication has improved in '*leaps and bounds*' (to quote what they said) under the leadership of the headteacher and inspectors agree with their view.

34. Management is good. Aspects of management are very good. Robust systems have been put in place to ensure that all teachers are effectively involved in important whole-school planning decisions. Because the headteacher has involved all teachers he has successfully managed significant change in a short space of time which has improved the quality of the educational provision for students and raised achievement. Senior managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work as an effective team. The management of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is very good, resulting in raised achievement in Years 7 to 9. The very good management of the care and welfare of students is no mean achievement given the complexity the school faces in dealing with the wide range of protocols and procedures of two different local education authorities. But, as recognised by the school, exclusions remain too high. Students with very complex special educational needs are successfully included in the school but not all teachers have yet embraced the notion that they must take responsibility to plan flexibly to meet the needs of all students in their classes. Some teachers place too great a dependency on the learning support department. Whole-school assessment procedures are well managed and result in raised achievement across the school. Changes in the construction of the school timetable for the current academic year has caused disquiet amongst Year 11 students.

35. Performance management procedures have been well established and have led to improvements and more consistency in the activities of senior and middle management. Continued professional development is well managed and effectively linked to the focused priorities in the school development plan. This plan is good and focuses on raising achievement. Departments are well managed and have clear development plans which dovetail into the whole-school development plan. There are, however, some weaknesses. Currently, the management of personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory and it is not clear how it fits into the curriculum model for delivering citizenship. Not all departments have yet taken on board that they have the responsibility to contribute to developing students' work related skills through the courses they provide. Monitoring of teaching and learning within departments is good and results in good practice being shared. Recently appointed new heads of department for mathematics and French have already successfully managed significant change which has contributed to improved standards.

36. The new headteacher has reformed many of the financial procedures and restructured financial administration, and governors have restructured their committee system, including the finance committee. The school's finances are now managed in a way that matches spending well to educational priorities. Principles of best value are embedded well into financial processes, which have recently been enhanced by improvement to the school's educational and financial monitoring systems. The headteacher and governors now make good use of the information available to compare their performance with schools of a broadly similar nature.

37. Although the headteacher, in partnership with his staff and governors, has skilfully and creatively managed change which has resulted in an improved school, he faces barriers. The unsatisfactory accommodation is not only a frustration but it impedes learning, particularly in physical education, music and art and design. The GCSE in sports studies was launched on the understanding that the school would have a new sports hall by January 2005 but this project has been delayed. The school hall was designed to accommodate 400 students and there are now almost 1,000 on roll. The headteacher, together with a supportive governing body, does all that can

be expected with the resources available and continues to argue a well-presented case for improved accommodation. The vision for improved accommodation is integral to the bid for specialist humanities status.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,229,631	Balance from previous year	142,699
Total expenditure	3,094,825	Balance carried forward to the next	277,505
Expenditure per student	3,155		

**Sixth Form**

38. The sixth form is led and managed well. The head of sixth form provides a very effective service to students and the deputy manages vocational provision very well. Leadership is very good, particularly in the context of the tutor system in Years 12 and 13 and in the clear vision for development within the consortium. Admissions requirements are very clear and all procedures are implemented and managed well.

39. Students believe that they receive very good advice about subject choice, that induction procedures are effective and that the general management of the sixth form is providing real benefits for them all. Booklets on the academic and vocational courses, procedures in the school, study skills and careers advice are clear and comprehensive. A major strength of provision is that the school encourages students from all backgrounds to study after the age of 16 – often with the help of government funding. The school has introduced a system for private study that allows students to take some private study periods at home. This is carefully monitored and is popular with students who feel that they should have more opportunity to study independently. The sixth-form council gives the students who participate a voice and a real influence within the school. They participate in planning social events for the student body and in improving the day-to-day running of the school and sixth form. This is managed very well because of the regular tutor team and council meetings

40. The head of sixth form has a clear strategic overview of the sixth form, provides firm leadership and ensures good quality links with neighbouring schools, colleges and the community as a whole. Assessment data is managed and used very well. The head of sixth form aims to encourage students to have high aspirations and make the most of available opportunities in both the academic and vocational programmes. Monitoring and review are very effective and information is used to promote change and development in this increasingly popular sixth form. Governance is satisfactory. Governors understand the potential for development well but need to consider the provision for religious education and spiritual development in the sixth form. Few students in Year 13 take the general studies course, which has a religious education element, and assemblies take place only once a week. Financial management is secure and the school educational priorities are addressed well. The sixth form is cost effective and is no longer being subsidised from the main school budget.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work related learning (WRL)

Provision in work related learning is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not all subject departments have yet grasped that they have a role to play in developing students' work related skills through the courses they provide.
- The audit of work related learning skills across the curriculum has not yet taken place and so there is not yet a clear co-ordinated approach to WRL across the whole school.
- Very good strategic thinking and planning has gone into the shaping of courses to develop the skills required for students aspiring to become plumbers and electricians.
- Vocational GCSE courses have opened the eyes of a group of students to the world of work.

### Commentary

41. Students demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of work related concepts and skills in a number of subjects. Students' achievement and personal development as a result of WRL activities are satisfactory. But not all subject departments yet plan to deliver these skills through the courses they provide. The school development plan identifies the need to develop a policy and whole-school approach to WRL. Although an audit of the existing provision is planned it has not yet taken place. The work experience programme provides students with satisfactory opportunities to experience the world of work outside school.

42. Learning through work is best for those students following vocational GCSE courses and for the few students taking practical courses in plumbing and electrics. The vision and robust action planning to increase the provision for vocational courses is exciting but the timing of the inspection was too early to evaluate the impact of these developments. Students learn about work through completing application forms and interview simulations as part of their taught careers lessons. Higher attainers in Year 11 do not consider that their taught careers programme is sufficiently challenging. Some of the best simulations occur in the health and social care and leisure and tourism GCSE courses, for example in developing customer care skills in the context of a customer being aggrieved about the quality of the caravan provided at a caravan site at Whitsand Bay. The students on these courses develop relevant skills through fun yet demanding activities, and greatly enjoy filming these simulations. Learning for work occurs in many subjects but it is not yet co-ordinated. In many subjects, students are required to make presentations, write reports and analyse data. The leadership and management of WRL, although satisfactory, are at an early stage of development and there is not yet a clear, co-ordinated approach to WRL across the whole school.

## **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**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, resulting in good achievement.
- There are very good schemes of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 which provide coherence across the key stage.
- In all lessons, teachers make sure that students know exactly what they will learn and how they will demonstrate their learning.
- The curriculum offers students a choice of courses at GCSE.
- Assessment procedures are good and teachers set students very specific targets for improvement. However, students are not always entirely clear about how to improve their work.

##### **Commentary**

43. Standards in English are broadly average when students enter the school, although students at the higher levels are still insecure in some aspects of their English. Since students' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 is in line with national averages, this represents good achievement. Furthermore, results have risen over the past four years at a slightly faster rate than seen nationally. By the end of Year 11, results for GCSE English in 2003 were slightly above the national average which again represents good achievement. Although GCSE English literature results were slightly below average in 2003, provisional results for 2004 show a considerable increase in the number of students receiving grades A\*-C. Attainment for current Year 9 students is in line with national expectations and for current Year 11 students it is in line with the national average at an early stage in the school year. Achievement is good across the school.

44. Students' attitudes to English are good and they clearly enjoy the subject. Students are eager to share their work; Year 7 students enjoyed reading aloud their metaphor poems to the rest of the class. Students contribute ideas willingly to whole-class discussion and, in one Year 11 lesson, the teacher's skilful use of group work enabled all students to provide feedback to each other. These positive attitudes contribute well to the good achievement students make across the school.

45. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good command of their subject and use a range of approaches to make the lessons interesting and varied. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs and in small groups, which enables them to take more responsibility for their own work. Writing is explicitly taught and teachers often show students how to improve a short piece of writing before asking them to work on their own. In all lessons, teachers explain exactly what students will learn; at the end of lessons, students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt, often with a partner. In one Year 9 class, students were asked to comment on each other's work and made constructive comments which helped their partners to further improve their writing. Teachers are very clear about the needs of different students in their classes, including those with special educational needs. Less able students are supported by shorter, more focused tasks whilst more able students are challenged and, as a result, use some demanding literary techniques with confidence.

46. Teachers respond in considerable detail to students' work and set very specific targets, telling them which aspects of their work they need to improve. In spite of this, students are



sometimes unclear about what they need to do to improve their work. However, the department has already identified this issue and has taken steps to support students further. Teachers have a very clear understanding of how external examinations are marked and often share this with their students. Two teachers are serving examiners and this has a positive impact on the department's understanding of assessment criteria.

