

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE**

East Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103518

Headteacher: Mrs R Robinson

Lead inspector: Mr D Roberts

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004

Inspection number: 271620

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,357
School address:	Gressel Lane Tile Cross Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B33 9UF
Telephone number:	0121 464 9600
Fax number:	0121 244 5841
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Crook
Date of previous inspection:	Not previously inspected

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The International School was formed in September 2002 when two secondary schools, which shared the same site, amalgamated. It has not been previously inspected. Since 2003, the school has operated within a Federation with two other Birmingham secondary schools. With the support of Federation resources and leadership, the school has recently undergone very substantial internal reorganisation, the impact of which was still to the fore at the time of this inspection. It is also part of an Education Action Zone and benefits too from Excellence in Cities funding and support.

The school serves a community which experiences levels of socio-economic deprivation which are among the highest nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very substantially above average. The pupil population is predominantly white, with the proportion of pupils coming from other ethnic heritages low by national comparison. For very few pupils is English not the first language. On entry to the school, at the start of Year 7, the average level of prior attainment is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is broadly in line with the national average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7582	D Roberts	Lead inspector	
9588	A West	Lay inspector	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English
10160	R Bagguley	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form) English as an additional language
19867	M Pettitt	Team inspector	Art and design
21825	E Kelly	Team inspector	Design and technology
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business education
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
13155	J Dixon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music Special educational needs
17987	B Coates	Team inspector	Physical education
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
31879	D Rhodes	Team inspector	Mathematics
33019	S Aspinall	Team inspector	Geography
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism Health and social care
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**The overall effectiveness of the school is good.** Pupils achieve well and generally display positive attitudes due to the good quality of teaching and the very good support, advice and guidance provided. The curriculum for pupils aged 14-16 is designed to meet their needs and is successfully raising their aspirations. The school benefits from excellent leadership by the headteacher, who is supported very well by key staff. Highly effective additional support to leadership, management and the pace of development has derived from the school's participation in a federation of three Birmingham secondary schools (the 'Ninestiles Federation') and from the LEA. It now provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well in general, including those with special educational needs; achievement in ICT in Years 10/11 is excellent.
- The school's new behaviour improvement strategy is working well and behaviour is now satisfactory overall.
- Teaching overall is good; it is very good in Years 10/11 in mathematics, ICT, geography, history and music.
- Staff's commitment and enthusiasm has blossomed under the new leadership arrangements and all energies and resources are focused on appropriate priorities.
- The school makes very good use of data on pupils' performance to ensure that the appropriate praise and guidance is given.
- There is an excellent programme of continuing professional development for staff, sharply focused on improving teaching and learning.
- Standards remain below the national average but the sharp improvement seen in GCSE results in 2004 looks set to be sustained; standards are too low in religious education and citizenship lessons, and too many pupils achieve no qualification at age 16.
- Attendance levels are not yet satisfactory; although the school's efforts to improve attendance are very good, these are not given adequate support by all parents concerned.
- Punctuality to school of too many pupils is unsatisfactory; as a result, they miss key elements of their personal, social and health education programme.
- The curriculum for personal, social and health education is insufficiently developed and pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in the life of the school.
- The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped in a number of subjects.
- A number of statutory requirements are not met.

The school has not before been inspected, having been established in September 2002 upon the amalgamation of two schools which shared the same site. It has made rapid improvement from the poor performance which characterised much of its first two years.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

**Achievement overall is good.** Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and in the clear majority of subjects; only in religious education is it unsatisfactory. In Years 10/11, achievement is also good overall and in the clear majority of subjects, although in religious education and citizenship, it is poor. Standards remain generally below average in Years 7 to 11, except in science, where they are average. Achievement is good overall in the sixth form subjects inspected. Standards remain below average overall in most subjects inspected, except in biology and sociology where they were average, and in ICT, where they were above average. Pupils and students with special educational needs generally achieve as well as others.

The table below shows that GCSE results in 2003, the latest year for which validated results are available, were among the worst five per cent nationally. However, in 2004, results in GCSE examinations, and their equivalent, improved very substantially indeed. The proportion of pupils

who gained five or more higher grades A\* to C increased from nine per cent to 34 per cent, which is above the average for similar schools, although too high a proportion gained no qualification. There was also an upturn in results post-16.

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

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

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. The quality of teaching is good overall and this secures good quality learning.** Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is very effective. The school provides a satisfactory breadth of curriculum opportunity overall, good in Years 10/11. Staffing, accommodation and resources are generally good, although with some shortcomings in resources in the sixth form. Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory overall. There is very good provision of support, advice and guidance to pupils based on the effective monitoring of their progress and their needs. Whilst sixth form students are well involved in developing the sixth form, younger pupils are insufficiently involved. Links with other schools are excellent, leading to significantly enhanced quality of provision and teaching quality.

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management are very good overall.** The leadership provided by the new headteacher is excellent, backed up by the very good leadership of other key staff and the additional resources accessible through membership of the Federation. Management is very good overall, and that of the sixth form good. Governance is satisfactory.

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

Parents have mixed opinions of the school. They have commented very positively about the progress review day, held recently. A significant number of parents, whose children have been at the school and its predecessors through a period of some turbulence, have continued, understandably, to comment adversely. Pupils feel that their views are not always responded to in a positive way and that the school council could be more effective; the inspection supports these views.

### IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To continue with all existing strategies aimed at securing high quality teaching and guidance in order to raise standards achieved by all pupils, and particularly those who might otherwise leave school with few or no formal qualifications.
- To take further steps, including with parents and carers, to further improve attendance and punctuality, including in the sixth form.
- To secure a more coherent programme of personal, social and health education and involve pupils more in the life of the school.
- To improve learning resources where they are inadequate in the sixth form, including in the library and for ICT teaching, and the use of ICT to support learning in a number of subjects.
- To improve standards and achievement in religious education and citizenship.

**and, to meet statutory requirements in relation to:**

- Curriculum provision for religious education in Years 10/11 and the sixth form, sex and relationships education, the daily act of collective worship and work-related learning.

- Annual reports to parents on their children's progress.
- performance management of staff.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very effective in providing a satisfactory range of courses to suit the nature of its intake, in line with the school's policy of encouraging young people to commit themselves to continuing education. It is cost-effective. Standards in examinations are below average but are rising steadily as a result of committed teaching and positive student attitudes. Most students, irrespective of the level of the course they are following, achieve well relative to their previous levels of attainment.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good or better in most subjects.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership of the sixth form overall is very strong and determined, and the leadership in most subjects is good.
- Library and research facilities, and resources in some subjects, are poor.
- The sixth form is inclusive, and its curriculum provides opportunities for students of all ranges of attainment to continue their education.
- Students are well supported and guided.
- Results in A-level examinations are below average.
- Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.
- The proportion of students continuing on their A-level courses throughout the two years is below average.
- There are very good accommodation and resources in information technology, facilitating good teaching and learning.

### 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. As well as those listed below, lessons in geography, psychology, chemistry, design and technology and leisure and recreation were sampled.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good and students achieve well, but standards remain below <b>average</b> .
Mathematics	In mathematics, provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching and achievement are good, but standards in examinations are <b>below average</b> .
Science	Provision is <b>good</b> in biology, where standards are <b>average</b> . Teaching and achievement are <b>good</b> .
Information and communication technology	Provision is <b>very good</b> . Teaching is <b>very good</b> , resulting in <b>very good</b> achievement in both Years 12 and 13, leading to <b>above average</b> standards.
Humanities	There is <b>good</b> provision in sociology. Teaching and learning are <b>very good</b> , leading to <b>good</b> achievement and <b>satisfactory</b> standards. Resources are <b>poor</b> .

Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are <b>below average</b> , although students' achievement is <b>satisfactory</b> .
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	No courses inspected in depth.
Business	No courses inspected in depth.
Health and social care	Provision for health and social care is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good, and students' achievement is <b>good</b> . Standards remain <b>below average</b> .

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The school provides well for the personal development of students. Teachers are helpful and supportive, and the school's very strong assessment procedures ensure that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Students have good access to personal counselling and to advice about the possibilities offered by higher education and careers.

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

The leadership of the sixth form is very good. There is good vision and a determination to ensure that the sixth form provides well for the whole school population, and encourages young people to continue their education. The sixth form is well managed and provides a secure and agreeable place in which to learn, although the arrangements for students' personal research and private study are inadequate.

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

Students interviewed during the inspection and those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were all very satisfied with their sixth form. Almost all felt that their work was helpfully assessed, that they received good help and guidance with their studies and good careers advice. Students agreed that the student body gets on well and is inclusive. A significant proportion of students felt that there is not an adult in school who knows them well and that there are insufficient enrichment activities for sixth form students. Inspection findings support the positive views of the students, and agree that the range of enrichment activities could be extended. Inspection findings do not support the view that students are not well known to their tutors and to the sixth form leadership.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS**

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

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and in the clear majority of subjects; only in religious education is it unsatisfactory. In Years 10/11, achievement is also good overall and in the clear majority of subjects, although in religious education and citizenship, it is poor. Standards remain generally below average in Years 7 to 11, except in science, where they are average. Achievement is also good overall in the sixth form subjects inspected. Standards remain below average overall in most subjects inspected, except in biology and sociology, where they were average and in ICT, where they were above average.

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

- Standards seen in the inspection show that, based on their starting point, pupils and sixth form students are now achieving well.
- Results in national tests and examinations at all levels remain below the national average.
- In the end of Year 9 tests, performance in English is well below that in similar schools.
- GCSE results in 2004 showed a very substantial improvement over the previous year; the proportion of higher grades well exceeded the school's target and were above the average for similar schools.
- Too high a proportion of pupils aged 16 attain no qualification, particularly boys.
- A-level results similarly showed an improvement in 2004 but the proportion attaining higher grades remains low.
- Results in vocational subjects are generally better than in others.

#### **Commentary**

1. At the end of its first year of existence, the school's results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, and their equivalent, at the end of Year 11 in 2003, were well below the national average.
2. When the results are compared with similar schools, however, a somewhat different and improving picture emerges. In the end of Year 9 tests, results in mathematics, and particularly in science in both 2003 and 2004, have come broadly into line with those achieved in schools with a similar, very high, pupil entitlement to free school meals. Results in English tests, however, have remained well below average on this comparison. Compared with schools where pupils arrive at the start of Year 7 with similar prior attainment, results remain well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science.
3. The school's analysis shows boys performing significantly worse than girls, with the writing component of the test revealing the worst performance overall. Comparison between different ethnic groups indicates that pupils from an Asian background have performed best, although the numbers involved are relatively very small.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.0 (26.8)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	30.7 (29.3)	n/a (35.4)
science	28.4 (28.8)	n/a (33.6)

*There were 293 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. In the GCSE examinations, and their equivalent, there was a very significant improvement in 2004 compared with the previous year. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grade (A\* to C) passes rose from nine per cent in 2003 (within the lowest five per cent of results nationally) to 34 per cent in 2004. This figure substantially exceeded the school's target of 20 per cent. This dramatic advance was due to improvements in teaching, quality and curriculum relevance, and the new directions taken by the school's leadership. The school has now revised its target for 2005 up from 35 per cent to 50 per cent based on the confidence now developed in the improved pupil attitudes and quality of provision.
5. Comparisons with schools with similarly very high rates of free school meal entitlement reveal that the proportion who obtained five or more of the higher grades A\* to C in 2004 came into line with the average for such schools. Even more impressive is the comparison with other schools where the starting point of pupils at the beginning of their GCSE course was similar. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grades in 2004 was above the average for such schools. However, the proportion achieving pass grades in general remained well below the average on both similar school comparisons; this is confirmed by the school's analysis which indicates that too high a proportion of pupils, and particularly boys, continue to achieve no GCSE level qualification.
6. Unlike the results at the end of Year 9, performance in English at GCSE level is relatively strong, whilst that in mathematics and science is relatively weak in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades. Results in 2004 in music and ICT were also particularly strong, whilst art and design, sociology and business education were relatively weak.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	34 (9)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	58 (32)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88 (86)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	20.8 (12.8)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 239 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. In the pupils' work seen during the inspection, standards were found to be generally below the national average, although in science, they were in line with the average and, in Years 10/11, they were above average in both ICT and music. On the other hand, they were well below average in religious education and, in Years 7 to 9, in modern foreign languages and, in Years 10/11, in citizenship. That standards seen were generally below the national average is not surprising given the low levels of prior attainment of the majority of pupils. However, the quality of teaching and the response of pupils is now such that pupils are achieving well in most subjects and generally making good progress. In ICT and music in Years 10/11, progress is very good. Subjects where achievement is satisfactory rather than good are modern foreign languages, design and technology, citizenship in Years 7 to 9, and art and design and business education in Years 10/11. In religious education, achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10/11 it is poor in both religious education and citizenship.

8. This is an effectively inclusive school where the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good. Pupils are assessed on entry to Year 7 and clear targets are devised for those who require additional help. The good liaison between teachers, learning support assistants and mentoring staff helps pupils to make progress.
9. Many subjects in the curriculum have a clear policy for developing skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, for example in emphasising the correct use of subject vocabulary. In several subjects, however, low levels of literacy skills are holding back pupils' progress and, overall, literacy standards are below average. Pupils' competence in mathematics is now satisfactory and pupils' numeracy skills enable good achievement in science, design and technology, ICT and physical education. The school has prepared well for the development of ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects, but this is still patchy. Standards are now average.

### **Sixth form**

10. Although the results showed an improvement over those of the previous year, post-16 examination results in 2003 were well below the national average. Male students did rather better than female students, but remained well below average, whereas the average points score per female candidate was very low when compared with results nationally. Less than three-quarters of entries achieved a pass in 2003, compared with almost nine out of every ten nationally, and the proportion of entries gaining A or B grades was well below average.
11. The school's performance in A-level examinations was also very low compared with all maintained schools nationally in 2003. In 2004, however, there was a significant upturn in results when all students entered for an A or AS equivalent examination gained a pass and the average points score rose by over half a grade per student. The proportion of higher grades A/B, however, remained low.
12. Results in 2003 in the vocational subjects were generally higher: in performing arts, results were well above average, with four of the six entries gaining A or B grades. In information technology and business, however, results were well below the national average and in health and social care, below the national average. In 2004, all students except three entered for a vocational qualification achieved the qualification for which they were studying. Here, the subjects represented were ICT, business, health and social care, leisure and recreation, and performing arts. Two out of five of the students completing A-level examinations in 2004 achieved university places. As yet, the proportion of students who remain on academic courses through the whole two years of the sixth form is below average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	74.2 (69.6)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	22.5 (9.6)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	152.2 (141.1)	265.8 (258.2)

*There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

13. In the work seen during the inspection, there is clear evidence that standards are beginning to rise in the sixth form. The school is keen to encourage all students, whatever their levels of attainment, to take the opportunity to raise their educational standards, and consequently does not at present insist on students' achieving minimum threshold barriers for entry to post-16 studies. Most students respond well to this challenge, and, irrespective of the courses they are following, achieve well in the sixth form, although in many subjects, standards remain below average. Nonetheless, standards in information technology are above average, and in science, sociology and health and social care, they are at or around the nationally expected levels and demonstrate how standards and expectations are rising. Students who follow one-

year courses in GCSE English, mathematics, science or design and technology work hard and generally improve on their grades. Post-16 students with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English are well supported and their achievement is at least satisfactory.