47. Leadership and management are both good. Performance data is analysed and adjustments to teaching groups are made as a result. The head of department has introduced GCSE media studies as an alternative to GCSE English literature which offers students a choice of subjects in Year 10. There are effective arrangements to support students on entry to the school: students work with a professional writer when they visit the school in Year 6 and again in Year 7. The head of department encourages a team spirit in which every member of department is invited to contribute to the shaping of departmental policy.

48. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Resources for independent reading have been improved through the use of book boxes and reading journals. The department has made very good use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy to develop teaching approaches and provide support for students who need extra help in Years 7, 8 and 9.

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

49. Standards in literacy across the curriculum are average. Provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is very good. There is now a whole-school policy in place and teachers in all subject areas support students with their reading, writing and speaking and listening. Whole-school literacy targets have been agreed and these are planned into units of work across a range of subjects. Key words are displayed and taught in ways which help students to understand what they mean. Writing frames and planning sheets are used to support students' writing to help them to produce extended pieces, for example in geography when students write well about the impact of tourism in Kenya. Students research information in a number of subjects well and, in some cases, use their information to give spoken presentations to the class.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision to lead the department forward.
- French GCSE results are well below the national average but standards of work seen are in line with national averages and so indicative of a significant current improvement.
- Accommodation and display set a positive tone for learning.
- Assessment to inform student learning is in need of improvement.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance learning.

### **Commentary**

50. All students begin to study French in Year 7. Teacher assessment in Year 9 in 2003 indicates that attainment is below the national expectation. From the beginning of Year 10, students no longer have to study French. GCSE results at A\* - C in French in 2003 were well below the national average but results improved in 2004. In 2003, students were less successful at GCSE in French than in their other subjects. The most able students begin to study German in Year 9, and by the end of Year 11, the small numbers who have chosen to continue with their studies obtain GCSE results which are well above the national average. In both key stages, the attainment of girls is higher than that of boys, reflecting the national pattern.

51. Standards of work seen tell a very different story and indicate that students are being much more successful. Attainment in lessons is in line with national averages and this is also reflected in the standard of work in students' exercise books. In a Year 7 French lesson, students were able to incorporate a variety of prepositions into a description of where they live, and by Year 11, German students were able to use different tenses and express opinions when justifying the type of holiday they would prefer. Exercise books are generally well presented indicating that students take a pride in their work. Students are particularly successful when using the skills of listening and reading, although they are less confident in speaking and writing. Current Year 9 and Year 11 students are close to the average, reflecting the improved teaching and improved leadership of the subject by the newly appointed head of department.

52. The achievement of students is good across the school. Most students, regardless of ability, achieve their potential. A group of Year 11 low ability students, including several with special educational needs, were able to make enquiries, using French, about the facilities at a French campsite with confidence. The most able students in Year 8 rose to the challenge of using reflexive verbs in a very demanding way with the aid of a computer program.

53. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. The best lessons are characterised by the high quality of relationships between teachers and students resulting in the students responding eagerly to the real interest and care which teachers show towards them. In one lesson, students applauded each other spontaneously when they were told their test results because of the sensitivity and encouragement displayed by the teacher. The good pace of teaching also plays a major role in students' success. Where there is a variety of activities, constantly reinforcing learning in different ways before moving on to the next stage, students are always interested and enabled to succeed. The way in which lessons challenge students is also integral to their success; both the more and the less able students are stretched and no-one feels excluded from the learning process. On the rare occasions when lessons are less successful, the partnership between teacher and students is not so strong and activities are less varied. Although assessments are not yet fully in place and it is therefore not possible to analyse results and use them to help raise standards, work is underway in this area. Students are already told clearly what they have to do to improve further and their work is marked regularly and carefully.

54. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of modern foreign languages and has a robust plan to turn that vision into a reality. Teachers also team-teach occasionally to share expertise. As a result of this common approach, students are motivated and standards are beginning to improve significantly. Visits abroad in both key stages and the appointment of a part-time German assistant are also giving students a renewed interest in languages. Displays, incorporating students' own work, grammar, conversation prompts and posters of France and Germany, give the whole languages area an immediate European dimension and set a positive tone for learning. The department uses the computer rooms for classes on a regular basis and is gradually building up a stock of suitable computer programs and developing its own website. However, there is, as yet, insufficient expertise within the department for the facilities and resources to be fully used.

55. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved and although standards have fallen in the interim, all indications are that they are now at least in line with those at the previous inspection. The number of students studying French has dropped dramatically recently but with the whole-school commitment to supporting modern foreign languages has resulted in renewed student interest in the subject.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good** and improving.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very good, with a strong drive for improvement.
- Teaching is good with some excellent features but also some inconsistencies.
- Standards are rising, particularly for more able students.
- Assessment is good with regular tests and rigorous monitoring of individuals, although marking is inconsistent.
- Investigative skills are developed well, and the schemes of work are well structured, but further guidance is needed on suitable teaching and learning methods.

### Commentary

56. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average, and equal to those of similar schools, with an increase from 2003 in the higher levels. Mathematics results were below those of English and science, but the attainment on entry to the school for that group of students was also much lower. Over time, there is no significant difference between the results of girls or boys. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, GCSE results were much better than previous years. Passes at grades A\* - C were in line with the national average but with more A\* and A grades than in previous years. The results in 2004 were in line with those of similar schools, although below English and science, with decreased difference between boys' and girls' results.

57. Standards are in line with national averages by Years 9 and 11. Achievement is good throughout the school. Students enter the school with average attainment overall, although many have very low attainment or special educational needs. By the end of Year 9, students do well in algebra and data handling. Investigative skills are developed well by twice yearly projects for each year group and sometimes an investigative approach to topics. Confidence and competence with number skills are developing well, with 'fun' activities and careful ongoing assessment by teachers. This will in time counteract the current difficulties older students have with number bond recognition and recall. Mathematics classes are set across half years; the match of work to students' prior attainment and aptitude varies with the quality of teaching, but is good overall. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall, but their achievement is better when sufficient teaching assistants are available to help individuals, and the teacher is effective in managing the behaviour of others. Students with higher prior attainment are achieving well in all year groups where tightly structured lessons with a variety of timed activities challenge them appropriately.

58. The Key Stage 3 Strategy approach is now being developed in Years 10 and 11, with mental 'starter' activities and a range of teaching and learning methods, including practical work. However, the investigative approach to learning is often missing for older more able students when teachers felt under pressure to cover the GCSE course content. Some negative attitudes were seen in higher attaining sets in Years 10 and 11, where off-task chatter hindered the progress of the lesson. On some occasions the more able or faster students in a class were sitting waiting for others to finish or for the teacher to progress to the next stage, when extension materials would have improved their individual achievement. Attitudes and behaviour are good on the whole, better where teachers provide a variety of learning activities with quality resources, and have developed a positive relationship with students.

59. Teaching and learning are good. Often teaching and learning are very good with excellent features. However, there is some inconsistency in the planning, preparation and pace of teaching. Most teachers handle class discussion very well, and their questioning techniques are good, guiding students to answer their own questions, building up confidence and self-esteem. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to interest students, with enthusiasm about the power and beauty of mathematics. Teachers know their classes well, and most are good at assessing achievement within lessons, using verbal praise frequently. Homework is set regularly, is usually relevant,

although sometimes minimal, and completion or otherwise is recorded by teachers. Marking is inconsistent across the department, although most teachers provide detailed corrections and constructive comments.

60. Leadership by the new head of department is very good, with vision and drive for improvement which have raised standards. Frequent and relevant in-service training has led to the development of a good team of specialists. Management is good, monitoring of teaching and learning is established, although it is yet to provide consistently high standards across the department. A rigorous assessment system of regular tests has been developed, which enables monitoring of individual students and teaching groups. Good links with primary schools through regular meetings and visits supplement the use of transition units. Coursework is a focus, with lunch time sessions through Year 10. Booster and revision classes for Years 9 and 11 students run each year in lunch times with an Easter course for GCSE C/D borderline students. Provision for the gifted and talented in mathematics includes master classes at Plymouth University. The schemes of work are constructed well, but do not yet include any guidance on citizenship, or work related learning, and personal development through teaching and learning methods needs to be made explicit. Improvement since the last inspection is good as standards have risen, especially for the more able, with structured schemes of work, and numeracy across the curriculum is a current whole-school focus.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

61. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The numeracy skills of students are satisfactorily developed in all areas across the curriculum, and are good in science and geography. Number skills are taught well by the mathematics department. Students are able to interpret and present information in charts and graphs. They can calculate competently when required, and are aware of patterns in time, rhythm and space, as seen in music. Students' competence in mathematics does not impede progress in any subject, and enhances many. In 2003, the Key Stage 3 manager took over responsibility for the monitoring and development of numeracy across the curriculum. Whole-school training days were led by the local education authority consultant, aided by the mathematics teachers working with all other departments. This resulted in a revised numeracy policy, and adaptation to all subjects' schemes of work. Further development, with monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness, is planned for this year. There has been significant improvement in numeracy across the curriculum since the last inspection.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

- Very good leadership and management provide clear direction for raising standards.
- Teaching is good so students achieve well.
- Students do well in national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The monitoring of students' performance is excellent.
- Strategies to encourage and monitor students' self-evaluation are not in place.

#### **Commentary**

62. The 2004 national test results for Year 9 were above average. They were well above average for the higher levels. Results have improved considerably since the last inspection. Students enter the school in Year 7 with average test results and they achieve well over the next three years. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above average. They are also above average when compared with students in similar schools who had similar Year 9 test results, showing that they have achieved well over the last two years.

63. Attainment by Year 9 and Year 11 is above average and achievement is good throughout the school. Year 9 middle set students are able to explain the difference between renewable and non-renewable forms of energy well and distinguish between energy transfer and energy transformation. Year 9 students demonstrate very good scientific investigation skills with a high number of students being able to make predictions based upon sound scientific knowledge and understanding. The attainment of Year 11 students in the upper set is well above average and these students are able to use nuclear equations to find the products of radioactive decay. Year 11 lower set students are able to describe the location, structure and function of the kidneys at a superficial level. Students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are well developed and support their learning in science.

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, students achieve well including those with special educational needs. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the teaching is good overall. The teaching reflects many elements of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Good teaching is characterised by stimulating lesson beginnings, well thought out learning objectives that students understand and a range of suitable tasks to enable students to learn. A variety of enjoyable end-of-lesson activities is used to assess students' achievements. Good classroom management is used to ensure that students remain on task. As a result, students enjoy the lessons and achieve well. The small amount of less effective teaching lacks pace and allows students to work at a more leisurely rate resulting in less student achievement. In Years 10 and 11, all the teaching is very good overall. There is a little excellent teaching. Very good and excellent teaching includes very high expectations of student achievement, a very enthusiastic delivery that inspires students, is imaginative, and provides fun activities to support the learning and constant reinforcement to raise the self-esteem of students. For example, in a Year 10 lower set, the teacher employed a variety of competitive games to structure student learning of the types, properties and uses of different electromagnetic radiations. The activities were fun, challenging and related to real life. Students were rewarded constantly for their responses and their confidence increased noticeably as the lesson progressed. As a result, the students' achievement was excellent. In upper Year 10 and 11 sets the expectations of student achievement are extremely high and encourage gifted students to reach the highest levels. Teacher assessment is good in all years. Students know their target grades and what level they are working at in a particular topic. However, the benefits of students evaluating their own knowledge and understanding in a structured way are not stressed.

65. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision for improvement that is shared by a committed team of effective teachers and laboratory technicians. Very good management supports this vision and the excellent monitoring of performance data results in a clear departmental plan with a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Although a system for the external monitoring of students' progress is firmly in place, a strategy to encourage and monitor students' knowledge of their own learning has not been developed. The curriculum is good and offers all students the opportunity of gaining GCSE qualifications in science. The curriculum is enriched very well by many activities that involve outside agencies and other educational establishments and the students have opportunities for extra support in science outside lesson time.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with national averages and students achieve well in all years.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Good leadership and management have led to successful implementation of new courses.
- Students use their ICT skills well to support learning in other subjects.
- Negative attitudes of some students affect their achievement in Year 11.

### Commentary

66. Students start at the school with mixed prior experience of ICT but their standards overall are below expectation. The school has just begun formal ICT lessons for students in Year 7 to Year 9, although a system to track their progress has yet to be fully developed. Early indications are favourable. Most students in Year 9 are on track to reach nationally expected standards by the end of the school year. A substantial number are on track to better this performance. Boys and girls achieve well. The students in Year 10 who have chosen to take the new GCSE course have made a good start and are working at the levels expected for this early stage. All students in Year 10 and Year 11 take a Key Skills ICT course. About half of the students in Year 11 attained a Level 2 pass in 2004. There is no national data by which to compare this result with other schools taking the same course. However, success at Level 2 is equivalent to an A\* - C grade at GCSE, and comparison in this way shows that students attain similar standards to those taking ICT at GCSE. The course is demanding and achievement overall is good. In 2004, however, several students, mainly boys, made insufficient effort to keep up with the coursework and consequently did not gain the Key Skills certification at the end of the year.

67. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teamwork, management and leadership within the ICT department are good. Teachers and support staff have worked hard as a team to prepare for the new courses. The good teaching that students receive owes much to the very good planning that has been developed. The vocational nature of the courses offered in Years 10 and 11 suits students' needs well because learning is based on real-life examples, such as investigating the practicality of installing a sandwich vending machine within the school. Learning is structured effectively around detailed guidance notes for each course unit. These support students well when they are working independently and enable them to monitor their own progress. In all years, students receive good feedback on their work, both from written comments and from discussion with teachers during lessons. Consequently, students are well informed about their progress and know what needs to be done to improve the quality of their work.

68. The ICT suites are well equipped and sufficiently spacious for students to have individual access to a computer. Lessons are taken at a good pace and students have ample time for practical work. At its best this arrangement works very well, for example in a lesson where students, working mainly on their own, developed their understanding of how to use a spreadsheet to model the finances of a car rental company. Nearly all students have good work attitudes and behave responsibly. This allows teachers and support staff to respond to individual students' needs as they arise in practical work. Support is good, ensuring that all students, regardless of ability or special educational need, make equal progress. Although attitudes to work are good overall, a significant group of Year 11 students, mainly boys, arrive late for lessons because new temporary timetable arrangements require afternoon lessons to start ten minutes early at the end of the lunch break. In a small number of less successful lessons, the challenging behaviour and unsatisfactory work attitudes of a few students are not managed effectively enough to enable learning for the class as a whole to move on at a sufficient pace to meet lesson and long-term objectives. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Statutory requirements for ICT are now met. The curriculum, the quality

of teaching, students' achievements and learning resources have all improved, and the school is well placed to continue its agenda for development.

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

69. Standards in ICT across subjects are average. The school's previous practice of teaching ICT through other subjects has set a good foundation for cross-curricular work. Provision is good in many subjects, for example through automatic logging of experimental data in science, using ICT to analyse geography field trip data and using specialist programs to learn the properties of French reflexive verbs. Teachers have good access to the ICT suites on a booking system and several lessons were seen during the inspection.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE standards are above the national average.
- Attainment by Year 9 is above national expectations and achievement is good.
- ICT is used well to support learning and independent research.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Fieldwork enhances what is learned in the classroom for most students.
- Teaching and learning are good, but a few lessons do not provide for the full range of ability in the group.
- Monitoring is required to ensure consistent practices in all classes.

### **Commentary**

70. Teacher assessments for students in Year 9 in 2003 were above national expectations. In the same year in the GCSE examinations, the percentage of students achieving A\*-C grades was above the national average and there was very little difference between boys' and girls' results. GCSE results for 2004 are very similar. These results represent good achievement throughout the school.

71. Students enter the school with below average geographical skills. By the end of Year 9, standards are above those expected nationally. Students' achievement relative to their prior attainment is good. As students progress through Years 7 to 9 they make good progress in finding information from texts, maps, graphs and diagrams and their skills in using computers improves considerably. Some very good work was seen in Year 7 when students used a spreadsheet to produce graphs from fieldwork data. Students show in their writing that they have a good understanding of the geographical processes and the impact these have on the environment, such as the impact of tourism in Kenya. Teachers do not always employ sufficient strategies for the inclusion of students with special educational needs. On these occasions, teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of texts and worksheets to cater for the differing needs of students within their classes and this has an adverse effect on their learning. However, students with special educational needs make good progress in working towards their targets when they receive specific and guided support. Higher attaining students, when given the opportunity in class, write well on a given topic but in some lessons they are not challenged or engaged in work suitable to their abilities.

72. Throughout Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills and so attain above average standards by Year 11. Achievement is good in Year 11. In their writing, students of all abilities show a good understanding of the specialist vocabulary and use their skills with maps, diagrams and graphs to

convey their ideas; this is particularly in evidence in the writing up of their fieldwork. Overall, students listen well to their teachers and many use their thinking skills and are prepared to take part in the lessons.

73. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranges from very good to satisfactory. Aspects of assessment of learning, monitoring and marking to guide students to improvement are variable. The best teaching is characterised by imaginative teaching methods and careful planning. In these lessons the teaching assistants are well deployed and make a significant contribution to students' good learning. The level of challenge is good, realistic and students work at a fast pace. In addition, the work is accessible to all students allowing both high and low attainers to achieve well. When teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is slow and the tasks are not well explained, so that students become disaffected, talk out of turn and lose concentration which in turn impedes their learning. ICT is used well and on a regular basis to support students with their coursework and assessment assignments. Students are encouraged to search the Internet for information. Moral and cultural themes, and references to citizenship, are part of the developing schemes of work, but are not yet always made explicit in all lessons.

74. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has shown that by her vision and chosen direction the subject will make further progress. She has been able to build an effective team of teachers who work well together. Her clear vision for the future of the department is conveyed very well so that all the team are clear about the direction the department is taking. Curricular planning is under review in Key Stage 3 to bring it in line with the National Curriculum schemes of work. Fieldwork continues to enhance what is learnt in the classroom well for most students. Monitoring of teaching and learning is required to ensure a consistency of practice in all classes and the sharing of best practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good so students achieve well.
- Assessment within the department is very good.
- The department is well led and managed and there is a clear vision for development and raising standards although attainment has been affected by timetable and staffing issues.
- There is very good support for development in literacy and good support for citizenship but there are few trips and visits and limited access to computers.

## **Commentary**

75. Students have limited knowledge of history when they arrive at the school and some find writing difficult. Teacher assessment indicated below average standards by Year 9 in 2003. Standards are similar in the current Year 9, although history skills have clearly improved. The recent trend at GCSE has also been below the national average and in 2003 it was significantly below. In 2004, results improved with almost half of students reaching grade C or above. Boys achieved better results than girls in 2003, although there is no evidence of difference in achievement now. In both 2003 and 2004, students did not do as well at GCSE as predicted because of staffing problems within the department and the failure of some students to complete coursework. Planning is now focused on the need to improve standards in literacy and to promote skills and understanding as well as knowledge. Current students in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well because of the very clear focus on GCSE requirements. Staffing changes have improved achievement in Year 11 and the department also plans to change the examination focus away from coursework. Attainment by current Year 11 students is in line with the national average.



76. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Years 7 to 9. It ranges from excellent to satisfactory. There is a clear focus on developing history skills in most lessons and most students show a good understanding of change over time and about how to find out about history. Research based homework is valuable because it adds an extra dimension to learning and students have sound skills in using computers, although the department has limited access to computers in class. In Year 9, excellent support for below average students and those with special educational needs ensures that they make exceptional gains in learning both about conditions in factories and about sources of evidence. In the best lessons, issues such as health and safety at work and the trade union movement are discussed in a way that helps students understand aspects of citizenship. However, some teaching lacks pace and challenge and there are in these lessons insufficient activities to promote good learning. The achievement of some students is affected by timetable and accommodation issues. For example, Year 9 now has one lesson per week and this limits the scope for activities and in-depth coverage of some topics. Teachers share some classes in Year 7 and this affects continuity and progression. Only two history rooms are available and classes are taught in a variety of rooms where there are no history displays and limited access to resources.

77. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11, students talk confidently about the topics that they are studying and the majority have a good understanding of Hitler's use of propaganda and the main features of his dictatorship in Germany. The highest attaining students write well and are very secure in their use of sources, although others find this more difficult. Assessment procedures are very good in all year groups and most marking is careful and helps students to improve. Students are given the opportunity to evaluate and review their own work and that of others.

78. Management is good, particularly in the development of resources, monitoring and planning, although there is still inconsistency in teaching and few trips have been organised recently. Leadership is good and there is a clear emphasis on improving standards at GCSE. Since the last inspection, schemes of work have been reviewed and new initiatives such as citizenship supported. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching overall is very good due in the main to very strong subject expertise.
- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their learning.
- Resources such as texts books are insufficient for the present needs of the department.
- More visitors from other faith groups would be of benefit to the students' learning.

## **Commentary**

79. At the end of Year 11 in 2003, standards of attainment in the full course GCSE were well above the national average. In the short course GCSE in the same year, standards of attainment were in line with the national average. The results in 2004 in the full course GCSE are even better. The standards of attainment seen during the inspection are in line with national averages in the GCSE short course and above and often well above national averages in the full course. Students on both courses have a good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of Christianity. These include moral issues such as the environment and animal rights, and more philosophical issues such as the problem of evil and suffering. Many students have good written skills, particularly in their assessment tasks. The achievement of students is good and often very good. Students with special educational needs and the less able students make very good progress as do the more able students. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys but this is not a reflection on the teaching.

80. At the end of Year 9, the standards of attainment are above average as measured against the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Students have good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of world religions. These include the central beliefs of Buddhism and special journeys in Islam. Students talk intelligently about religion and the community, holy books and aspects of God and the world. Their written skills are good and students use ICT to complete projects on religious leaders. The achievement of students is good. Often it is very good. Students with special educational needs make good progress as do the less able and more able students. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

81. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Some of the teaching is excellent. All lessons are planned in detail and they include a range of learning objectives which cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The learning covers not only the facts about world religions but also includes helping students to see how their learning might be relevant to their own lives and experiences. The teachers are experts in their field and this enables them to put across the learning with confidence and clarity. This clarity extends to the tasks which students are required to do in the lessons. Carefully prepared sheets guide the students in their work and so they progress with confidence and learn a lot in the time available. The department has an active and well-developed marking and assessment policy. Homework is regularly set. The teaching and learning make an important contribution to students' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

82. The department is very well led and managed. The staffing is excellent. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. Resources are unsatisfactory. Additional texts would be of benefit to the students' learning. The accommodation is good.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment by Year 9 are above, and by Year 11 are well above, the national averages particularly in textiles, graphics and food technology. Achievement is very good overall.
- Results are consistently higher than the students attain in other subjects, but girls are doing better than boys.
- Teaching and learning are very good; planning is detailed and focused on improvement.
- Assessment is very good, especially on examination courses where the students are given clear guidance on how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Leadership and management are very good, courses are organised very well.
- The time for GCSE lessons has been reduced to one hour sessions; teachers and many students are giving up their lunch times to complete activities.

### **Commentary**

83. Standards on entry in Year 7 are in line with the national average, but most students have had a restricted experience of design and technology. By the end of Year 9, the standards, indicated by teacher assessments, were above the national average in 2003, and they improved in 2004. Students in Years 7 to 9 have made good progress and have achieved well. Standards were well above the national averages by the end of Year 11 in GCSE in 2003, and the results were similar in 2004, despite relatively lower grades from the resistant materials, systems and control, and GNVQ courses. Students' results are generally higher in design and technology than in the other examinations they take, and the proportion gaining the higher grades is well above the national average. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11, especially in textiles, graphics and food technology. These standards have been maintained consistently since the last inspection, and girls are still out-performing boys overall but this is not a reflection on the teaching. Students needing

extra support receive specially devised work sheets to enable them to succeed; as a result, all achieve well, and no particular group underperforms. Inspection findings mirror test and examination results for the current Year 9 and Year 11 students.

84. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Each teacher works in their specialist area and uses their particular expertise very well. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. In the most effective lessons, the teachers' preparation and classroom management are very good. Teachers use skilful, well-targeted question and answer sessions, keeping the pace brisk with no time wasted. Students' work is very closely controlled, with clear direction as to what is expected. There is a focus on skills and introducing students to the design process, as they move around the five areas of design and technology, bringing in and assessing ICT where appropriate. The structure recommended by the Key Stage 3 Strategy is used in all classes, with effective introductions highlighting the objectives for each lesson, and plenary sessions that review the progress towards them. Students respond enthusiastically, co-operate well and work productively. Teacher assessment is very thorough, each teacher identifying the level that a student is working at in each area. This is filed centrally and builds up to an accurate picture of how well students are progressing and achieving. The assessments are backed up with detailed marking and constructive comments.

85. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11. The examination course is very well organised and teaching is closely focused on the assessment objectives and, at the moment, completing the coursework. This unit lasts for almost a whole year and each component is thoroughly prepared by the teachers. Explicit guidance is given on targets and deadlines, and the students are therefore clear about what needs to be done and by when. The very close control over this process means that students' learning is also very good. Students are informed regularly of their progress through very good assessment procedures, including very good marking and one-to-one discussions. The planning is extremely detailed in the course booklets provided for textiles and food technology. Overall, students who follow the teachers' guidance achieve very well. Those students who work independently and do extra research achieve even better, introducing elements of personal direction and ownership of the projects. ICT is used well to research, print and illustrate the projects.

86. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is very well organised; he has created a good team who work together very well to develop the subject. Staffing problems have affected results in some areas, but effective strategies have been put in place to overcome them. The curriculum has been revised as a result of the subject becoming an option for GCSE. The analysis of results is very thorough and is used effectively to identify successes and areas for improvement. The timetable for the GCSE classes has been changed to single one hour periods this year. This has created problems for students in completing work, especially in food technology and textiles. Standards have been maintained by hard work, and a reorganisation of the lessons, but teachers and students have to give up their own time outside lessons, which is an unsatisfactory situation. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection, maintaining the high standards and addressing the inconsistencies by identifying and sharing good practice. The shortcomings in provision for ICT have been addressed, and computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) facilities are now satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Students achieve well throughout the school.
- Much of the work is imaginative.
- Accommodation for art and design is very cramped.

- Valuable verbal assessments are not recorded for future planning.

## Commentary

87. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in the 2003 GCSE examinations was below the national average and results for 2004 are similar but even so this represents good achievement for the students involved. The results are broadly similar each year. Students come into the school in Year 7 with standards that are generally below expectations and by the end of Year 9 the school's assessments show that standards are broadly in line with averages. Many students who opt to take art and design at GCSE are lower attainers and they achieve well, but standards at the end of Year 11 are below the national average although a number of individuals achieve standards that are well above expectations.

88. In work seen during the inspection, standards overall were in line with national averages at the end of Year 9. The students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well throughout Years 7 to 9. Drawing skills are developed consistently and students gradually gain confidence to reach average standards. In Year 7, students work successfully to improve accuracy and detail in their observations. Techniques are taught carefully, so that students learn how to express themselves in visual forms. They develop satisfactory skills across a wide range of media and in two and three dimensions. Much of the work is imaginative because students are encouraged to experiment and to make artistic decisions. For example, in a Year 8 class, students were dressing up to pose for digital photographs at the beginning of a project on portraiture in the style of Warhol. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below course expectations, yet for those students taking the course, they represent good achievement measured against their prior attainment. In these years, technical skills continue to develop, particularly in drawing and painting. In all years, students show good awareness of form, scale and composition.

89. The quality of teaching is good and promotes good learning. Teachers plan the content and strategies for their lessons carefully. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of art and design and of the learning processes in the subject. This enables them to provide good technical support and to set high expectations for students when they intervene in students' individual work. Relationships in most classes are good, but at times there is too much chatter that interrupts students' concentration and learning. Otherwise, students enjoy their lessons and behaviour is generally good. In each lesson, good assessments are made verbally, but are not recorded. Consequently, planning for the next lesson does not identify learning targets for different groups in the class. Accommodation for art and design is unsatisfactory. Small rooms combined with very large classes, in which there is often a number of students with behavioural difficulties, is a constraint on learning and achievement. To counter this, art and design teachers give very freely of their time so that students come to the department at lunch times and after school to extend their studies and this supports their achievement well.

90. The leadership of the department is good. The head of art and design sets a clear direction for the subject, both in policy writing and in his relationships with staff and students. The curriculum is well planned; it covers a wide range of media and is supported by a good range of resources. Visits to places of artistic interest are arranged and artists visit the school to work with students. ICT is being increasingly used, even though the equipment is not the most up to date. Digital cameras and computers are used in lessons. The department has maintained its standards since the last inspection and has made satisfactory improvement in, for example, ICT.

## Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

- The subject leader's commitment to the subject ensures that drama is highly regarded by students.
- Teachers' subject expertise and high expectations ensure that students reflect on their work and think about ways in which it can be improved.
- There are many opportunities for extra-curricular drama.
- Planning and assessment are thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of different groups of students.
- Students are now taught drama in Years 7, 8 and 9 which provides them with a firmer foundation for GCSE.

## **Commentary**

91. Drama has only recently been introduced into Years 7, 8 and 9 and it is too early therefore to make a robust judgement on standards and achievement. However, work seen during the inspection indicates that students' practical work is broadly in line with the national average by Year 9. GCSE results at A\* - C were well above the national average in 2003. Results in 2004 are very similar. Attainment for current Year 11 students is well above average. This represents very good achievement since these students did not have a firm foundation on which to build lower down the school.

92. In Years 10 and 11, students work together very well. Their work is thoughtful and mature and they make very good use of their teachers' and each other's advice to refine and improve their practical work. Year 8 students use voice, movement and gesture effectively although they are still at an early stage of their drama study.

93. Teaching and learning are very good. Both teachers in the department are subject specialists and use their expertise to promote a very good understanding of techniques such as 'still image' and 'thought tracking'. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher helped students to explore a poem and then supported them as they used movement and gesture to create still images based on the central ideas. Resources are used effectively. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher's use of a simple lantern prompted students to explore ways of creating atmosphere. Teachers have high expectations and have worked hard to establish routines which students understand. This leads to high levels of motivation and self-discipline by the end of Year 11. Teachers use assessment very effectively to encourage students to reflect on their own and each other's work. This, combined with the teachers' own skilful interventions, ensures that students constantly strive to improve their practical work. It also prepares students for the evaluative skills necessary for coursework at GCSE.

94. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department strives to ensure that all students, including those with special educational needs, are able to succeed at drama. She has produced units of work which are adapted to the needs of different groups of students and target setting sheets are simplified so that all students can be involved in the assessment of their work. Her commitment to drama ensures that students respect the subject and take their work seriously. Many extra-curricular activities are offered and, last year, the department participated in the Shakespeare School Festival in order to involve younger students in public performance.

95. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Since the previous inspection, a number of improvements have been made and the department is very well placed to build on its successes. Drama is now taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 and a drama studio has been provided. The department has grown and a new teacher has been appointed to work alongside the head of department. Facilities, such as storage and staging, would enhance the subject provision still further.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their expertise well to extend the students with less developed musical ability.
- Large classes doing ensemble work are generally well managed so that they achieve their lesson objectives.
- Tasks set for the whole class are not always suitable for individuals or groups resulting in a few students losing concentration.
- Students receiving instrumental tuition make good progress.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

96. Results of the 2003 teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with national averages. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above the national average with all students gaining grades A\* - C. Results in 2004 were similar at the end of Year 9 but GCSE results show a reduction in the number of passes at grades A\* - C, although they were still above the national average. Results in the Certificate of Achievement (Entry Level) for lower attaining students in Year 11 were well above average in both 2003 and 2004.

97. Students enter school with broadly average attainment. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and so by the end of Year 9, attainment is in line with national averages. By Year 9, students construct a Reggae piece of music using the chords of G and A minor. Lower attaining students find difficulty in pitching the notes or singing them in unison but have a good sense of rhythm, responding to and echoing changing rhythms. Students work well together but girls remain more focused on their task than boys and consequently do better in lessons than the boys. Most students make up lyrics with a number of verses. Students with average ability compose a simple theme tune for a television programme and can create an arrangement for an existing tune. They enjoy using instruments and behave well and this makes a valuable contribution to their achievement. Students who learn to play musical instruments make good progress.

98. By Year 11, attainment is above average and this reflects good achievement. Students put their knowledge to good use as they develop performance and compositional skills. Students with below average levels of attainment at the start of their course also show a good level of achievement. In Year 11, these students chose from a blend of percussion, keyboard and drums to create suitably atmospheric music to an excerpt from a Wallace and Grommet film. Students evaluate each group's composition well, according to examination assessment criteria and use the correct musical terminology.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge generates questions which make students achieve more than they thought possible, and the good use of ICT provides students with rich opportunities to create and write more complex scores in which they can take pride. Where the satisfactory teaching has shortcomings, the teaching assistants are not always suitably deployed to support the students with their learning. On these occasions a small minority of students do not always remain on task when unsupervised in music practice rooms especially when the tasks are too open-ended. Students are effectively assessed in class but the assessment outcomes are not always used to inform planning to structure individual or group work. Those students' with weak writing skills but good verbal skills are not always given a suitable range of methods in order to effectively record their evaluations. Teaching makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and spiritual education. A particularly sensitive response was seen in a Year 8 class when students listened to an atmospheric extract from 'Saving Private Ryan'. They listened in total absorption followed by a lively verbal exchange trying to capture the haunting mood of the music revealed through the instrumentation.