14. Achievement is well promoted through the school's focus on how to succeed, which pervades every school activity. A very high profile is given to the levels at which students are working and what they might do to improve on their performance.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory throughout the main school and good in the sixth form. The pupils' interest in school activities, their personal development and relationships are satisfactory in the main school and good for the sixth form. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall, with social and moral aspects good. Attendance and punctuality throughout the school are unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Too many pupils in the reporting period and during the inspection were absent or late.
- Arrangements for improving attendance and punctuality are very effective and are reflected in the improved performance over the last two years.
- Parents' efforts to ensure the attendance and punctuality of their children are unsatisfactory.
- The school's strategies for improving behaviour and attitudes are good and the school has very detailed procedures that have impacted positively on pupils' learning.
- There have been a large number of exclusions as part of the above strategy.

### **Commentary**

15. Behaviour and attitudes during the inspection were satisfactory. The great majority of pupils behave well in class. However, a minority do present challenging behaviour in lessons. Behaviour is good in the dining and social area; however, in corridors and playground areas when unsupervised, the quality of behaviour is not always as consistent.
16. As a result of the school successfully improving behaviour and attitudes by the introduction of the behaviour for learning (B4L) scheme, many pupils have received rewards and praise for good work and attitudes. As a 'consequence' of displaying inappropriate behaviour or attitudes, pupils can be given a range of sanctions depending on the seriousness of the misdemeanour. These consequences are ranked and can result in pupils being warned, detained after school, sent to an isolation centre or ultimately excluded. A significant number of pupils have been excluded.
17. Despite criticism from a minority of pupils about inconsistency in its application, the introduction of B4L has successfully achieved its aims, in a short time, of improving behaviour, as well as raising learning expectations. The scheme is signed up to by pupils and includes school rules as well as subject-specific rules, prescribing accepted standards of behaviour. The school has also adopted an innovative shape to the school day since the beginning of this term. This, related to the new rule that pupils may not leave the site during the school day, is successfully playing its part in ensuring that anti-social behaviour is minimised.
18. The level of exclusions is high, with the proportion of pupils excluded being high among certain ethnic minorities. The school is monitoring this situation carefully. The school acknowledges that the current high rate of exclusions is part of its successful strategy to improve the climate for learning. There is a focus on communicating effectively with parents and carers of excluded pupils. Behaviour and attitudes are monitored very well and this information is passed on to parents at the progress review day. Since teachers and all of the

support staff provide good role models, this influences the way pupils with learning difficulties behave.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1029	296	15
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	63	14	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	30	9	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	59	71	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	52	18	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	16	3	0
Any other ethnic group	8	8	0
No ethnic group recorded	68	23	1

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

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	7.6
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

- Attendance in the year 2002/3 was unsatisfactory. At 86.1 per cent, it was well below the national median for secondary schools. In the same period, unauthorised absence, at 7.6 per cent, was above authorised absence and well above the national median.
- The school's automated processes are used very well to establish why pupils are absent or late and to encourage parents to substantiate absences. During the inspection, too many pupils were absent from lessons and large numbers of pupils were late at the start of and

during the day. The school is putting much effort into improving punctuality. Some lesson lateness is due to the geography of the site. The automated system used for registration did not always allow the teachers to identify where absence from a lesson was legitimate.

21. The school has worked extremely hard to successfully improve attendance by using a variety of strategies, including first day calling and incentives. Attendance records are kept and maintained correctly. The school enjoys a very good relationship with the Education Welfare Service and regular meetings are held to improve attendance and to discuss concerns regarding the care and welfare of students. The efforts of some parents to ensure that their children are punctual and in school are unsatisfactory and the school and authorities are prosecuting a number of them.
22. Pupils co-operate together in different groups, sharing resources, collaborating and working with adults. There was no evidence of racial harassment or bullying during the inspection and all pupils spoken to confirm it is not a problem for them, although responses to the small number of questionnaires received expressed concerns about bullying. The results received in school questionnaires, following the school's progress review day, were far more positive.
23. The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Pupils experience two weekly assemblies that provide good opportunities for spiritual reflection. However, arrangements for assemblies and tutor periods do not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship. A few subjects provide appropriate contributions to spiritual development but there is little evidence of planning explicit provision in schemes of work.
24. The promotion of pupils' moral and social development is good. The school has a very clear code of conduct based on moral principles. It is consistently applied by reinforcement in all subjects and in tutor periods. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Some subjects provide particularly effective opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues, such as history, science and design and technology. Teachers and pupils relate well together. Pupils have many opportunities to develop appropriate social skills in paired and group work across most subjects. Pupils have a forum to contribute their ideas about the school community through the school council.
25. The promotion of cultural development is satisfactory. Subjects have recently audited their contribution towards this aspect of the curriculum, but it is yet to impact significantly on pupils' educational experience. The current programme of residential visits, trips to museums, galleries, theatres and concerts is modest. The most effective contributions are found in music, history and design and technology.

### **Sixth form**

26. Sixth-form students respond well to the high levels of trust placed in them by the school. Behaviour and attitudes to work are good. Students feel that they are treated as adults, and most are willing to take responsibility for their work and actions, and to engage positively with others. They enjoy being in a building separate from the main site.
27. Students relate well to one another and to the staff. In lessons, there is a friendly yet workmanlike and committed atmosphere. Students are confident and attitudes are positive throughout the student body.
28. Although the school has procedures for checking and recording student attendance and punctuality and for ensuring that individual students keep up with their work, attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. There is some inconsistency in the requirements for students to register at the beginning of the day related to the need for students to attend lessons every day and their start times. Whilst student punctuality at lessons is generally satisfactory, punctuality in arriving at school on time is in some cases not as good as it should be.

29. The school provides well and in a wide variety of ways for students' personal development. Using a building separate from the main school does give the sixth form a strong focus; however, it does mean that the older students are not in regular contact with their younger peers and are therefore unable to make a significant contribution to younger pupils' development.
30. There are effective opportunities for post-16 students to become involved in helping others and organizing their own social activities. There is a requirement in the sixth form to make a contribution to the community and this involves all students in a range of activities within the school and beyond.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. The quality of teaching is good and secures good quality learning. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is very effective. The school provides a satisfactory breadth of curriculum opportunity overall, good in Years 10/11. There are satisfactory arrangements for the enrichment of pupils' curriculum experiences. Staffing, accommodation and resources are generally good, although with some shortcomings in resources in the sixth form. Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory overall. There is good provision of support, advice and guidance to pupils, based on the effective monitoring of their progress and their needs. Whilst sixth form students are well involved in developing the sixth form, younger pupils are insufficiently involved. The school's links with parents and the community are improving and are now satisfactory. Links with other schools are excellent, leading to significantly enhanced quality of provision generally and teaching quality in particular.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning are both good overall, and the quality of teachers' assessment of pupils' and students' progress is very good. Among lessons observed, the quality of teaching was best in the sixth form and least good in Years 7-9. In general, learning is similarly effective, accounted for in particular by the high quality of lesson planning and classroom management, teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm, and the generally productive relationships between teachers and pupils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects in all years.
- New schemes of work, the thorough planning of individual lessons, good classroom management and enthusiasm for the subject all help ensure a high proportion of good teaching.
- This good teaching engages the attention of most pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and supported and therefore also make good progress.
- Very good assessment procedures embrace pupil attitudes as well as their academic progress.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 171 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
10 (6%)	41 (24%)	69 (40%)	39 (23%)	8 (5%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)

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

31. Teaching in Years 7-9 is good overall and in all subjects except French, ICT, religious education, art and design and citizenship, where it is satisfactory. In Years 10/11, teaching is good overall. It is very good in ICT, geography, history and music. In the other subjects, it is good, except in art and design, citizenship and business education, where it is satisfactory, and religious education, where it is unsatisfactory.
32. Teaching in the sixth form is good or better in four out of every five lessons, and very good or excellent in over a third. In Years 10/11, teaching is good or better in three quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in a third. In Years 7-9, almost two-thirds of teaching is good or better, and a quarter is very good or excellent. Across the school, the subjects where the proportion of good and very good teaching is highest are English, mathematics, science, music, physical education and particularly in Years 10/11 in ICT, geography and history.
33. Overall, well under one in ten lessons were unsatisfactorily taught (and a few of these were poor). The proportion of such lessons was highest, at about one in ten, in Years 7-9. Only in design and technology, business education and citizenship was more than one less than satisfactory lesson seen.
34. In general, pupils respond well to the good quality teaching such that the quality of their learning is also good. The subject knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers helps to secure pupils' interest well in most lessons, particularly in science, music, ICT, geography and history. Teachers plan schemes of work and individual lessons very carefully and this is particularly effective in English, art and design, geography, history, mathematics, music and physical education. Learning is particularly productive where this planning is then backed up with high quality classroom and behaviour management. Other than in modern foreign languages in Years 7-9, behaviour management is at least satisfactory, and often of high quality. Other features of the lessons observed which helped to secure effective learning were:
  - the effective use by teachers of modern technology (including in science, geography, history, religious education, design and technology, business education and music;
  - well-structured lessons, with learning objectives shared with the class, supported by a good range of activities, particularly in mathematics;
  - productive relationships between teachers and pupils, with teachers often supporting pupils' progress outside lessons;
  - helpful, encouraging marking, particularly in English, and the effective use of data on pupils' performance in the planning of lessons, particularly in ICT and mathematics;
  - effective questioning techniques which provided appropriate challenge to all pupils – this is well done, particularly in history and physical education; and
  - regular setting, and responsive marking, of homework, for instance in science and ICT; however, the use of homework was satisfactory rather than good in most subjects.

Elements of teaching in the lessons observed which made a less positive contribution to effective learning were:

- work was not well enough matched to the range of ability in the class (particularly the highest attainers), as observed in some geography, history and religious education lessons;
- there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to use modern technology to support their learning, for instance in art and design, English, history and religious education;
- opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills were limited, for instance in physical education;
- the National Key Stage 3 Strategy had not had sufficient impact on lesson structure; for example, where lessons did not make effective use of starter and plenary activities; and
- teachers' expectations of what pupils should be achieving were too low, for instance in some ICT lessons in Years 7-9.

35. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs help teachers match work to pupils' needs. The well planned teaching programmes and the support that pupils have in a number of lessons enables them to make good progress. Those pupils with a statement of need are well known to teachers and they receive good support to help them improve their learning and personal development. There is careful monitoring of pupils' progress and welfare to ensure that they are fully integrated into school life.
36. The school has very good procedures for assessment of pupils' progress. The focus on how to succeed pervades every school activity, and the school has developed rich and effective procedures for monitoring and promoting the progress which pupils make. At whole school level, a very high profile is given to the levels and grades at which pupils are working and, at subject level, what they might do to improve on their performance. Most lessons include a review of progress so far and attempt to make pupils aware of what they need to do in order to reach the next level. Pupils are keen to know at what levels they are working in each of the subjects they study. Throughout the school, achievement is celebrated and encouraged, and successes and progress are displayed prominently for all to see. This strategy has played a significant part in raising pupils' aspirations. The process continues into the sixth form, where the grades at which students are presently working are prominently displayed.
37. The assessment process is not restricted to pupils' academic achievement. There are central records kept of their attendance, attitudes, behaviour and homework, and these, along with all other assessments, are discussed at the review days, when both parents and their children meet with tutors to discuss the performance of the pupils. All teachers have access to the full range of data on pupils, and this is effectively used to compare groups of pupils or classes where appropriate and to set targets. All pupils have aspirational targets set for their future performance based on the wealth of prior attainment data which the school possesses. However, there is still some disparity across the school, and within some departments, in the accuracy of judging levels and grades. The school has taken steps to improve the perceptions of National Curriculum levels across the teaching body through training courses.
38. The performance of the pupils, year group by year group, is reviewed monthly by the school's 'raising of achievement' group. Each year group has a head of student progress whose responsibility it is to ensure that there is sustained effort and achievement from the pupils. Particular attention is paid to attainment and progress in the core subjects, for which there are separate steering groups. Where the need is perceived for support and assistance to help drive up standards, the school makes effective use of the resources at its disposal. There has been effective use of the Federation through its advanced skills teachers, who have had an impact on achievement.

### **Sixth form**

39. Teaching is good in most subjects post-16. In information technology it is very good. It is characterised by the good subject knowledge and commitment of the teachers to promote their subject and to drive up standards, and the positive attitudes which the students have towards their learning.
40. Teachers show a good understanding of students' learning needs, and are skilled in tailoring their lesson planning to the wide range of students they will encounter. The school's inclusive policies enable a much wider range of students than is normally the case in school sixth forms to continue their studies or improve their grades, and students respond well to the opportunities which are offered. Most try hard in the GCSE subjects which they are going to re-sit and, in the majority of cases, they succeed in improving on the grades which they had previously achieved.
41. In English, teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is conveyed to the class and promotes positive attitudes and good learning, and there is a good sense of partnership. Effective lesson planning in mathematics and science ensures that the needs of all students are well met, although there is a need for strategies to be devised in mathematics which will promote

greater understanding of mathematical process. In science, access to information contained on the school's intranet gives students good support for their independent research. In information technology, the assessment of students' work provides a basis for teachers to provide expert individual attention and thus promote high standards. Students have good opportunities to expand their learning through class discussion and debate in sociology and general studies, and through contact with the world of industry and commerce in business education. In art and design, students benefit from the amount of personal attention which teachers are able to give them, but they are slow in developing as independent learners.