100. Leadership is good. All teachers, including instrumental teachers, are clear about their roles and perform them well. The management of the subject is good. A good range of musical opportunities is offered through instrumental tuition and the Yamaha music school. Students can participate in the school's stage band or in the annual concerts, musicals or variety shows. They have participated in twelve concerts in school over the last year. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. However, the accommodation is still unsatisfactory. Music rooms and practice rooms still lack soundproofing and are immediately adjacent to other teaching rooms or the examination halls so that musical activities have to be suspended in summer. The computers are better used than at the time of the last inspection but the department does not have enough computers that can run advanced programs and multi-media software.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good across the school.
- Accommodation for indoor activities remains poor and limits the curricular experiences of the students and the standards they reach.
- Staff work hard to minimise the effects of the poor accommodation, and their efforts are appreciated by both parents and students.
- A new head of department is now in place with the vision to move the department forward.
- Teaching is too teacher led with not enough opportunity for student involvement.
- Comprehensive records of student performance are kept but it is not clear how this data is used to improve standards.
- Teachers give willingly of their time to lead extra-curricular activities.

### **Commentary**

101. Standards seen during the inspection across a range of year groups and sports are in line with national averages by Year 9 and Year 11 for this time in the school year. Teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average. However, consideration should be given to moderating these levels across the department and with other schools to ensure their accuracy because levelling is not sufficiently accurate. The first GCSE results available are for the year 2004. The eleven boys who took the GCSE short course in 2004 gained 100 per cent A\* to C, a commendable figure considering that they had to give up a lunch time to follow the theory section of the course. This arrangement caused a significant drop in the number of students, especially girls, who completed the course. However, so far this school year numbers on the GCSE course in Year 11 are being maintained.

102. The poor indoor accommodation limits the range of curricular experiences that can be offered to students, especially in Years 10 and 11. Limited indoor space makes it difficult for students to experience full size games, and to be able to transfer individual skills into more competitive situations. Space for the evolving rhythmic gymnastics is too tight to develop basic skills. Thus the weaknesses in the accommodation have an adverse impact on students' learning. However, because of the commitment of the teachers, achievement in games skills is still good as they work so very hard to overcome the deficiencies in the accommodation. Students in Year 7 are developing skills in throwing, catching, receiving and passing, building on their varied experiences in primary schools. The school sports co-ordinator is working with the family of primary schools to help to raise standards and to develop some baseline data at the end of Year 6. Awareness of health related exercise is developing throughout the school via the specific units of work on fitness and through lesson warm ups but there are too few opportunities for students to lead the whole or parts of that warm up. The use of the names of muscles and joints helps students gain an understanding of basic anatomy which will provide a firm basis for the GCSE theory work. This needs to be embedded in the learning of Years 7 to 9.

103. Achievement is good throughout the school. Attainment by Year 9 and for the core physical education students in Year 11 is average. Students are attentive and enthusiastic. They persevere with the tasks and do well. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and achieve in line with their peers. Some more able students, especially boys, show developing control and fluency, dribbling with both hands and performing turns and cross steps in basketball. These students perform at a high level. Overall, though, the more able students are not sufficiently challenged and not given sufficient opportunities to take enough responsibility for their own learning, through leading warm ups, developing practices, and evaluating their own and the performance of others.

104. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is organised and well planned, with increasingly complex skills built up gradually and applied to game situations. Teachers relate well to students and relationships are strong; students work well together either in single sex or mixed groups. Lessons, however, are very teacher directed. The teaching of students with special educational needs is very sensitive and the curricular organisation of setting students in Years 8 and 9 helps to keep classes for the less able small. Less effective teaching is characterised by slow pace and activities which do not match the ability of the students. Teachers work hard to limit the effect of the poor indoor accommodation maintaining the programme even in wet weather. Students cope well with being outdoors and maintain their efforts, although at times the environment is not conducive to good quality learning. Assessments are carried out at the end of each unit of learning, but students do not have access, via displays, to consider where they might be and what they have to do to achieve a higher level. Comprehensive records are kept of student performance but this is not currently used to inform improvement. Teachers affirm student effort but there is limited diagnostic feedback to help students develop their skills further.

105. A new head of department has been in post since September following a period of uncertainty. Leadership is good, showing clear vision, and there are plans to broaden the curriculum which is currently very games orientated. Management is satisfactory but processes, roles and responsibilities need clarifying under the new leadership. Consideration should be given to the role of non-participants in lessons to ensure that they are still learning and contributing to lessons. Teachers give willingly of their time for extra curricular activities to extend those more able and motivated students through a range of opportunities in different sports, some leading to local inter-school competitions. Clubs are open access and attract a significant number of students on a regular basis, providing a link with a few local clubs and filling a gap in after-school sporting opportunities, especially for girls. All students have two hours of physical education per week but curricular arrangements with half year groups result in some mixed teaching in Years 7 and 8 with some changes of teacher for the different sports and therefore some lack of continuity. Organisation in half year groups puts additional pressure on cramped changing facilities. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Accommodation still remains unsatisfactory. The outdoor hard court area has been resurfaced; the GCSE course has been developed and standards have been maintained in line with national averages.

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

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A curriculum audit has been undertaken to map provision and to inform a training programme to support teachers in delivering PSHE and citizenship through a cross-curricular model in Years 7 to 9.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 have discrete provision and follow the short course GCSE.
- There is a co-ordinator in place but roles and responsibilities are unclear following the change to cross-curricular provision in Years 7 to 9.
- Some departments lack an understanding of the need for explicit learning opportunities in their scheme of work for citizenship.



## Commentary

106. During the inspection specific citizenship lessons were observed in Year 10. Inspectors did observe varying references to citizenship within subjects in Years 7 to 9, but these were seldom explicit, planned opportunities relating to the three strands of citizenship. Evidence of intent was seen in schemes of work across a range of subjects, with some departments matching expectation closely to their units of work. There were some clearly identifiable contributions seen in some subjects in Years 7 to 9, for example in the debate on organ donation in Year 7 science. However, there was insufficient evidence to support a secure judgement on standards in Years 7 to 9.

107. Work seen in citizenship books of students in Years 10 and 11 indicate that standards attained are in line with the national expectation. The learning follows the GCSE syllabus closely and covers a range of learning styles, developing skills of enquiry through independent research, using personal consideration of views, debate and direct inputs to extend knowledge and understanding. In the lessons observed students made presentations using information they had researched on the Internet. Some students struggled to understand what they had downloaded whilst the more able students communicated the information clearly and with good understanding of content.

108. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Students in Year 10 are developing an understanding of local government. There are some missed opportunities to link learning to practice by way of the school council. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Citizenship lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives which are shared and recorded in students' books. The teacher has high expectations of written work and marks books carefully to aid student understanding. Frameworks are given to help students shape their work and examples demonstrate what is required. Students reflect on their learning giving personal views in response to questions. A few boys are disruptive and off task on occasions and in the lessons where this occurs their learning is disrupted. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is part of a carousel arrangement which includes careers and religious education. Students consider that the citizenship examination coursework is not well supported because of not having sufficient time and that there are no lessons for some students in the immediate run up to the examination because of the manner in which the provision is made. Provision across the school is well supported by 'Impact days' to which outside agencies contribute significantly to widen student awareness and understanding. The school provides funding to support this.

109. Leadership and management are satisfactory but the new system in Years 7 to 9 is embryonic and so at an early stage of development. The co-ordinator has undertaken an audit to map provision but it is unclear how gaps are being addressed. Monitoring of citizenship across subjects by heads of department has not yet been clarified. There is a clear improvement and development plan with explicit targets and budget implications. However, the role of the co-ordinator needs clarifying as does the relationship between PSHE and citizenship.

110. The co-ordinator has given an input on the requirements of citizenship to the heads of department but there has been insufficient staff training to support the cross-curricular model, to identify the explicit contributions that subjects can make and to ensure that citizenship does not get lost within the host of other subjects.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE 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	11	100	80.1	63.4	23.7	50.0	29.9
Biology	6	83.3	65.2	16.7	11.1	26.7	20.6
Chemistry	6	100	72.7	71.0	13.9	50.0	24.1
English/English language	14	100	82.9	14.2	17.5	37.1	28.7
English literature	15	100	85.9	60.0	19.1	49.3	30.2
French	4	100	78.2	50.0	18.9	37.5	27.6
Design and technology	14	100	74.9	85.7	15.1	55.0	25.3
General studies	9	100	73.9	11.1	17.8	35.6	25.7
Geography	9	100	74.3	22.0	19.8	25.7	26.5
History	9	100	80.7	11.1	19.5	32.2	28.6
Mathematics	9	88.9	61.9	11.1	17.1	26.7	22.1
Other social studies	3	66.7	69.7	0	16.7	16.7	24.1
Physics	7	100	68.6	14.3	14.4	27.5	22.7
Sports/PE Studies	7	100	73.2	22.2	11.4	34.4	23.1