42. The quality of students' learning in the sixth form block is, however, impaired by the poor facilities for independent learning and research. Such library stock as exists is out of date and does not match the quality of work going on in lessons, and the provision of computers for students' individual use is inadequate.
43. In most subjects, the assessment of students' work is good, and enables them to be more aware of how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. The school's sustained emphasis on assessment and achievement, which is marked in the main school, continues with effect in the sixth form, where progress levels are still displayed prominently and still closely scrutinised by the students.

### **The curriculum**

The school provides a satisfactory breadth of curriculum opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and a good range in Years 10/11. Overall, curriculum enrichment arrangements are satisfactory – this judgement embraces much that is good but takes account too of the relatively slim programme of extra-curricular activities. The quality of staffing, the accommodation and resources for learning are all generally good, although with some shortcomings in sixth form resources.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Innovative curriculum arrangements, matched to the needs of individual pupils, in Years 10/11 are enhancing pupils' self-esteem and chances of success.
- There is now a good match of specialist staff to the curriculum offered, although there is restricted access to a second modern foreign language and to drama in Years 7 to 9 and to science in Years 10/11.
- Very good arrangements exist to extend and support the learning of pupils outside of normal lesson arrangements.
- In the sixth form, there are very good accommodation and resources for teaching ICT but library and research facilities are poor.
- Arrangements for the daily act of collective worship are not meeting statutory requirements.
- Arrangements for teaching religious education in Years 10/11 and the sixth form are not meeting requirements.
- The personal, social and health education curriculum is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

44. The school offers a satisfactorily broad and balanced curriculum to pupils in Years 7 to 9, although with no access to a second modern foreign language for pupils who may be interested in this, or to drama in Years 7 and 8 due to a shortage of teachers. Setting of pupils in English, mathematics and science is helping to ensure that the work is very well matched to the needs of individual pupils, although the lack of setting in French is hampering the progress of some. Arrangements to provide additional literacy support to pupils identified as having this need work well, although the provision for pupils not so identified, during the designated lessons, needs to be kept under review.
45. In Years 10/11, pupils are channelled into one of three 'pathways' which the school has taken care to develop to ensure that all pupils can gain a real sense of achievement. All pupils,

whichever their identified pathway, follow a core curriculum of English, mathematics, ICT, religious education/citizenship and games. The ICT course provides the potential for pupils to achieve the equivalent of four GCSE passes. The innovative approach to teaching and learning which is developing in this core course is beginning to influence practice in other subjects, through a carefully managed programme of continuing professional development of all staff. The course for religious education and citizenship is afforded too small a time allocation for either subject to be taught effectively, and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are not all met. In anticipation of the revised curriculum regulations which come into force in 2006, not all pupils take science but are provided with a broad range of alternative options, which in particular provide opportunities for some pupils to take vocational courses, dependent on which pathway they are following. Care has been taken in designing the timetable for this age group so that no pupil misses any core curriculum time when following their vocational programme, which can often involve them working away from the school premises for up to two days each week. Particularly successful has been the special provision for around 25 disaffected pupils who have been at a high risk of exclusion. Whilst this range of curriculum developments in Years 10/11 are still at a formative stage, the arrangements do help to secure the motivation, and higher aspirations, of a higher proportion of pupils than might otherwise be the case. However, attendance in these two year groups is not yet at an acceptable level. Links between the curriculum opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 and those for sixth-formers are being well developed, particularly in relation to the catering course.

46. Arrangements for the statutory daily act of collective worship are unsatisfactory. Whilst the quality of individual assemblies is often good or very good, pupils attend these on only two days each week and there are no effective arrangements for the other days.
47. The length of the teaching week, at 24 hours, is somewhat below the national average. This has been planned so as to allow the teaching staff additional planning time during the period of substantial reorganisation of the school. These current arrangements are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching but will need to be kept under review as the school settles into its new pattern, so as to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement to expert tuition.
48. The teachers, the learning support staff and the learning mentors all make a good contribution to helping pupils with special needs to have access to the whole school curriculum. Tracking pupils carefully shows that literacy skills and personal development improve through the extra support they receive in withdrawal groups and in booster lessons in literacy and numeracy. Because the English and mathematics faculties have their own attached learning support assistants, this contributes well towards the progress that pupils make. Where there is differentiated planning, as in science and for older pupils in ICT, this enhances the provision available. However, apart from the support for pupils with statements, there is insufficient help available for pupils in other subject areas.
49. The school has identified pupils in all years who are gifted or talented, and teachers show good awareness of them in lessons. As a matter of policy, the school has decided not to make any special provision for these pupils whilst concentrating its efforts on raising attainment and achievement for all.
50. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. The subject has only recently been reintroduced and is taught by form tutors three times each week during form time. The majority do this well but there is a lack of ownership of the materials used, especially in Years 10 and 11 where a commercial scheme is used. There are no detailed schemes of work for personal, social and health education, only a list of topics to be covered. There is, at present, only a draft policy for sex and relationships education that contains several important omissions and has still to be approved by governors. Sex and relationships education is not taught as part of the school programme, other than through possible "immersion days" for pupils in Year 11, with outside speakers brought in from the Youth Health Project.

51. The needs of pupils are very well addressed through the very well organised and supported programme of enrichment activities, designed to enhance pupils' revision and learning opportunities. After-school lessons, Saturday School, half-term clinics and Easter School help promote improved examination results. The school's correct decision to focus teachers' time on this form of extra-curricular activity, at least for the time-being, has inevitably hampered provision of a wide variety of more traditional activities, including educational visits and trips. However, pupils join in inter-school sporting competitions, enjoying success. Productions, performances, exhibitions and workshops run by the school are successful and enable many parents and carers and visitors to enjoy the work of the school. The school organises visits and visitors as part of curriculum and enrichment activities, but these are not yet fully impacting on the pupils' experiences or making significant contributions to their personal development.
52. The school, situated on a large site which was formerly two schools, provides extensive accommodation with the majority of subject faculties having their classrooms located in the same part of the school. The classrooms are spacious, with all faculties having teacher workrooms and good storage areas. Rooms allocated to provide essential facilities for the pupils have been re-designated or redesigned with improved facilities. The school has provided a new social area and a new dining room for pupils at lunch-time. The school site has been made secure with new fencing and this has also led to a reduction in truancing. The outdoor environment for learning in physical education is poor; there are no grassed areas and the surface of the playground is poor. All classrooms contain data projectors and this enables most subjects to use power-point and interactive whiteboard facilities effectively.
53. The number of teachers is well matched to the curriculum, with a good range of experiences and qualifications. The school is very well supported by teachers from the other Federation schools. The restriction on finances has resulted in a significant reduction recently in the number of support staff that are available. The number of learning mentors and learning support assistants is limited and the lack of a librarian inevitably restricts pupil access to the library.

### **Sixth form**

54. The post-16 curriculum which the school provides clearly reflects the needs and aspirations of the students at this stage of the school's development. There is a strong commitment to providing learning opportunities for young people in the community which will persuade them to continue their education and to equip them for life and their future careers, and where appropriate, for higher education. The head of sixth form and her colleagues are constantly reviewing the curriculum provision and seeking to provide courses which are more relevant to the students. In this, the curriculum provided has been successful in promoting the growth of the sixth form and its developing success. The school sets no qualification threshold for entry into the sixth form.
55. There is provision for four GCSE one-year courses for students who wish to improve their grades before undertaking an advanced level course of study, a good range of intermediate and advanced courses of study, and a limited number of academic courses leading to A-level qualifications. A-level study in English and mathematics offers a narrower range of options than in many schools, and in art and design, where an A-level course is offered, a more vocationally-oriented course would be more suitable to the needs of the students. Good use is made of collaborative arrangements with a neighbouring school to ensure that there are viable numbers for some courses, although the curriculum arrangement into four option pools is less effective inasmuch as it limits the subject combinations which students can choose.
56. The school offers a limited but practical range of enrichment courses which, on the whole, are well supported, although timetabled lessons prevent some students from being able to attend. Students are involved with the local community and are encouraged to organise their own

social events. There are at present insufficient cultural and sporting activities available which might serve to broaden students' horizons.

57. In subjects, courses are well planned in the main to promote student achievement, although there is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in art and design. Provision for information technology is very good, but some subjects are not sufficiently well resourced. Whilst resources are good in science, the lack of suitable technical support in the sixth form centre is a disadvantage. The sixth form provision for students' independent learning and research is poor: the library is poorly stocked and there is insufficient provision for students to use computers outside of lessons.

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

The school's provision for the care, welfare and health and safety of the pupils is satisfactory. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, to all pupils is very good. Pupils' involvement in the work and development of the main school is unsatisfactory, although the involvement of students in the sixth form is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is very good.
- Induction and transition processes, from primary schools through the secondary school years and into work or further study, are good, including those for students with special educational needs.
- Pupils feel that their views are not always heard and responded to in a positive way by the school and that the school council could be more effective.
- Child protection arrangements are good.
- In the sixth form, students' involvement in school life is good.
- The programme for personal development at sixth-form level is good.

### **Commentary**

58. Members of staff are well aware of pupils' specific needs, and strategies are devised and implemented to support and advise them. Pastoral support is appropriately provided from within the school or from outside agencies. The great majority of pupils confirm there is an adult they can speak to if they are in need of advice or help. They have access to their tutors, the heads and assistant heads of student progress, teachers, graduate mentors and other support staff and particularly to a new, and clearly very effective, 'student support centre' where they can receive skilled and impartial support and guidance.
59. The provision of guidance and support for pupils who are having difficulties with mainstream academic arrangements are very good. These include the 'ASDAN' course for pupils in Years 10 and 11, arrangements for courses for pupils at other schools and colleges, part-time college placements and continuous work experiences that have, in some instances, led to offers of apprenticeships.
60. The school's very good assessment system includes details of pupils' personal and work attributes. This information, together with data on their subject performances, enables the staff to provide pupils with high quality information on progress and how they can improve. This system is very effectively used on the pupils' progress review day, which engages parents as well as their children in the process.
61. Pupils with special needs are well cared for. Because teachers, learning support assistants and learning mentors know these pupils very well, the good relationships help to build up confidence and self-esteem. Much verbal praise and careful explanation helps pupils to know how well they are doing.

62. The provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory overall. Careers education is satisfactory, although it is currently disrupted by the re-organisation of the school. Tutorial sessions, when personal and social education is taught, vary in quality from good to poor. Some tutorial staff are providing good lessons on topics such as bullying and respect for others. Assemblies are also used to provide personal and social education for students. The arrangements for sex and relationship education are not fully compliant with statutory requirements. The school operates a work experience scheme that gives pupils a good introduction to the world of work.
63. Whole-school and year student councils have been established but, as yet, they do not give pupils any meaningful opportunities to have their views sought, valued or acted upon. Pupils do not feel they are able to contribute to the management of the school, and they confirm that they do not have any allocated funds for projects of their own.
64. The induction and transition processes into, through and out from the school to the next phase are all good.
65. Arrangements for the care, medical and welfare support for pupils are satisfactory. The local area child protection committee requirements are fully met by the school and plans are being made for training teaching staff on procedures following the re-organisation of the school's management structure.
66. Arrangements for health and safety are also satisfactory. The school bursar has recently taken on overall responsibility for these matters and a school safety committee has yet to be formed. There are significant levels of expertise in faculties and in the school overall; as a result, there is a strong commitment to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and that arrangements are thorough. Members of the governing body and the staff regularly review and update policies and apply considerable time and skills to this aspect of the school. Any concerns are handled well, statutory requirements are met and risk assessment procedures are in place, including those for visits and trips. Trained members of the staff deal skilfully with those students requiring first aid attention. However, the location of the first aid area is very public and is unsatisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

67. The school provides well the personal development of its older students. There is good advice and support for students' next steps, including university application, moves into higher education or the world of work. The school counsellor provides an effective and confidential service for students with personal problems.
68. Arrangements for supporting students' progress and attainment are very good. All students are given targets as soon as they move into Year 12, and these are kept under close review throughout their stay in the sixth form. Expected grades are based on the student's performance in the GCSE examinations and represent the level at which the student is expected to perform. In all subjects, there are regular reviews of progress towards targets, and the students are asked to evaluate their own performance and set themselves targets for improvement. The system is very effective in involving students in a clear appraisal and understanding of where they are.
69. Students interviewed all felt that they know what they need to do to improve and they confirm that tutors and subject teachers will give help and guidance when problems arise. The view, expressed by some in responding to the inspection questionnaire, that students do not have an adult who knows them well and to whom they can speak when in need of help, was not borne out by inspection evidence.
70. Students meet regularly with their tutors to discuss their progress. These meetings are helpful and promote good learning. Procedures for ensuring that students present work on time and

are keeping up with their targets are secure. The sixth form team meets regularly to discuss progress and to identify any adverse trends in student work and progress that may be developing.

71. Sixth form students enjoy the opportunities the school provides to contribute through the student councils. Although they do not have any specific funds allocated for their needs, they do feel that the school listens to their views and that they are able to influence the management of the sixth form.

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

The school's links with parents and the community are satisfactory and those with other schools and colleges are excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are excellent links with the schools that are members of the Federation.
- Links with primary schools, receiving colleges and other local schools provide many benefits for pupils.
- The parents have a unique opportunity to attend the school's progress review day.
- Communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs is good and well documented.
- Annual reports to parents on their children's progress do not fully meet requirements.

### **Commentary**

72. Parents and carers have had mixed opinions of the school. Parents have commented very positively about the progress review day, held recently, when nearly two-thirds of pupils were accompanied by parents. There are several opportunities for parents to attend the school to discuss student progress and to witness the celebration of pupils' achievements through the year. The school is working hard to build up good relationships between parents and the staff in order to improve pupils' academic performance, behaviour and attendance.
73. However, a significant number of parents, whose children have been at the school through the turbulent years prior to 2004, have continued to comment adversely about the school. The school works hard at involving parents, but many are unresponsive. Although members of staff are very willing to discuss with parents their concerns, there are few opportunities for parents to voice their opinions or influence the school's plans for the future. The pupils' homework/contact books are often not completed by parents and parents do not always respond to school invitations to attend meetings or events to discuss their children's progress. The efforts made by some parents to ensure that their children attend and are punctual to school are unsatisfactory and court proceedings against some parents are proceeding.
74. Parents generally are positive about the school's efforts made to smooth the settling-in process when their children join the school. A comprehensive and detailed range of information is provided for parents regarding the curriculum and how they can help their children at home. Parents receive a regular newsletter from the school, they have received documents on the 'behaviour for learning' programme and they have received letters from the Education Welfare Service on attendance. The school is careful to ensure that parents are made aware of any concerns about individual pupils' behaviour or attendance.
75. The written annual pupil reports for parents do not fully comply with statutory requirements in that they do not always include comments and progress details of all curriculum subjects. They do not allow for any comments from parents or pupils and they do not consistently explain how pupils can improve in all subject areas.

76. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved with setting individual education plans and are invited to attend progress meetings and reviews. They attend the annual reviews and are encouraged to contribute to the statements. There is also a strong link with the local authority agencies. Close relationships also exist with feeder schools; consequently, the transition from one school to another is very smooth.
77. Links with other schools and colleges are excellent. Good induction arrangements with partner primary schools ensure that the school is well informed of the achievement and support needs of pupils about to enter Year 7. All new pupils are assessed to ascertain their levels of knowledge and understanding. As a result, these pupils settle down quickly in their allocated sets.
78. The school has benefited significantly from its membership of the Ninestiles Federation of three secondary schools in Birmingham. The links formed by the federation have supported a rapid transformation of the school, including behaviour management, curriculum development, the recruitment and retention of staff, the professional development of staff, co-operation between faculties in the three schools and the transfer and exchange of ideas, expertise and resources too numerous to mention.
79. In addition to the links with its federation partners, the school is developing links with other secondary schools and pupils are now able to take advantage of attending courses in other schools and colleges. Pupils attend these courses on a part-time basis and the school continues to provide work experience placements for all, as well as extended work experience for some. The links with primary schools enable a large number of young children to attend workshops in the sixth form centre, including in drama and art.
80. The school's links with the community are developing and are at present satisfactory. The school has links with a local project, founded by the Prince of Wales Trust, that will involve pupils in the design and outfitting of the building for the project. There are developing links with local charities and projects and the school has made on-site unused accommodation available for small projects, charities and other organisations. The school has worked with a local organisation to set up and equip a "computer suite" that is used by outside organisations, as well as pupils.
81. The school enjoys good links with the caring and emergency services and government agencies. Pupils benefit from the links with local providers of specialist learning, pastoral and social support, mentoring services and local youth organisations.
82. The links with the careers advice provider are being strengthened and a new service agreement is about to be signed. Business links, the world of work and the school's work-experience programme ensure that many pupils have opportunities to experience and talk about the world of work. The school has been able to offer specially tailored curricula for some pupils that have included work placements and more practical college study.
83. Pupils join in inter-school sporting competitions, enjoying success. Productions, performances, exhibitions and workshops run by the school are successful and enable many parents and carers and visitors to enjoy the work of the school. The school organises visits and visitors as part of curriculum and enrichment activities, but these are not yet fully impacting on the pupils' experiences or making significant contributions to their personal development.

### **Sixth form**

84. Parents regularly receive good quality information on the school's activities and students' progress, and progress is regularly reviewed with parents and students present. Students have visited higher- and other educational establishments. Visitors have enriched the students' experience and have dealt with careers as well as extra-curricular and curricular

subjects. The Connexions service is regularly in the sixth form building to provide advice for students on career and course choices, as well as advising on gap years.

85. Links with other schools and colleges are good and include collaborative arrangements to enable access to courses that the school could not otherwise provide. Students also attend workshops and presentations in the performing and visual arts. Links between the school and universities are strong and there are effective systems for dealing with the UCAS process.
86. The school's performing arts groups are working with primary school pupils and performing for visitors from a local sheltered housing project in the sixth form centre. Sixth form students take part in the city's Art Fest activities and performances and take part in a range of fund-raising activities.
87. A post-16 open evening is held, when the community and parents are able to visit the sixth form and view what the students have achieved. A very popular post-16 open evening is held for Year 11 students and other interested future students with a view to encouraging pupils in the main school that it is worthwhile to continue their studies.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good taken overall. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent and this is backed up by the very good leadership of other key staff. Management is very good overall, and that of the sixth form good. Governance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new headteacher provides excellent leadership and has quickly rebuilt the school's confidence in itself while maintaining a very determined focus on raising pupil achievement.
- Key staff work very well together in support of the headteacher and have built effective teams.
- Good use is made of pupil performance data to secure improvement.
- The school's improvement plan is a model of clarity, with appropriate prioritisation.
- There is emerging good practice in school self-evaluation, for instance the subject steering groups.
- The programme of continuing professional development of staff is excellent.
- Much effort has gone, successfully, into recruitment and retention of staff.
- In all the above, the support of the LEA and particularly the Federation has added very considerable value to the rate of improvement.
- Governors are fully committed to the future of the school.
- A number of statutory requirements are not met.
- The school's budget is under very great pressure but is now well managed.

### **Commentary**

88. Governors have been able to make their contribution to the vision and direction of the school, but their role in this has been overtaken by events on a number of occasions during the short but turbulent history of the amalgamated school thus far. They are now much clearer about their role in this respect and are beginning to play an increasing part. This is helping to ensure that they develop a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are beginning to work productively with the new headteacher to secure the information they need, and are entitled to, in order to ensure that they can ask informed questions about the way the school is developing. Governors bring a considerable range of skills to their role in the leadership of the school. They know the school's community well and are already playing their part in supporting the school, in its recently reorganised form, in its efforts to rebuild success and earn the support and commitment of the community. Governors have embraced with enthusiasm the additional support of the local federation of schools in helping to bring about the rapid improvement needed.

89. However, governors have not been able to ensure that the school fulfils all its statutory duties, but this has largely been due to the need of the school's leadership to prioritise improvements with some determination. As a result, the school does not currently meet requirements in relation to:
- the provision of sex and relationships education;
  - performance management of staff;
  - religious education in Years 10/11 and the sixth form;
  - some of the information required to be provided to parents; and
  - the daily act of collective worship.
90. In the recent circumstances of the school, which have required decisive remedial action across a broad front, the decisions taken by leadership about how to prioritise have been justified and the school is committed to resolving the above discrepancies, in the above order of priority, as soon as possible, and will ensure they are included in the revised improvement plan which will be drawn up in the context of this inspection report. In the light of the very substantial further changes in the school, together with the appointment of a number of new governors, it will be appropriate for the governing body to audit its skills and further training needs and draw up a governor development plan.
91. The new headteacher provides excellent leadership. She used her time as an associate headteacher extremely well in the months leading up to her appointment, at the start of this term, as permanent headteacher. Very effective teamwork between herself, her immediate predecessor and the now executive headteacher of the Federation, meant that the foundations for the very significant reorganisation of this September were well laid in the preceding months. Staff's confidence in the process and outcomes has been high due to the sensitive but determined approach adopted by the new headteacher. Her vision of what needed to be achieved rapidly, and the way in which it needed to be done, was very well communicated to staff, such that all involved have pulled together extremely well and have met the challenges set. The determination to bring about very significant improvement to pupils' attitudes and achievement has been, and remains, paramount and is visible in improvement planning at all levels within the school. The focus on raising pupils' self-esteem and their aspirations dominates the learning environment, with consistent reference to success wherever it occurs. The reorganisation of the teaching staff into faculty teams, each of which has benefited from the additional support of the Federation, has ensured a shared commitment to success. Support staff reorganisation has also ensured that teachers and learners, particularly those with special educational needs or at high risk of exclusion due to disaffection, have been well supported.
92. Other key staff provide very good leadership overall. This includes other members of the senior leadership team, heads of faculty and subject, heads of student progress and key staff within the support services. A senior leadership team member has a link manager responsibility with each faculty and year head, and this arrangement is found to be very supportive by the middle leaders. In the core subjects, this support function is augmented by the monitoring of a subject steering group, which includes key staff from other schools in the Federation. This model has begun to ensure a high level of accountability and has generated further improvement. Where this facility is not available, the school acknowledges that monitoring and evaluation skills need further development. Most heads of faculty and subject, and particularly those in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, history, music and physical education, have ensured that their teams work well together, with a shared commitment to improvement and the raising of pupils' aspirations and achievement. Leaders at all levels have played their part in inspiring the commitment and enthusiasm of their teams, and this has a positive spin-off into pupils' attitudes. Staff at all levels provide very good role models for pupils. Staff reveal a commitment to ensuring that good progress is made by all pupils regardless of their starting point. They work particularly hard with pupils at significant

risk of exclusion, although significant numbers of such pupils in Years 10/11 still have poor attendance records.

93. The school now engages well in self-evaluation and makes good use of data which is generated. It undertakes effective analysis of pupil performance data, both at whole school level and within subjects. Data are particularly well used in English, ICT and geography to plan improvements and to identify ways in which specific pupils' improvement can be targeted. Rigorous and regular monitoring of the quality of provision, particularly teaching, is undertaken and this has benefited particularly from the support of staff from other schools in the Federation. Lessons drawn from this monitoring, particularly in relation to teaching and learning in ICT, have begun to be disseminated around the school. Much effort has gone into the rewriting of subject schemes of work, again with the help of Federation staff, and these are having a significant positive impact on teaching and learning, particularly in English, modern foreign languages, history and music. Inevitably perhaps, so recently after the very substantial reorganisation, there remains some inconsistent practice within some teams, for instance in relation to marking of pupils' work. In art and design, the improvement plan is not sufficiently well related to an analysis of improvement needs.
94. Because the head of faculty and the special educational needs co-ordinator have a clear vision of support for learning, their good management skills ensure that there is a sharing of good practice with the team of learning support assistants and learning support mentors. Regular in-service training is provided to raise teachers' awareness of particular issues that affect pupils with special needs. However, teachers in a number of subject areas still feel that there is not sufficient support to enable all pupils to reach their full potential confidently. Not all areas of the school are accessible to pupils with mobility difficulties.
95. The programme for continuous professional development is excellent. It is sharply focused on improving teaching and learning through the school improvement plan. The main focus of professional development is on whole-school needs, for example all staff have had training in ICT, lesson planning and behaviour management strategies. There are many additional opportunities for staff through the Federation. Induction for new staff is very effective. For the majority joining the school in September, there was a full induction day before term started, a residential at Warwick University and a further two days at the beginning of the term. Ongoing support for newly qualified staff is very strong with an individual mentor and training plan and a quality of teaching group meeting each week to give further support. This support has had considerable impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
96. An effective performance review cycle has been established with all senior and middle management staff receiving lesson observation training and it has supported an improvement of teaching quality. At this stage, however, the school has yet to adopt a formal performance management strategy for staff; this is to begin in February 2005.
97. The leadership team has worked very hard and effectively to recruit, retain and deploy staff. Last year, there were a large number of temporary staff; but this situation no longer prevails. The Federation has played an important part in improving the situation by supporting the recruitment process and providing or exchanging staff in particular circumstances.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	7,033,155	Balance from previous year	-413,853
Total expenditure	7,375,076	Balance carried forward to the next year	-755,774

Expenditure per pupil	5,093
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98. The school's budget is significantly overspent, apparently because the costs associated with the amalgamation may never have been fully clear. Difficult budgetary decisions have had to be taken in recent months. Supported by the appointment of a new school bursar, there is now a satisfactory analysis of the school's budgetary situation. Agreement has been reached with the LEA as to how the deficit can realistically be remedied within the medium to long term, while ensuring that the school's declared priorities can be funded. Best value principles are satisfactorily deployed, for instance in relation to the new catering facilities.

### **Sixth form**

99. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. The head of sixth form is highly committed to the task of developing learning opportunities for the whole school community and beyond, and it is her vision which has shaped the developing sixth form as it is today. There is a deep commitment to provide learning opportunities for all students irrespective of how well they performed up to Year 11, and the philosophy of the sixth form curriculum development is centred on the needs of students. It is acknowledged that there are clearly improvements to be made in what the school provides for its post-16 students: the GCSE courses serve a purpose, but there is space for a greater range of intermediate vocational courses which may in the longer term serve students' interests more precisely. The head of sixth form is making effective use of the school's detailed assessment data to ascertain where students' strengths lie and to plan courses better suited to their needs.

100. The sixth-form centre is well run and strongly managed on a daily basis by the head of sixth form and her colleagues. It provides security and a sense of belonging for students who might otherwise not have the confidence in themselves to pursue their studies. They enjoy a sense of self-reliance and freedom, but these are backed up by the firm insistence of the sixth form leaders on a sense of shared responsibility and conscientious attendance at lessons. A major weakness in the provision at sixth form level is the lack of suitable facilities for students to pursue independent learning and private research, but there are plans afoot to make some small improvements with a view to providing better opportunities for students.

101. The leadership and management of subjects post-16 are overall good, although leadership in art and design is unsatisfactory. In information technology, there is a high level of co-operative planning to raise standards, and in biology there is a strong sense of direction and a commitment to raise standards. Governors take an interest in sixth form affairs and receive periodic reports on its progress. There is no governor designated to take a special interest in the post-16 part of the school.

### **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

#### **Work-related learning**

Provision for work-related learning in the school is unsatisfactory.

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

- Only about a third of pupils in Years 10/11 take part in vocational courses.
- All Year 11 pupils have the opportunity for work experience; a more comprehensive programme of meaningful activities is being organised for the current Year 10.
- There is no current policy on the provision of work-related learning, although a draft is being prepared, based on an audit recently conducted.

- Youth award (ASDAN) lessons are well managed, with realistic targets.
- Several subject areas currently include work-related elements in their schemes of work but this has yet to be extended across the curriculum.
- The lack of a careers library inhibits pupils' ability to access information independently.

### **Commentary**

102. The quality of work-related education is unsatisfactory overall. The contribution of work-related elements to students' achievement in most curriculum subjects is currently insufficient, but it is satisfactory in design and technology, music and performing arts. The lack of a careers library is hampering pupils' independent research.
103. The school is currently in the process of developing a strategic overview of work related education with the intention of implementing the new statutory requirements as soon as possible. It has conducted an audit of provision across the curriculum and is in the process of writing a policy for implementation in the next school year.
104. The majority of work-related learning is currently delivered through vocational courses. Eighty-six pupils in Years 10 and 11 are involved in motor vehicle studies, health and beauty, catering, and construction vocational courses which are linked to local colleges. These courses are proving to be very successful in motivating these pupils. The catering course is proving to be the most popular, where pupils are keen and progressing well. Pupils' attendance on these courses has improved immensely. The recently introduced Year 10/11 ASDAN course is very effective in involving disaffected pupils with specific needs.
105. The current work experience programme for Year 11 pupils provides all with an opportunity, although not all placements are sufficiently meaningful and productive. The school is supported by local industry and Connexions and has developed its own bank of employers willing to support work experience placements in the future, leading to an improved programme being available to Year 10 pupils in the current year.

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Very good	

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have created a shared commitment to improvement.
- A consistent approach to teaching, learning and behaviour management enables most pupils to achieve well.
- Well-planned and managed lessons enable pupils to develop by building on previous skills and knowledge.
- The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped.

##### Commentary

106. In 2003, standards in tests at the end of Year 9 were very low compared to national expectations and those in similar schools. Girls performed better than boys. In 2004, the standards attained by girls improved. In the 2003 GCSE examinations in English and literature, standards were very low compared to the national average. There was little difference in the performance of boys and girls in English, but girls did better in literature. There was a substantial improvement in English in 2004 for girls but not for boys. There was an overall improvement in literature, although the entry was much smaller than the national proportion. Over time, girls have improved in both subjects.

107. By Year 9, pupils are attaining below average standards. They listen well to the teacher but less well to each other. They are less articulate in spoken English than would be expected, speaking in short phrases or sentences. Girls are more reluctant than boys to contribute to discussions. Reading aloud is accurate but often lacks expression, and some girls are too quiet to be heard. Their written responses to books usually show a sound grasp of plot and character and, in a Year 9 class, they showed understanding of how the central character had changed during the story of 'Holes'. Original writing by the most capable pupils is lively and well structured. By Year 9, most pupils have begun to write successfully for different purposes but many are still inaccurate in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Given their low level of literacy skills at the start of Year 7, these pupils have achieved well, however. By Year 11, pupils are working at below average standards. They listen well to each other in group and pair discussions. In formal speaking situations, the most capable pupils present their views with clarity and treat each other's ideas with respect. They write perceptively about the poetry, plays and novels they study and comment on the effect of language and imagery. Most have a sound grasp of the storyline of novels and the content of poetry. Original writing for a variety of purposes varies in length and accuracy. Good achievement is maintained during Years 10

and 11 from a low starting point. Those with special educational needs do well because teachers know them well and work in partnership with support staff.

108. Teaching and learning are both good overall in Years 7 to 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and several lessons were very good. Teachers plan carefully, ensuring that pupils are able to build on existing skills and knowledge. Lesson objectives are shared so that pupils are able to measure their own progress. Most lessons get off to a purposeful start and end with a review of learning. Clear and consistent expectations of behaviour are maintained through a commonly understood code. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, drawing in some initially unresponsive students. Effective use of projectors gives lessons a clear visual focus. In less successful lessons, tasks are not sequential and instructions are unclear, so pupils make less effective use of time. In the best lessons, all pupils are actively involved, with no passengers or sleepers. Marking is very helpful, giving pupils encouragement and clear advice on how to improve. Teachers make very good use of display to inform and inspire. Pupils do not make as much use of ICT to enhance their work as would normally be seen.
109. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Most students respond well to good teaching. They arrive promptly and ready to work. They try hard and are pleased when they succeed. A minority of disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well managed, but they are reluctant to learn in spite of the teacher's best efforts. By encouraging pupils of all ages to consider moral and social issues such as law and order, English is making a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development as young citizens.
110. English is very well led and managed. The department has a shared commitment to improvement, and there is a very good sense of teamwork amongst the well-qualified staff. Improvement plans have clear priorities and intentions, many of which have already been implemented to good effect. Self-review and assessment data are very effectively used to plan provision. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and regular, leading to improvement. Schemes of work are detailed and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. A very clear focus on behaviour management and effective teaching strategies has led to substantial improvement in provision. Currently, there is little extra-curricular activity on offer in English.
111. There is a very clear capacity for further improvement in standards through the quality of teaching and subject leadership. Results in tests and examinations have already begun to improve.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

112. Many subjects in the curriculum have a clear policy for developing skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, for example in emphasising the correct use of subject vocabulary. In several subjects, however, it was found that low levels of literacy skills are holding back pupils' progress in Years 7 to 11. The school has now developed strategies to ensure that pupils in need of additional literacy support receive this during taught time as well as through after school and Saturday sessions.

### Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity to improve	Good

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The department is well led and managed, and beginning to develop well after a very turbulent period.
- Teaching is often good, and effective use is made of PowerPoint and the data projector.
- There are very positive plans for the development of the subject.
- There is insufficient formal oral language practice in lessons.
- The attitude of some pupils to language learning sometimes stands in the way of their progress.
- Mixed-ability classes do not promote high achievement by all pupils.

## **Commentary**

113. The modern foreign languages department has recently undergone a period of extreme difficulty, and there have been too few entries for external examinations in recent years to make comparisons with other schools. Less than one in five 14-year-olds reached the expected level in 2004.
114. In the work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, standards were often well below average because many pupils had received little languages teaching in the past. However, pupils' achievement, taking this into account, and relative to their starting point, was at least satisfactory in the vast majority of cases, and in some cases pupils were achieving well. Higher levels of achievement were seen where the teacher had high expectations of the class and relationships were positive. In a minority of cases, pupils did not achieve as well as they might because their attitudes to learning French were poor and their behaviour unsatisfactory. The very small numbers studying French and Spanish in Year 11 show satisfactory levels of achievement relative to their past experience and the length of time they have been studying the language.
115. Overall teaching is satisfactory, although a good proportion of lessons were seen where the teaching was good, and promoted good learning. Most lessons are well planned and make effective use of PowerPoint presentations, using the computer to hold pupils' attention and engage them in the lesson. In around half of the lessons seen, where the teachers had high expectations of their pupils and the lesson had pace and variety, most pupils responded well and made good progress. In some lessons, however, where the teacher worked very hard to keep the lesson going and make it interesting, pupils' lack of attention meant that the teacher had to spend valuable time keeping the pupils on track, and this had a negative effect on their learning. Additionally, mixed-ability classes make it more difficult for teachers to extend the more able pupils. The school has taken effective measures to tackle behavioural issues by providing support for teachers in some classes, helping them to concentrate on teaching and learning objectives.
116. The leadership of the modern languages department is good. The newly-appointed head of department has a clear perception of how the department needs to improve and the determination to ensure that it achieves its objectives. The department works well together as a team, and there is a sense of optimism for the future. The communications faculty leader gives strong support. Management is good: the department has already made good progress in a short time, and it is clear that there are shared teaching strategies and helpful monitoring of teaching quality which will take the department forward. All teachers are involved in the creation of new work-schemes which will provide a sound basis for work in the future. The department has good potential for improvement.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management ensure that teaching overall is good and that pupils generally learn well.
- The challenging and imaginative scheme of work means that most pupils enjoy their mathematics.
- The strategy of starters in every lesson ensures proper reinforcement of pupils' work.
- The drive to improve teaching and learning has ensured that appropriate support is now available in areas of weakness.
- Behaviour for learning has had a major impact, but there are still examples of intolerable behaviour on the part of a minority of pupils.
- Standards are rising rapidly.

### Commentary

117. Results in the national tests in 2003 show low standards compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. GCSE examination results in 2003 also show low standards by the end of Year 11. However, there was a slight improvement in 2004.
118. Standards seen during the inspection indicate that much improvement has been made since and standards in Year 9 and in Year 11 have risen to be merely below national expectations. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards in mathematics, and both boys and girls now achieve well. Higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 11 and pupils with average capabilities achieve satisfactorily.
119. Teaching overall is good. The best teaching is truly excellent, with dynamic and enthusiastic teachers capturing the imagination and involvement of all their pupils. In Years 7 to 11, pupils are actively engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities because teachers plan properly structured lessons well. Not all teaching meets these exacting standards, but effective measures have been implemented to address the shortcomings of a minority of teachers. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and formatively. Pupils know their current levels and their targets, and know what they need to do to achieve them. Their performance is carefully tracked and the available data is used to very good effect in planning and monitoring. An innovative and stimulating scheme of work has been introduced in Years 7 to 9 which provides an effective challenge for pupils. From an early stage, starter activities in all lessons engage the interest of students, effectively reinforcing previous work and ensuring that pupils consolidate their skills in basic numeracy. For the most part, pupils' attitudes to the subject are good, but in a few cases, pupils are not motivated to work and consequently underachieve.
120. Very good leadership and management have effectively addressed the major issues facing mathematics teaching in the school. A faculty structure has been successfully introduced and the coordinated approach to teaching and learning has already effected improvement. There

is a shared vision among the dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers. The faculty is committed to the proper implementation of the behaviour for learning policy of the school, which most teachers use effectively. However, there are still a few instances of intolerable behaviour on the part of pupils which has a detrimental effect on learning.

121. The good deployment of highly skilled learning support assistants ensures that students with special educational needs perform as well as the other students in mathematics lessons. However, the provision of additional support is limited to pupils in the lowest sets for mathematics, and there is a substantial number of lower-attaining pupils who would benefit from support which currently is not available.
122. Information and communication technology in the mathematics curriculum is not yet fully implemented, although it is planned for in the scheme of work. Teachers make very good use of the available facilities in their teaching.
123. Standards are rising rapidly and the faculty has the capacity to improve enormously.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

124. Pupils' competence in mathematics is now satisfactory. The strategy of introducing every mathematics lesson with a starter for reinforcement has had a positive impact on the pupils' acquisition of numeracy skills. The mathematics faculty has prepared a whole-school numeracy policy, which is in the process of being introduced. Most subjects incorporate numeracy objectives in their schemes of work and numeracy in all subjects is at least satisfactory. Pupils' good numeracy skills enable good achievement in science, design and technology, ICT and physical education.

### SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership and management of the faculty are significant in helping to ensure rising standards.
- Teachers work very hard, and well as a team that has a desire to raise standards and a capacity to succeed.
- Teaching strategies do not yet exploit the full potential of sharing learning objectives, key words, starter activities and plenary sessions.
- Pupils are not often challenged to make predictions, to design, and to form hypotheses.

### Commentary

125. The Year 9 results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were well below the national average for both the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6, when compared with those in all schools nationally and with those of similar schools. In recent years, girls have done better than boys. Results for the GCSE single award examination were very low for pupils gaining A\*-C grades

when compared with those in all schools. Equally so, this was the case when compared with similar schools based upon prior attainment and on the level of free school meals. In their GCSE examinations, pupils did less well in science than they did in their other subjects. The unconfirmed 2004 results for science for both Year 9 and Year 11 are significantly improved upon those in 2003, with the challenging targets set for science almost being met.

126. The standards of work seen reflect well the improved test and examination results in 2004 and look very likely to improve in future years. In all lessons, pupils achieve well. They respond very well when challenged. Most pupils listen well and are keeping a good record of their work at an appropriate level. They handle apparatus safely whilst making accurate observations, but it is clear that they have not had a history of developing practical skills. There is now little difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Higher-attaining pupils bring good prior knowledge to new situations. They are confident when presenting to others what they have learnt. They are not well practised at design, making predictions and forming hypotheses. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in response to the good support they get from their teachers. Many of them lack confidence and are uncertain when practising number. Overall, very positive attitudes to work and good behaviour are helping pupils' improving achievements, as are their satisfactory levels of literacy and numeracy, and good levels of ICT.
127. Teaching and learning are good overall in all Years 7 to 11 and this is resulting in most pupils, at all ages, making good progress towards improved results. In an excellent lesson on acids and alkalis in Year 7, planning provided a wealth of challenging activities. Music, drama and video clips added to an action-packed lesson during which pupils' achievements exceeded all expectations. During a very good lesson on healthy diet in Year 10, the teacher made very good use of the interactive whiteboard, a feature of all lessons that pupils rate highly, to keep the class focused on to the learning objectives, thus securing very good progress and pace of learning. In both of these lessons the department teaching and learning policy was employed to great effect. All teachers set and mark homework regularly but not all marking sets short-term targets. Some very good assessment data is shared very well with pupils, but as yet, pupils are not skilled at self-evaluation.
128. Leadership and management are both very good. There is a strong sense and evidence of a very well motivated and effective team. Clear strategic planning promotes both faculty and whole-school visions for the future. There is rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the faculty and monitoring of performance data that triggers appropriate action. Very good monitoring of teaching and learning supports a commitment to professional development but has not yet secured consistent practice across the faculty.
129. The faculty has addressed all of the barriers to learning that seem to have been present up until very recently. There is now in place a quality provision that can secure future developments and improving standards.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Collaborative leadership has worked with vision and commitment to bring about improvement in the curriculum, in teaching, learning and achievement.
- The achievement of the pupils at GNVQ is excellent because of very good teaching and teachers' excellent commitment of time outside formal lessons.
- The practices that have brought about excellent achievement at GNVQ need to be replicated to improve teaching and learning between Years 7 and 9.
- The school does not ensure that the pupils' greatly improved ICT skills are fully used to help their learning in other subjects.