### *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	10	100	98.6	60.0	50.2	98.0	87.5
Biology	24	95.8	96.4	37.5	39.2	77.5	78.6
Chemistry	9	100	97.6	77.8	49.0	93.3	84.9
Communication Studies	6	100	99.4	83.3	37.8	103.3	82.1
English/English language	14	100	99.4	21.4	36.3	78.6	80.9
English Literature	15	100	99.5	60.0	46.5	98.7	86.5
French	3	100	98.8	33.3	51.5	80.0	87.6
Design and Technology	14	100	97.8	85.7	35.0	110.0	77.9
General Studies	4	100	94.7	25.0	31.0	70.0	73.1
Geography	15	100	98.7	26.7	44.5	81.3	84.0
History	8	100	99.0	50.0	44.6	97.5	84.6
Mathematics	16	87.5	96.7	62.5	55.6	88.8	88.8

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-C		Average point score	
Other Social Studies	2	100	97.4	0	42.7	80.0	81.8
Physics	10	100	96.7	50.0	44.6	90.0	81.7
Sports/PE Studies	4	100	98.0	25.0	30.9	65.0	75.2
Business VCE	16	100	65.0	65.6	14.6	96.3	60.1
Health and Social Care VCE	16	100	67.7	81.3	14.5	97.5	63.5
Media: Communication and Production VCE	1	100	71.9	0	28.5	60.0	N/a
Travel and Tourism VCE	7	100	71.8	57.1	14.5	94.3	62.2

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Both English literature and English language were inspected in depth but media studies introduced this year was not inspected.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge promotes good achievement.
- There is a flexible approach which enables students to take A-level in one year.
- The department has flourished since the sixth form was established in 1998 and now offers English literature, English language and media studies.
- Students produce coursework which is ambitious and thoroughly researched.
- There are no departmental schemes of work and teachers rely on the examination specifications to plan their lessons.

### Commentary

111. Standards attained in English literature are well above average and a high proportion of students achieve the highest grades. Standards attained in English language are broadly average and all students achieve grade A - E. This is a relatively new subject offered by the department and the first cohort of students took the examination in 2003. Overall, standards are above average for English.

112. Students' good achievement is confirmed by work seen during the inspection. In both subjects, students produce coursework which is ambitious in scope and a genuine reflection of their interests. At the higher levels, work is meticulously researched. In lessons, students use sophisticated terminology in their analysis of text and apply it in their own writing. This is largely a result of their teachers' very good subject knowledge and their own very high levels of motivation.

113. Teaching and learning are very good overall; one lesson seen was satisfactory. In an English literature lesson, students appreciated their teacher's very detailed textual analysis which they went on to apply independently to their own work. In another lesson, the teacher had written her own model of a critical essay which she shared with students, encouraging them to apply to it the assessment criteria which she had also provided. In English language, teachers' very good subject knowledge enabled students to use and apply sophisticated terminology with understanding and confidence. In both subjects, lessons were characterised by the teachers' high expectations of their students and very thorough lesson preparation.

114. Management is good and leadership is very good. The introduction of both A-level English language and AS-level media studies has provided students with varied and stimulating choices and some students take more than one of these subjects in the sixth form. Several students had returned to the sixth form to take both A-level English language and A-level English literature in one year and appreciated their teachers' flexibility in making this possible. The head of department encourages all members of his department to teach A-level which promotes good professional development and has enabled the subject to expand. Although departmental schemes of work are not in place, teachers have a good understanding of the examination specifications and assessment criteria. Since the last inspection, when the sixth form was only recently established, English has become a highly regarded subject at A-level and is very well placed to develop further.

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

115. The use of literacy skills across the curriculum is very good in the subjects inspected. Students have very good research skills which they use, for example, in science to investigate their chosen topic and in history where they use appropriate reading strategies to read a variety of texts. Students' oral communication is very good: in geography they use their own research to give individual presentations to the group. Students' literacy skills are clearly more than adequate to meet the demands of their sixth-form courses.

### **French**

116. A small number of students study French to AS and A-level and work seen indicates that standards are at least in line with national averages. Two lessons were sampled, both of which were good and in which both groups of students had the benefit of the expertise of a French native speaker for a teacher. Students were motivated and by the end of the lessons were able to discuss topics such as the 'French Education System' and the 'Environment' in reasonably accurate French.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good** and improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- At A-level standards are consistently high.
- Teaching is very good, demonstrating enthusiasm and depth of subject knowledge.
- Leadership is very effective and management is good, with further mathematics offered.
- Students' attitudes are good, they show interest and work hard.

### **Commentary**

117. The number of students taking A-level examinations has varied over time and in 2004 there were too few to compare with national data even if it were published. In 2003, the AS modules, taken in Year 12, and the end of Year 13 A2 modules, resulted in above average results, with a high proportion of the higher grades. In 2004, one student obtained A grades in A-level mathematics and further mathematics, a very high achievement. Although the AS examination in 2004 at the end of Year 12 resulted in above average grades, half of the original class gave up mathematics for other subjects, or left school, a high drop-out rate. Current attainment is above average in Years 12 and 13 and this reflects good achievement.

118. Fifteen able students have chosen to study A-level mathematics in Year 12, and are achieving well with the core pure mathematics modules. In an excellent lesson on relating parabolic curves to their equations, achievement was excellent. A brief recap of knowledge from the GCSE course on vectors of translations led to applying this to parabolas, pictured using the interactive whiteboard, which allowed a fast pace and instant visual recognition. Earlier algebra work on completing the square helped students compare equations in this form to the many variations of

parabolic curves. By the end of the hour they were able to sketch parabolas for given equations and match curves to equations in the plenary activity using the interactive whiteboard. Students worked hard, appreciating the quality resource and structured teaching. A wide range of other subjects are studied by these students combining a variety of skills and interests.

119. The smaller group of six students taking the A-level modules in Year 13 also achieve well. Their algebraic manipulation standards are good. In one lesson seen the physical demonstration of a cone related to conic curves and the enthusiasm for the beauty and power of mathematics were good features which inspired students to learn and so achieve well. Further mathematics is offered, but at present only one student in Year 12 and one in Year 13 are taking this extra provision. Teachers act as facilitators, working through detailed notes and guiding them through examples, using a variety of relevant texts.

120. The mathematics department has also prepared a numeracy key skills course, taught for two hours per week to students on vocational courses who have not achieved a higher grade GCSE. A lesson on budgeting was seen, where newspaper accommodation adverts led to relevant and useful discussions of rent related to wages and the cost of living. These students are building up portfolios of work and are achieving well through the good teaching and structured course.

121. Teaching is very good overall, with breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding of how students learn. Most teachers prepare and plan well, with quality materials and plentiful textbook resources. ICT is insufficiently used. For example, the pace of learning was slowed in one lesson because the teacher did not use ICT to portray curves to support students' knowledge and understanding of curve sketching. The new interactive whiteboard is potentially a powerful resource for learning. Discussion is used well to share ideas about methods and answers, and students work very well together. Teachers know the examination criteria well, and assess appropriately, giving verbal and written constructive comments and detailed corrections and advice on how to improve.

122. Leadership of sixth-form mathematics is very good, with a drive for improvement now being seen in increased uptake of courses. The recent changes made to the A-level course were managed effectively. Standards have risen since the previous inspection, and increasing interest and achievement have improved mathematics in the sixth form. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Physics**

Physics was inspected in depth. Biology and chemistry were not sampled.

Provision in physics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and prepares students well for examinations.
- Students do well in A-level examinations.
- The subject is well led and managed and student progress is monitored effectively.
- Systems to encourage students' self evaluation are not in place.

### **Commentary**

123. A-level results for 2003 were well above average. Students achieved as expected overall based upon their GCSE results in Year 11. High attaining students achieved very well. The number of students converting their modular tests into AS qualifications was too small to make national comparisons. The results for 2004 were lower but students again achieved as expected.

124. The standard of work seen in Years 12 and 13 was above average. Year 12 students know and understand the factors affecting electrical resistance and are able to use the expression for resistivity in calculation work. The combination of a secure understanding of physics concepts together with above average mathematical skills allows them to resolve forces effectively and carry out calculations successfully using equations of motion. Year 13 students know and understand Faraday's Law of electromagnetic induction and are able to apply this in mathematical form to the solution of problems. Students are able to communicate their understanding of physics well, both verbally and in writing and use ICT effectively for presentation purposes and as a tool to support their learning in practical investigation work.