## Commentary

130. Results in the GNVQ examination in 2004, the first year in which it was taken, were well above those of the same pupils in their other subjects, as the majority obtained four pass grades and some were awarded merit grades. Girls performed better than boys. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below expected levels, with very few working at Level 5.
131. Standards in Year 9 work seen were slightly below those expected nationally but very much improved over previous years. Pupils have good technical ability, particularly in presentation skills. The majority are still very dependent on teacher guidance as they are unwilling to follow instruction sheets even when able to do so. Pupils design to please themselves rather than to meet a stated need. They judge multimedia presentations or web sites not in relation to their utility but instead in relation to their personal preference. Achievement by Year 9 is good, as attainment on entry to the school is very low in comparison with national expectation. By Year 11, pupils' work is above the expected levels. The highest-attaining pupils annotate their work clearly to explain how their thinking has developed, whereas the majority do so to describe how they have carried out procedures. Lower-attaining pupils produce accurate work with very strong guidance. Their work is often incomplete. Achievement is excellent overall as a result of the very hard work of both staff and pupils. Girls' performance is better than that of boys because they take greater care with their work, although some of the highest-achieving pupils are boys. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their ability. Pupils from ethnic minorities make the same progress as others. Pupils' success in IT units in Years 10 and 11 have had a very positive impact on their attitudes to the subject and to school in general.
132. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in the GNVQ course taken by all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Rising standards in Years 7 to 9 are the result of improved curriculum planning by all staff to meet the aims of the subject, but teachers still expect too little of the pupils in the given time, and concentrate on skills development at the expense of explanation and evaluation. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good. The impact of the Federation is strongly beneficial, with teachers from other schools planning and teaching along with the school staff to raise standards. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work rate and depth of thinking. They show a very high level of commitment to the pupils, almost all of whom respond by working very hard and giving extra time to the subject. Teachers assess pupils' work very well, marking it to show where they have succeeded and how they can improve even more. They use assessments very well as a basis for lesson planning. The excellent achievement is also the result of teachers' and pupils' willing attendance at extra classes, not only outside school hours but also at weekends and during holidays. The school has equipped the subject very well for success at GNVQ, with enough rooms for all classes to have access to computers, and good technical support to maintain reliability.
133. The department is very well led, with excellent leadership of the taught ICT courses leading to very productive co-operative planning among teachers. School leaders with the help of the Federation have supported and driven the excellent improvements in ICT results. The department is well managed, with thorough analysis of performance data resulting in

appropriate action. The department is already planning the necessary application of lessons learned at GNVQ to the work in the lower school. Recent improvement in Years 10 and 11 will therefore benefit others throughout the school, leading to potential further improvement in standards. There is good capacity to improve further, and this will now be directed at Years 7 to 9. Where leadership and management are less strong is in the use of pupils' well-developed ICT skills in other subjects.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

134. The school has prepared well for the development of ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects, but this is still patchy, so that pupils do not all have the entitlement specified in the National Curriculum. Use for data logging in science and computer-assisted design in design and technology help to teach the IT curriculum. Almost all teachers use data projectors well to lead whole-class sessions, although the whiteboards are not often used interactively to involve pupils in their work. The school has now written opportunities for the use of ICT into schemes of work so that teachers will be more prepared to use it.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Very good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is very good, as is the capacity of the department to continue to improve.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Although pupils achieve well, there is a need to develop extension work for higher attainers and to further develop modified worksheets for lower attainers.
- Fieldwork skills are poorly developed in Years 7, 8 and 9.

### Commentary

135. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average. Fewer girls took geography than boys and they did better. In 2004, the unvalidated results show a significant improvement and, although these are still below average, they represent good achievement when compared to similar schools. Boys performed equally as well as girls.

136. In Year 9, standards are below average. Pupils' work is detailed and often impressive and represents good achievement when compared to their level on entry to the school. Field study skills are poorly developed, with few opportunities given to practise field sketching and survey techniques. However, pupils have acquired good map-reading skills and are able to recognise landforms using contour lines and cross sections. Their written work shows a good understanding of how physical and human processes shape the landscape. They can link cause and effect; for example, in a case study on tourism in Kenya, pupils are able to appreciate the reasons for the expansion of the tourist industry and explain the positive and

negative impact it is having on the country. Higher-attaining pupils make good use of homework assignments to explain environmental issues such as the clearance of the Amazon rainforests, but there is a need to develop extension work further in lessons that will challenge and interest the most gifted pupils. Lower-attaining pupils are given good support in class on an individual basis and cope very well in most lessons but there is a need to continue the development of modified worksheets with cloze text exercises and writing frames to better meet their needs. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate little practical use of ICT in their work. Standards in Year 11 are below average but represent good achievement over a two-year period. Most pupils write well and can apply a range of skills to their GCSE coursework, for example to demonstrate the impact of visitors in Dovedale. This study shows a good hypothesis-based approach but would benefit by a widening of the field study to include a second contrasting area.

137. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Pupils benefit from a core of specialist teachers who are well prepared and have good subject knowledge, evident in their whole-class teaching and their explanations to individual pupils. Teaching methods are varied, well supported by ICT and have clear learning outcomes so that most pupils are interested and challenged. Pupils generally respond well to the good teaching and are making good progress. They participate well in discussions and work well together in group activities and these attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. Teachers know their pupils well and give much individual help to those with special educational needs so that they are able to cope in mixed ability classes. Homework is set regularly and marking is supportive and helpful.

138. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision of the contribution to be made by this subject to the whole-school curriculum and has created a real team spirit in the department. The department makes very good use of baseline data to track pupils' progress and to set clear targets for each pupil. The department's improvement plan is clearly focused on teaching and learning issues but at the moment is only an annual plan. It needs to extend over a three-year period to be fully effective in bringing about further improvements. The department's capacity to continue to improve is very good.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Capacity to improve	Good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and excellent relationships support very positive attitudes towards the study of history in Years 10 and 11.
- There is very good learning in Years 10 and 11 as a result of very good teaching.
- The department is very well led.
- Some marking is of a very high quality with clear targets for pupils' improvement; however, there are some inconsistencies with the departmental strategy not always followed.
- There are some very good examples of work carefully planned to meet the learning needs of all pupils; there are some inconsistencies with work not sufficiently matching the needs of all the pupils.

- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a research tool.

## Commentary

139. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were a little below the national expectation with over half securing A\* to C grades. This represents good achievement. In 2004, the number of A\* to C grades declined but remained one of the highest percentages in the school. Twice as many candidates sat the examination in 2004 and the numbers have continued to increase with over a hundred studying history in Year 10.
140. Standards are below average in Year 9 and achievement is good. All pupils, including gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, achieve well. The National Curriculum Teacher Assessment results in 2004 were well below the national average; by Year 11, standards have risen to below average and this represents good achievement. In Year 11, historical interpretation and analysis are good and pupils can effectively discuss and exchange ideas.
141. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good with very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, the strongest features are the expert teacher knowledge and leadership of the curriculum, the very careful planning of the learning activities and the very good, and often excellent, attitudes of the pupils in the examination classes. Very skilful questioning ensures that pupils develop their learning well and the full range of pupils is encouraged to participate. The good use of the interactive whiteboard, to illustrate original historical evidence, ensures a high level of interest. However, there is insufficient use of ICT, as a research tool, across the department. In a few lessons, work is not always matched closely enough to meet the learning needs of all pupils, in particular the gifted and talented and pupils with special educational needs. Key words are not emphasised sufficiently and the reinforcement of learning is not always effective. In one Year 8 class, the failure to meet all learning needs led to attitudes becoming unsatisfactory. Much marking is of a very high quality with historical and literacy points carefully developed and there are clear targets for improvement. A limited amount of marking, however, is cursory and leaves technical inaccuracies unchecked.
142. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a very clear view of the direction of the subject and an effective and committed team has been developed. The improvement plan primarily focuses on raising standards by good teaching. There are high expectations of the pupils and these encourage the good and very good attitudes to learning. Management is good because the schemes of work are reviewed regularly and an innovative and challenging curriculum encourages pupils to learn well; however, there are still some inconsistencies in the planning and marking of work. The subject has good potential for further improvement.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Capacity to improve	Good	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average; achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management have affected provision until recently.
- The negative attitudes of some pupils have affected achievement.

## **Commentary**

143. Religious education was only introduced in this school in September 2004, so there are no examination results as yet.
144. Pupils up to Year 9 have well below average standards and their achievement is unsatisfactory. They all started this year from a low base in terms of their knowledge and understanding, and their progress has been slow. Their knowledge of the world's faiths studied is still very limited and their ability to express themselves, whether orally or in writing, is equally limited. Many pupils have negative attitudes to the subject. Standards in Years 10 and 11, who are following identical courses at the moment, are also well below average and their achievement is poor. They are not making the progress needed to succeed in the GCSE short course that they are undertaking, and are further affected by the lack of time allocated to the subject. Pupil attitudes are also unsatisfactory, overall.
145. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, although the quality of teaching varies. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory, based on the evidence of written work seen. (No lessons in religious education were actually taught during the inspection week.) The quality of teaching and learning depends much on how well teachers are able to manage a significant minority of disaffected pupils; all teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject and plan their lessons carefully. A weakness, however, is that they do not provide a wide enough range of tasks for pupils of different capabilities. There are satisfactory resources available, but the books being used are often too difficult for the majority of pupils. There are few opportunities for pupils to use ICT, although most teachers use the data projectors to good effect. Assessment is satisfactory, with teachers marking thoroughly.
146. Decisions taken about religious education when the school was created had the effect of marginalising the subject, and it has had a difficult rebirth. The current provision is affected by the legacy of the past and by the inability to staff the subject fully. The head of religious education, who joined the school in September 2004, is leaving after one term and his successor, who joined the school at the start of the inspection week, has had no opportunity yet to develop the changes he has instigated. The status of the subject has suffered, and it has not been possible to fully staff the department. Most of the permanent teachers are specialists in other subjects in the humanities faculty who have not had sufficient training, as yet, in religious education. Teachers rarely receive extra support in lessons, and the learning of pupils with special educational needs is particularly affected by this. A serious weakness is the time allocation for the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11, with one hour per week being shared with citizenship: not enough time is available, especially with other interruptions, for either course to be taught adequately. There is a statutory breach in provision for religious education in these year groups, in that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus cannot be met. Nor is it met in the sixth form, where no students receive any religious education. Leadership and management of the subject are thus unsatisfactory, notwithstanding the efforts of the present subject leader and the head of the humanities faculty, who oversees the monitoring of teaching and learning.
147. Now that the subject has gained some recognition, it has good capacity to improve further, although improvements will be hampered if a second specialist teacher is not appointed or if adequate time is not provided for the GCSE short course.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

## Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Capacity to improve	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in examinations are below the national expectations.
- Good quality teaching by a well-qualified team who plan and teach lessons with a wide range of challenge and activities.
- The high quality teamwork, leadership, management, accommodation and resources contribute well to raising achievement.
- The recently implemented assessment and monitoring programme is effective but needs refining to ensure that monitoring outcomes influence teachers' planning.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is well supported.

### Commentary

148. Results in the GCSE examinations were below average. The results have fluctuated over the past three years with a slight improvement in 2004. Textiles consistently achieve good results. Girls perform better than the boys.
149. The test results and current standards in Years 7-9 are below the national average. The analysis of pupils' work, observations and talking to pupils indicates that achievement is satisfactory overall, but that the standards are below the national expectation. Pupils make more progress from Year 7 to 8, especially in textiles and food. The basic practical skills are weak in all areas of technology but improving rapidly due to the revised schemes of work and structures introduced. Standards are better in Years 7 and 8, with girls performing better than boys.
150. The current standards in Years 10/11 are in line with the national expectation. Over the past three years, standards of attainment have fluctuated, with a very slight improvement especially in the proportion gaining A\*-C grades in 2004. The coursework standards in Years 10/11 were satisfactory and the predicted grades reflect this. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, they are well supported and cope well alongside others. They would benefit from further specialist support during practical sessions. Achievement overall is satisfactory.
151. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well qualified and work very effectively as a team to plan lessons which are of a good quality and proceed at a suitable pace. The teaching is more effective in Years 7, 8 and 11 because good demonstrations and discussions raise pupils' skills and understanding. A real sense of purpose is seen in most lessons with good support for all. In a Year 8 food lesson, the newly qualified teacher's good subject knowledge, enthusiasm, humour and class management enabled students to understand technical vocabulary and make progress in learning and simulating manufacturing processes of the food industry. Pupils' practical skills and use of equipment are underdeveloped in Years 7, 8 and 9 in all areas of technology but are improving rapidly due to revised schemes of work, focused practical tasks and effective teaching. In Year 9, however, there is a higher dependency on the teacher for reassurance due to the lack of basic skills.

Pupils are now aware of their National Curriculum levels and what they need to do to improve. The teaching of related ICT is effective. The weakness in teaching occurred in resistant materials where, in a couple of lessons, pupils were insufficiently challenged and there was inadequate classroom management. The support provided by a Federation teacher in assisting a weak member of staff is proving effective. Resources used were well chosen to suit the tasks and ensured students had equal access. In Year 11, pupils make good use of the examination criteria and constructive marking. There was good recall of previous work, supported by effective question and answer techniques which aided the reinforcement of knowledge. All homework, when set, was relevant and used as part of the lessons.

152. The head of department provides good curriculum leadership and management. The department is well organised with well-planned strategies in place to respond to the considerable challenge of raising standards. There have been some staff changes recently, and the department is now a committed team with a clear vision for the subject. The recently implemented assessment programme is proving very effective, teachers always use levels of attainment to inform pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Accommodation is good; the new facilities have created an improved learning environment. Some areas still need modification, especially one resistant materials room.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good planning and class management enables pupils to develop their art skills.
- Pupils show good attitudes and behaviour in most lessons.
- GCSE standards are marred by pupils' erratic attendance.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT.

### Commentary

153. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were very poor. Girls achieved better results than boys. The unvalidated 2004 results show a slight improvement but remain poor.
154. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average, representing good achievement since the majority of pupils enter the school with poor, or well below average, standards in art. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average, representing satisfactory achievement for the wide ranging capability of the pupils. Standards are better in Year 10 than Year 11, where standards are often impeded by poor attendance levels. Throughout Years 7 to 11, there are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender, SEN or ethnicity. Pupils identified as talented in art achieve well. Drawing skills develop with variable success. Pupils' application of colour in a variety of media is satisfactory. Sketchbooks are appropriately used to collect images, but the extent to which these contribute to finished pieces is very uneven. Work lacks imagination. Pupils' familiarity with artists, styles and

genres is weak, as is their ability to evaluate their work. Pupils generally behave well and work with enthusiasm.

155. Pupils are able to achieve in art because lessons are well planned. The most effective lessons provide short, timed tasks that develop pupils' confidence in their acquisition of art skills. Teachers possess good class discipline, treat pupils fairly and consistently and provide a positive environment in which pupils feel supported and encouraged. Pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds are treated equally, enabling them to succeed. Teachers make effective use of exemplar artwork to show pupils how well they are doing. Pupils achieve less well where lessons lack challenge and teachers do not check pupils' understanding of work set by using incisive questioning. Some lessons lack sufficient opportunities for pupils to share ideas, discuss artwork and develop assurance in the use of art-specific language. Some lessons are too teacher led and inhibit imaginative work. Teachers' approach to marking is inconsistent and poor spelling and written presentation goes uncorrected. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to generate artwork using ICT. Pupils experience a limited range of art from outside the European tradition. Opportunities for pupils to enhance their experience of art through gallery visits, working with professional artists and engaging in community projects and competitions are currently very restricted. The range of media offered to pupils is very limited.
156. Leadership lacks vision but art teachers work effectively as a team and provide good role models to pupils. Development planning currently lacks sufficient art-specific detail derived from focused analysis of needs. The department has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The main focus should be on extending the range of media offered and introducing a vocational option.

### Drama and the performing arts

157. Both music and drama are now part of the recently formed performing arts faculty. During the past two years, regular teaching of music in Years 7 and 8 has been interrupted. At present, drama teaching begins in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a GNVQ performing arts course which also includes drama.
158. Provision in drama and the performing arts is **satisfactory**.
159. The GCSE drama results in 2003 were well below average but results in 2004 improved with girls doing better than boys. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average but pupils achieve well, even though drama is new to them. This is because the newly qualified teacher running the course has well prepared lessons. The good teaching of Year 11 pupils on the GNVQ performing arts course enables them to extend their knowledge of organising, planning and evaluating an event. Pupils enjoy the course and standards are broadly average with all expected to gain accreditation at the intermediate level. The head of faculty is working hard to have the performing arts course firmly established to lead into the successful course taking place in the sixth form.

### Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	

Capacity to improve	Good
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### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are taught well and display positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Although standards are below average in Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well.
- GCSE results are well above average.
- The use of ICT, using digital keyboards, is well developed.
- Some lessons would benefit from more variety of activity.

### Commentary

160. The 2003 and 2004 teacher assessments for pupils aged 14 were very low because of a break in teaching. However, the GCSE results were well above average because regular teaching was taking place. Girls are in the majority and achieve better than boys.
161. Although standards seen are below average in Year 9, this represents good achievement since most pupils enter Year 7 with very few musical skills. There is very good achievement in Year 10 because of the high standard of teaching and the practical element of the course which motivates pupils. The inclusive nature of the lessons enables both talented pupils and those with special educational needs to be fully involved and achieve well. Whilst the department has a number of computers, these have not yet been adapted to take music software.
162. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn well because teaching is good overall. The pace, challenge and management of lessons ensure that pupils are motivated and work hard most of the time. Because of this, standards are rising. Where the pace of lessons becomes more ponderous, pupils would benefit from a number of shorter activities. Group work and working with a neighbour helps pupils establish good attitudes and behaviour that supports learning. Because levels of assessment are explained in every lesson, pupils are well aware of what they need to do to improve. The excellent teaching seen in a Year 10 lesson leads to a greater commitment from pupils and a higher standard of work. The ICT skills of recording, layering and editing of music are well developed by the use of digital keyboards. Regular assessment of pupils' work and the use of grades are motivating factors that encourage very good learning. Pupils taking music and drama courses work effectively together in extra-curricular performances at school and in the local community, and this makes a good contribution to their learning and social development.
163. There is very good leadership of music by the head of faculty, who has a strong sense of purpose and a vision to lead the subject and faculty forward. Good management has enabled the schemes of work to be rewritten and for Year 11 pupils, to take a performing arts course where they can succeed. There is good potential for the faculty to improve further and the focus for the future is to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Capacity to improve	Good	

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management of the department set high standards and a clear vision.
- Curriculum planning is very good and provides a good framework for progression of teaching activities.
- Assessment procedures and the recording of pupil attainment are well developed.
- Target setting procedures, including the provision of opportunities for pupils to be involved in self- and peer-assessment, are not yet in place.
- Standards of the attainment of pupils in the examination programme are very low by the end of Year 11.

## **Commentary**

164. The examination course for physical education is very well organised but the results from 2004 were very poor. There was a significant decrease in the number of pupils who gained A\*-C grades from the previous year.
165. The standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is below national levels of expectation. Girls attain better than boys. By the end of Year 11, standards in core physical education remain below national levels of expectation. In the examination group, pupil attainment is of a better standard in their practical activities than in the theoretical components, but standards are very low. In trampolining, they observe, evaluate and provide feedback to others in order to improve their sequencing skills. The outdoor facilities are currently inadequate, preventing higher standards from being achieved.
166. The very good curriculum planning enables teachers to provide well-planned and progressive learning activities. The majority of lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In the best lessons, the positive nature, the encouragement and enthusiasm of the teachers allow pupils to improve their learning. The teaching is nearly always good or very good and this leads to good progress being made at all ages. In the best lessons, the teachers use very good questioning strategies. Pupils apply themselves in gymnastic activities very well and sustain their efforts throughout, acquiring skills very effectively. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are often very good. Teachers, however, do not always strive for, or achieve, good quality actions. This is sometimes the result of pupils not observing demonstrations or evaluating the performance of others. Similarly, teachers do not always provide opportunities for independent learning. Pupils with special educational needs learn and progress as well as other pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils, particularly before the start of the school day. A few pupils attain high standards in sports such as football and basketball through these activities.
167. The appointment of a new head of department is providing very good leadership. This leadership is promoting good teamwork and a cohesive approach to the teaching of physical education. The management of the department is also very good and, through effective curriculum planning, is beginning to raise standards, although the monitoring and tracking of pupil assessment has not yet been implemented. There is no assessment data available at the end of Years 10/11. Strategies to involve pupils in their own assessment and the assessment of others, together with the identification of their own individual targets, need to be further developed. The balance of activities is very good, as are risk management procedures. The School Sports Co-ordinator programme is not yet being implemented.
168. The capacity for physical education to improve is good as a result of the well-organised curriculum planning and assessment strategies. The examination curriculum is now well organised and effectively planned, providing a good potential to improve.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

## Business education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen		Below average
Achievement		Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning		Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of business courses in Years 10/11 is good.
- The assessment systems, particularly of the GNVQ course, are comprehensive and thorough.
- There is a good use of ICT by pupils, particularly for the portfolio work.
- The quality of some teaching is insufficient to ensure that pupils are fully engaged in their learning.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes of a few pupils prevent them making adequate progress.

### Commentary

169. There were no candidates for the 2003 GCSE examination. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well below the national expectation, with 37 per cent securing A\* to C grades. This represents satisfactory achievement because pupils had no previous experience of the subject.
170. By Year 11, pupils' business skills are below average; they can identify different company owners and shareholders. They have sound listening skills and can share ideas with other pupils constructively. In a few lessons, a small number are unable to work cooperatively with others or to listen to the teacher and they impede the learning of the rest of the class. Overall, there is satisfactory achievement across the two year groups.
171. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are inconsistencies because some lessons are good and two lessons seen were unsatisfactory and poor. The better practice does not appear to be shared effectively across the whole team. Most teachers have good knowledge of the subject and involve pupils in their own learning; good evidence of this was seen both in a Year 10 GNVQ class and in a Year 11 applied business class. In these classes, there is good use of ICT to develop the portfolio work and pupils show good application and responsible attitudes. However, in a few lessons, teachers' planning and organisation are insufficient to maintain a satisfactory pace of learning and the negative attitudes of a minority of pupils quickly affect the learning of the whole class. The assessment of the GNVQ portfolio work is good because pupils are monitored very regularly and the record keeping is comprehensive. As a result, pupils have a good idea of what they need to do to improve. Four of the six modules of the GNVQ course are internally assessed and the high level of absence of a few pupils has an adverse effect on their progress.
172. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good range of courses and the curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated. A full teaching team is in place after a period of staffing turbulence and pupil numbers are increasing steadily. The improvement plan and scheme of work provide a good basis for further development. Currently, the effectiveness of the pupils' learning is too variable because of the wide range of teaching quality. This variability is being managed by some additional faculty support and is beginning to improve

the learning of those pupils who are disaffected. The department has a satisfactory capacity, at this stage, to improve.

### Health and social care

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

	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity to improve	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with some very good features.
- Most pupils have a positive approach and this ensures good achievement by many.
- The department is well led and managed.

### Commentary

173. This is a new course and results, as yet unvalidated, for 2004 are most encouraging. The greater majority of those pupils who sat the examination began with below average scores in the standardised attainment tests at the end of Year 9. Analysis of the, as yet unvalidated, 2004 GNVQ results indicates good value added and good achievement, with many pupils achieving their highest grade in this subject.
174. Work seen in lessons indicates that similar standards will be achieved in 2005. Year 11 pupils are working well and grades, in already completed course work, are above predicted. 'Working-at grades' are lower than this in current work, although this gives a clear indication of the nature of progress made in the course of each assessable unit. This is undoubtedly because of strong teaching and a positive attitude of the majority of pupils. Attendance figures during inspection were well in line with what might be expected.
175. The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good features. The teachers know their subject very well and the planning and preparation of lessons is a strong feature of their work. The needs of individual pupils are well known and this ensures that their needs will be met by a programme of learning that is varied, lively and very appropriate. Because of this, pupils are readily engaged and quickly involved in their work. Good use is made of the most recent advances in information technology and this ensures that pupils can present their work to colleagues in class and so extend the range of subject knowledge and understanding. A good example of this involved a research and report back on health service professionals e.g. phlebotomists and the role played by them in the caring industry. All pupils are well informed relating to the assessment of their work and consequently their progress. This is a strength of the department and the information gathered is well used. In particular, very good use is made of grade criteria, encouraging pupils to strive to reach higher levels through a clearly staged process of knowing and understanding what needs to be done in order to improve.
176. The department is well organised and strongly led. There is clear vision relating to the opportunities available for pupils in vocational subjects and a recognition of a need to provide alternative courses to GCSE in order to provide more appropriately for lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.

177. This new course has already proved to be popular and successful and with the strengths in management, teaching and learning it is well placed to make further improvements in the future.

### Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **satisfactory**.

	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall teaching is good.
- Pupils in Year 11 are achieving well against modest levels of attainment on entry to the course.
- Attendance levels are unsatisfactory.
- The GCSE course is not appropriate in meeting the needs of some learners.

### Commentary

178. The GCSE course is new and the only results available at this stage remain unvalidated. In 2004, there were no higher grades, although many pupils achieved better grades than had been predicted.

179. Currently, in Year 11, many pupils are making sound progress. Most pupils are beginning this course with below average levels of attainment. Already, some have achieved the equivalent of higher grades in completed pieces of coursework, others have achieved levels above predicted. This represents good achievement and clear value added. In Year 10, the picture is less positive. Attendance in those lessons inspected was unsatisfactory and the attitude to learning of some boys was negative.

180. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The teachers' knowledge of their own subject is very good, as is the planning and preparation of lessons and the use of resources, including the most recently introduced teaching technology. Many older pupils respond well to this and are clearly involved in their learning. The assessment procedures ensure that they know what to do in order to improve. Attention does need to be given to ensuring that the style of working in some lessons is appropriate to the needs of all learners. In Year 10, for example, there is a degree of immaturity amongst some boys. This weakness stands in the way of the progress that, not only they, but others in the group, make. It occurs in those learning activities where they find it challenging to become fully engaged.

181. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The scheme of work is well organised and improvement is already evident in the Year 11 group. There is vision for the future and a commitment to establishing this vocational subject as a successful element within the school's curriculum. At the same time, there is a degree of inexperience in the department that will require some support from senior managers to ensure that the potential is maximised in taking the course forward.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Poor
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Capacity to improve	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average; achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory, but learning is unsatisfactory.
- There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject and good capacity for further improvement.

### Commentary

182. Citizenship was only introduced in this school in September 2004.

183. Standards up to Year 9 are below average, although achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, given the fact that pupils in these year groups only started the subject this term. They already have a reasonable understanding of the issues that are raised in citizenship, including the British political system, the local community, and rights and responsibilities. Pupils are able to write with some competence about these issues, but many lack confidence in speaking about them. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well below average and achievement is poor. This is mainly because of the limited time available for the subject; one hour a week, which is shared with religious education, and citizenship has only been taught to these year groups since half term. Both year groups follow the same course. Little writing has yet been done, and some pupils have a negative attitude towards a subject they do not see as necessary. In the better lessons, pupils showed some understanding of the issues surrounding the care of the elderly, and many were able to begin drafting a letter to their MP about their concerns. It is unlikely, however, that many pupils will reach even an average standard in the GCSE short course; it is certainly beyond the current Year 11, who have only just started the syllabus, and Year 10 will struggle unless extra time is provided.

184. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but learning is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where time constraints take their toll. The subject is staffed from within the humanities faculty, and teachers themselves are finding their way around it. Careful planning enables most to teach to at least a satisfactory level. They are assessing and marking work thoroughly enough and have resources to call on, including data projectors, although pupils themselves have limited access to ICT in lessons. The main weakness at the moment is a lack of differentiation in the teaching: there is a range of capability in all the classes, and the needs of some are not met. And where teaching does not take into account the age and capability of the pupils, they lose interest and behave badly, particularly boys. Learning is better in Years 7 to 9, but even here it can be limited by disaffection through inappropriate material being presented. There are pupils with special educational needs in all the classes, but few support staff, which

affects the provision for these pupils. Where staff are supported, as was the case in a lesson where a newly qualified teacher was mentored, all pupils benefit.

185. The subject was neglected in the past, and it is a tribute to the present head of citizenship that leadership and management can now be described as satisfactory. Much remains to be done, including planning for differentiated teaching and equipping non-specialist staff with the knowledge and skills they need, but good quality schemes of work have been drawn up as well as plans to help teachers with their lessons. The head of department is a good role model. He has a clear vision for the future role of the subject. He is well supported by the head of faculty, who oversees the monitoring of teaching and learning.
186. There is good capacity for further improvement, particularly if the syllabus can be extended to include more involvement in the local community as is required by the National Curriculum. The laudable desire to introduce the GCSE short course, and thus motivate pupils further, will only bear fruit if sufficient time for the subject is made available in Years 10 and 11.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	50.0	78.3	0.0	21.6	10.0	28.5
Biology	4	0.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	0.0	19.8
English	3	66.7	85.3	0.0	16.1	10.0	29.0
Design and technology	1	0.0	72.6	0.0	13.9	0.0	24.3
General studies	11	45.5	73.6	0.0	16.9	11.8	25.5
History	4	50.0	82.2	0.0	20.8	10.0	29.2
Mathematics	3	0.0	59.9	0.0	14.1	0.0	20.5
Sociology	2	0.0	72.1	0.0	19.6	0.0	25.9
Other social studies	16	6.3	67.8	0.0	15.1	1.3	23.2

### **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
English	10	100.0	99.2	0.0	36.4	44.0	81.1
General studies	1	100.0	94.9	0.0	30.5	80.0	72.9
History	2	100.0	99.0	0.0	45.6	60.0	85.1
Sociology	4	75.0	98.5	0.0	45.3	40.0	84.6
Other social studies	2	50.0	97.4	0.0	42.5	30.0	81.6
Business VCE	14	82.1	91.6	35.7	24.1	58.6	67.9
Health and social care VCE	4	100.0	93.5	0.0	24.9	55.0	70.0
Performing arts VCE	23	100.0	94.7	65.2	48.8	100.0	85.5
Leisure and recreation VCE	1	100.0	90.7	0.0	18.3	60.0	64.6
Information technology VQ	4	100.0	88.3	0.0	26.9	50.0	67.8

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

**GCE A-level English language with literature** was inspected in depth, and the one-year course leading to **GCSE English** (Mature) was sampled. Although standards were below average, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in the GCSE English lesson seen.