125. The teaching is good. Because of this good teaching and learning, achievement based on inspection evidence is good. In the best teaching, very good planning enables students to investigate physical effects for themselves using a variety of methods with a high degree of independence. Students are challenged by their teacher to evaluate their experimental results and procedures and they work at a good pace. For example, in a lesson on finding the value for the acceleration due to gravity, students worked in groups using two different methods. As the investigations progressed students used ongoing evaluation of their procedures to refine them and obtain more accurate results. This resulted in students achieving well. They strengthened their ideas about experimental errors and uncertainties and obtained values for the acceleration due to gravity. The small amount of less effective teaching was characterised by an all too leisurely approach which resulted in students not achieving as well as they could. Assignment work is set regularly and is assessed well, indicating what students need to do to improve. Students generally know what grade they have reached on the basis of past performance on modular tests but are unsure about their day-to-day performance levels. Student self-evaluation is not emphasised or monitored.

126. The subject is well led and managed. Teaching and learning are monitored well and students' performance in AS and A-level examinations is evaluated in terms of achievement. Issues emerging from departmental evaluation are highlighted, although action plans are not part of the science development plan. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- Standards are high and teaching and learning are very good.
- The care for individual students is exceptionally good, assessment information is used very well and students are given very good guidance on how to improve their work.
- The department has limited access to ICT resources.
- There are many opportunities for independent learning out of school but students are not always taking a sufficiently proactive role in lessons.

#### **Commentary**

127. In 2003, results were well above the national average at A-level and in 2004, although results were lower, students achieved their target grades. Achievement has been consistently very good in recent years although relatively few students have taken the subject in some years. Standards in the present Year 13 are above average, many students were awarded A or B grades at AS. Year 12 is a similar group although overall standards were lower on entry to the course. There is no significant difference between the results or achievement of male and female students. Both contribute very well in class.

128. Year 13 students achieve very well because they benefit from very good teaching and

advice about examination requirements. They have built on their experience in Year 12 and gained both in knowledge and maturity. They are confident in answering the demanding style of questioning at A-level and they discuss major issues, for example the political and ideological factors affecting the careers of key figures in the Nazi hierarchy, with real confidence. Students respond very well to opportunities for independent research and group work, although they are not taking a leading role in lessons and they are still too dependent on their teachers. Year 12 students are gaining in confidence and benefit from the high quality of teacher input and the range of sources available on both Mussolini and Hitler. The level of care provided for students who have changed courses or missed classes is quite exceptional. Students really appreciate this and the very effective advice on examination requirements and strategies for improvement. Students access a good range of books and periodicals but have no computers in class and this limits some research opportunities.

129. The very good quality of teaching and learning is a result of very good management. The department has a good balance of responsibility for different aspects of the course. Resources and assessment procedures are being used very well. Standards have improved and new courses developed well; the subject has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

130. Design and technology in the sixth form was sampled. Results in AS and A-level examinations are very good. The course is in product design, graphics and materials technology. A very well organised and delivered theory lesson was observed where expert teaching focused the students on techniques of gathering and analysing information. They responded very well.

131. NVQ courses were sampled. A visit was made to a theory class for students studying Level 1 plumbing on a business site about a mile from the school. This course is resourced and staffed well. Students clearly achieve well because of the care in planning and the quality of available support. Vocational courses are being further developed and this is an exciting initiative.

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

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and experience in the world of art and design which they use extremely well in their teaching.
- All students show a high level of informed engagement with their work.
- Lack of space and sufficient resources limit the further development of students' achievement.

### **Commentary**

132. Results in the A-level examination in 2003 were well above the national average, maintaining the well-established pattern. They fell appreciably below this level in 2004 but in that year a key teacher was on a year's sabbatical. Results are expected to be above average in 2005. There are plans to begin an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course in art.

133. Achievement is good. Attainment is above average. For students who start an art course with a Key Stage 3 entry level rather than GCSE the achievement is very good. Students are very well motivated, work hard and clearly enjoy art classes where they produce a good portfolio of work showing a good knowledge of artists and using a range of materials including acrylics, oils and photography. A project on icons shows artistic maturity and a perceptive exploration of social and moral issues. However, the range of artistic experiences is severely limited by physical and spatial constraints so that students are unable to explore and develop individual ideas. Teachers work very hard to ensure that the deficiencies in accommodation are not a serious barrier to learning. But

there is insufficient opportunity for students to extend their ideas into the fields of ceramics, sculpture or screen printing because of the accommodation weakness. Nevertheless, in one class, students explored a range of processes discovering the values and limitations of mono over lithographic printing but the lack of a large press meant that large scale work was impossible. All students attend a community life-drawing class every week after school where they develop good observational skills. Good use is made of digital photography but learning could be considerably enhanced with the aid of a digital projector.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan work which makes the best use of available resources to engage students and develops their understanding of a range of artistic processes. A very good knowledge of the world of art and design enables students to receive good and effective advice both on their work and on opportunities in terms of career and further education pathways. Students' work is discussed with them individually and clear learning objectives, closely linked to the assessment criteria, are shared with them. However, students do not sufficiently share their ideas and opinions in group discussion.

135. The department is well led. The head of department provides a good role model and inspires teachers to work together as an effective team. Their planning is effective and this contributes to the good achievement students make. Given the limitations in the accommodation and the resources this is to the credit of a hardworking team of teachers. Management of the department is good. Opportunities are made to visit artists' studios for students to experience processes such as lithographic printing and to art galleries in London. Teachers give up their non-contact time to provide additional teaching for students out of timetabled periods. Inevitably this erodes away at the amount of planning time available to them. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The very small room used by the sixth form and also other classes does not allow for students to work comfortably or for their work to be displayed for peer evaluation and discussion. Opportunities for ceramic work or sculpture are severely limited. Resources are unsatisfactory for this level of art teaching. The kiln is old and cannot fire at sufficiently high temperature for most glazes and the screen printing facilities cannot be easily accessed. Storage facilities are poor. There is limited space to display and celebrate students' work. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection. The use of ICT is much better than what it was then and there are more opportunities for students to encounter other artists and their works.

### **Performing arts**

Provision in performing arts is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average for AS and A-level students. Students produce very good practical work and their folders and coursework show very good achievement.
- Teaching is very good. The three teachers in the department are specialists and use their expertise very well.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good and this contributes to their very good learning. They are independent and well organised.

### **Commentary**

136. Standards were well above national averages in the AS and A-level GCE examinations in 2003, and were similar in 2004. This is a relatively new course. It was not running at the time of the last inspection. AS and A-level grades have been consistently higher than national averages over the past three years, as have the numbers of higher grades. Students achieve grades that are usually higher than those they gain in other subjects. The students progress very well from their GCSE courses in drama and music, and both male and female students achieve equally well. Standards seen in lessons and coursework are well above average. All students produce and develop a very good level of practical work, such as the thoughtful issues-based work focused on tension in Year 12, and the improvisations for public performance in Year 13, although the latter



were compromised by the absence of one teacher. This meant that the work needed more direction and focus. This practical work is backed up with extensive research and evaluation, linked directly to the assessment objectives of the examination. Students are using their language and ICT skills well to review and analyse their practical work.

137. Teaching and learning are very good. The three teachers in the department challenge and motivate the students very well. These teachers are enthusiastic, work well as a team and have very high expectations of the students. There is a clear focus on developing students' skills, and channelling their energies towards the examination requirements. The teachers know the students well and are able to support them as individuals. Lessons and projects are planned in detail and are delivered expertly by subject specialists in drama, music and dance.

138. Students' attitudes are very good, they are independent and well organised, work effectively in groups and concentrate very well, which means that their learning is also very good. They are conscientious in completing their work and give up time to complete projects and performances. Assessment is very good and used very well to set targets, inform students of their achievement and guide them as to what to do to improve. The marking is detailed and regular, with constructive comments and clear links to the assessment objectives of the course.

139. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. A very effective team has been put together. Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to devise lessons and projects. Monitoring of the results and devising strategies for improvement are not as well developed. A wide range of visits and performances are arranged, mainly to local theatres, but also to Stratford with the English department. Visiting performers enhance the provision, including a male dance teacher who worked very effectively with both Year 12 and 13 students on martial arts movements in dance. The main studio is a good space for teaching, despite a central pillar, and has very good facilities for lighting and sound, but no staging. Music rooms are used effectively for specialist tuition, but the main school stage is a passageway and unsuitable for development work. The students are closely involved in the annual school performances of musicals, and put on performances in Plymouth as part of their course. The subject was not inspected at the last inspection and so judgement on improvement since that time cannot be made.

## **BUSINESS**

### **AVCE Business studies**

140. The provision for AVCE business studies was sampled. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Students make good progress. They use business terminology with confidence and they already show a sound understanding of some aspects of marketing and customer service.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **General studies**

141. The provision for general studies was sampled. Three students are taking this course in Year 13. They are achieving well because of the quality of teaching and their approach to study. Students interviewed said that they found the subject interesting and that it made a valuable contribution to their personal development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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