Provision in English is **good**.

Standards seen	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make the subject enjoyable and work in partnership with students.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge gives students confidence in them.
- In some lessons, students are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas and viewpoints.
- Marking does not give specific advice on how to improve.

### Commentary

187. In 2003, a small entry all gained pass grades at GCE A-level at the end of Year 13. In 2004, a larger number of students was entered and all gained grade D or E.
188. In work seen during the inspection, standards were below average, but achievement has been good, given the students' prior attainment at GCSE level. The more capable students have good understanding of the dynamics of conversation in everyday life and in drama and make detailed analyses of text. Most make good progress in transforming texts into new genres. Several students do not spell or use linguistic terminology with sufficient accuracy. Commentaries and essays on 'Othello' and 'Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde' are relevant and clearly expressed but often make too little close reference to the text. English is growing in popularity. Students have a positive attitude to the subject, valuing it for its enjoyment, usefulness and the opportunities for success. They consider that they are well taught. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
189. Teaching and learning are both good overall. Teachers know their subject well, which gives students confidence in them. Their enthusiasm is conveyed to the class. In many lessons. a good variety of stimuli and activities helps them to understand and appreciate their set books. In others, they need more opportunities to think for themselves and develop an independent viewpoint. Relationships are purposeful and cordial, leading to a good sense of partnership. Although marking is regular and encouraging, students are not often given specific advice on how to improve.
190. Leadership and management are good overall. Teachers have a good sense of teamwork and dedication to high standards. Review of past results has led to a changed curriculum. Approaches to teaching and learning have not been as closely evaluated as they have been in Years 7 to 11.
191. With a shared determination to raise achievement, the subject is well placed to make further improvement.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

192. In the subjects inspected in depth across the curriculum, students were found to have sufficient communication skills to meet the demands of the course.

## MATHEMATICS

**GCE A-level mathematics** was inspected in depth, and the one-year course leading to the **GCSE mathematics** examination was sampled.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Standards seen	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the teaching is good; teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and their students learning needs are good.
- Standards attained are below average.
- The range of courses offered is limited.

### Commentary

193. In the AS level examination in the past three years, results have been poor as no student gained a pass grade. Consequently, there were no students entered for GCE A-level in 2003 or 2004 and there are currently no students studying mathematics in Year 13.

194. The standards of work seen in Year 12 mathematics are below the expected level, but students are making progress because of effective teaching. Students' competent algebraic skills enable them to cope with the differentiation and integration work, but their work is restricted to two modules: Core Mathematics 1 and Mechanics 1. There are a large number of students studying a variety of subjects who are taking GCSE mathematics again in order to improve their grades. These students are well taught and most have made much improvement already. For the most part, they are well motivated and keen to overcome the shortcomings in their mathematical knowledge. Standards observed during the inspection indicate that many of the students will attain the required improvement in grade.

195. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Lessons are well planned. The pace at which the work is undertaken is well matched to the needs of the students. Although the AS level students can perform the operations necessary to differentiate and integrate many functions, many are lacking in a real understanding of the processes involved. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they give clear explanations. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of questions which test the students' understanding. Homework is set regularly together with tests and examination questions. This work is marked in a detailed way to help students make progress in their understanding. Students find the work interesting and challenging. They are aware of their progress and predicted grades, and recognise and appreciate the help and support given by the teachers. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.

196. Work is well managed in the sixth form. Staff co-operate in the planning and work well together under the good leadership given by the head of faculty. Teachers know individual students' strengths and weaknesses well. The curriculum for sixth form mathematics is appropriate and meets the needs of the students.
197. Provision in the subject is clearly moving forward, and there are good prospects for further improvement in the future.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

198. Students enter the sixth form with adequate mathematical skills and there is no barrier to attainment in most other subjects. In science, sociology and psychology, students make good use of their numeracy skills in presenting information graphically.

### SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on **biology**. AS level **chemistry** and **GCSE dual award science** post-16 were sampled.

#### Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and effective planning to meet their individual needs help ensure that students make good progress and achieve well relative to their prior attainments.
- Very good, supportive relationships and very positive student attitudes to learning are significant to their achievements and to improving standards.
- Action planning in greater detail is needed to secure plans for AS and A2 courses, and for vocational options.

#### Commentary

199. In 2003, no students were entered for either AS or A2 examinations. This has been the case over a number of years. Unconfirmed results in 2004 show that standards were well below average in the AS examination.
200. Most students in Year 12 are now settled to achieving the higher expectations of the AS course. They listen well and demonstrate a good level of practical skills. Satisfactory levels of literacy and numeracy skills enable them to keep a good record of their work. They are achieving well relative to their prior attainments. Higher-attaining students bring good prior knowledge and understanding to new situations. They relate their work well to everyday situations and are confident when making presentations. Lower-attaining students are less confident in these situations. All students display very positive attitudes to work. They support each other well and are confident about their achievements and estimated grades.
201. Very well-informed and experienced teaching, effective planning and good use of resources ensure that the learning needs of individual students are met. A variety of activities are

employed well. Good use is made of past examination questions and mark schemes. This and very good sharing of assessment data with the students results in their being quite skilled at self-evaluation. Students are able to access the very good PowerPoint presentations used in lessons via the school's intranet. Thus, teaching is very supportive of homework and of independent learning. As a result of overall good teaching, students are progressing well. They are developing their ideas and increasing their understanding at a good pace.

202. In the faculty, there is a shared drive for improvement. Relationships are cordial and characterised by mutual respect. There is effective delegation of responsibilities. The level and quality of resources are good but technician support is not always present during lessons. There is a desire to offer a wider curriculum but planning for this is not yet set out in sufficient detail.
203. Improving standards in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, plus very good consortium arrangements with a neighbouring school, have led to a viable number of students now taking biology. With improving leadership, management and teaching, the faculty is in a good position to secure improved standards in the near future.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Capacity for improvement	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of the students at AVCE is very good because of very good teaching and assessment.
- The leadership and management of the subject make sure that there is good productive co-operation between different teachers taking the AVCE groups.
- The department is well resourced to cover the course.
- The school does not ensure that the students' ICT skills are fully used to help their learning in other subjects.

### Commentary

204. Results in the Year 12 examination were below average in 2003, but improved in 2004. This is the first year in which students have continued into Year 13 and so there are no prior results.
205. Standards in the present Year 12 are higher than those on entry to previous years, with greatly improved qualifications at the end of Year 11 in 2004. Standards seen are good, with students, especially females, taking great care to meet the criteria for assessment. Students work hard to solve problems using spreadsheets. Their coursework shows that they use their judgement well to design appropriate documentation for different purposes. The portfolios of Year 13 students show similar strengths in presentation. Although their systems design is weaker, this is all at least at pass level. Female students in Year 13 continue to work more carefully than males, but the highest attainer in the small Year 13 group is a male student. There is no difference in performance between students of different ethnic origin. Students' achievement in relation to their performance at the start of the course is very good, especially for those in Year 13.

206. This improvement is the result of good basic grounding in Year 11 followed by very good teaching in Years 12 and 13. Teachers assess students' work closely then provide individual attention based on these assessments. They all know the subject very well and have good knowledge of course requirements. Their approach gives the students confidence while challenging them to succeed. The very good relationships between teachers and students encourage students to do their best. Students are involved in their own learning and in that of others through mutual analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers thus create an atmosphere of trust and enjoyment in which students have confidence in their ability. Planning is very well managed and assessment is excellent. As a result, students know quickly how well they are doing and what they must do in order to improve.
207. The department is very well led with a strong focus on co-operation between staff to help students to succeed. This is particularly helpful where teachers sharing groups know what has been covered elsewhere and can refer to it. They have been well provided with high quality equipment and textbooks to help learning, and have attended training in the requirements of the course. The department is very inclusive, allowing all students to attempt the course and to remain into Year 13.
208. The department has improved the provision greatly in the past year, and has the capacity to improve still further.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

209. Access to ICT facilities for students in other subjects is low in private study, and so the extent to which ICT is used in other subjects is less than expected. Those students using computers have high enough skills to cope with the demands of their courses.

### HUMANITIES

210. **Sociology** was the focus for the inspection, but inspectors sampled work in **geography** and **psychology**.
211. Post-16 lessons in **geography** were sampled in Years 12 and 13. Standards are below average, but students' achievement is at least satisfactory relative to their attainment on entry. Teaching is very good.
212. In the one lesson observed in **psychology**, students significantly increased their understanding of a difficult topic: they were able to explain the key functions of the central nervous system and how it responds to stress, using appropriate terminology. The teaching was effective, because it was well tailored to the students' interests and prior attainments. In a sample of students' work, teachers had made detailed comments which gave students a very clear picture of the standards they were attaining and of what they needed to do to improve.

### Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching, including the use of assessment, is very good.
- Teachers work well together as a team and share good practice.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards sociology and learning in general.
- A-level results have been consistently below the national average.
- Resources are poor.

### Commentary

213. Sociology has been offered at A-level since 2002. The numbers of students entered have fluctuated since then, but have always been small, and results have been below the national average, particularly for higher grades. However, many of the students would not have been considered to have qualified for entry to the course by other similar institutions.
214. Standards observed in lessons and in students' written work were average overall. Students demonstrate a secure grasp of principles and practice with regard to research methods: they can analyse data and evaluate the results, linking their findings to different sociological traditions. Their achievement in lessons is very good: in the lessons observed, students gained a much clearer understanding of some difficult concepts relating to theory and methods, as a result of very good teaching. Students enjoy their lessons, and they apply themselves well in written work, which in general is well organised and presented.
215. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good, and they plan their lessons meticulously to include a range of activities that challenge students and also stimulate their interest. They are adept at using questioning techniques that encourage students to develop their ideas and back up theories with sociological evidence. Students develop a good understanding of different sociologists' views about the way society works, and make perceptive comments: one student, for example, gave a telling description of the school as a microcosm of society, whilst another pointed out the relationship between this analysis and Marxist theory. Students' contributions to discussion are welcomed and built upon to help the whole class deepen their understanding of topics. Teachers show a very good understanding of students' needs and their different learning styles: comments on written work are clear and detailed, and give students the information they need in order to improve their standards. Students are very appreciative of the help they are given. They confirm the positive effects their studies have had, not only on their development in sociology but also on their approach to learning in general and its relevance to their future careers.
216. Leadership and management are good: teachers support one another well, and are united in a common approach towards maximising students' performance and increasing their self-confidence. They are very ambitious for their students and have, for example, established good working links with local universities from which they benefit. Schemes of work are comprehensive and sufficiently detailed to provide a very good framework for coverage of the syllabus, as well as many opportunities to assess progress. However, resources for independent study of the subject within the school are inadequate. There are no sociology books or journals in the library. Although the teachers have tried to remedy this deficiency, they are unable to ensure that students can access a sufficiently wide and up-to-date range of materials to support their studies.

### ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

217. One Year 12 **design and technology** resistant materials lesson was observed. This GCSE retake course is well structured and well-taught to enable students to improve on their past performance. Students are motivated and making satisfactory progress. They are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Boys struggle with written work whereas girls' drawing skills are limited. Overall standards are below average.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on **art and design**. Provision for **performing arts** was sampled. The 2004 results in performing arts were well above average with four of the six entries gaining the higher grades. The students in the present group are taught at a neighbouring school and are achieving well.

### Art and design

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

Standards seen	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Capacity for improvement	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are able to achieve because they receive much individual attention.
- There has been a good increase in student numbers for art.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

218. In 2003, no students were entered for the A2 examination. Of the two students entered for the AS examination, one achieved a pass. The unvalidated 2004 results are well below average for the few students who entered the examination.

219. The standard of work seen in the significantly increased Year 12 cohort is below average for the majority of students. This represents satisfactory achievement since students enter the course with low prior attainment in art, some without a GCSE in the subject. Standards in Year 13 are average. There are no significant differences in the standards and achievement of male and female students, or those with special educational needs. One talented artist is achieving well. The quality of observational drawing ranges widely, with only a minority of students able to refine and develop their ideas with confidence and imagination. A minority of students is able to translate their ideas into bold and large-scale paintings. Sketchbooks are generally patchy in their range and extent of researched material. Students lack confidence in evaluating and discussing art, and their knowledge of artists is very narrow in scope.

220. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers plan efficiently and circulate well to ensure each student gains in confidence through frequent individual attention. Students develop their practical skills because teachers make appropriate use of set tasks that centre on specific skills, such as anatomical drawing. Students understand how they need to improve their work because teachers explain examination assessment procedures effectively. Teaching lacks explicit challenge, however. Students are slow to develop as independent learners, where teaching is over directed, and are less productive when the pace of teaching is slow. Seminar work misses opportunities to engage all students fully and to develop their confidence in discussion. Students have insufficient opportunities to generate artwork with ICT. They do not benefit from appropriate enrichment activities that could extend their understanding and awareness of art. Unsatisfactory accommodation does not inspire students to aim high.

221. Leadership lacks vision. Development planning is yet to focus on providing a distinctive ethos and approach to study at this level. Management is satisfactory and the department has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The focus should be on reviewing the impact of teaching strategies on learning, monitoring performance data and developing vocational courses that are better suited to student needs.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

222. The AVCE course in **leisure and recreation** was sampled. Standards reached by students are average, and their achievement is good relative to their attainment when they started their course. This is due to good teaching and effective assessment procedures which are well used and valued by both students and teachers.

223. A very good **Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA)** course is provided for the students, which is very appropriate to their needs. The students' attitudes, behaviour and sense of responsibility are all very good.

## BUSINESS

224. Two **business education** lessons were sampled. In one GNVQ group, very good teaching ensured that the use of a wide range of examples of local companies developed the understanding of the students well. The students showed good independent study skills and their interest in merchandising techniques was high. In the other lesson, satisfactory teaching enabled the students to gain satisfactory understanding of the different stakeholders of their chosen company.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Standards seen	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good with some very good features.
- Most students have a positive approach to the work.
- Many students achieve well from a modest starting point.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There are very good procedures for assessment.
- There are currently insufficient practical opportunities for students to gain experience.

### Commentary

225. Overall attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. Students in the AVCE course begin their studies from a modest level of attainment based on their GCSE average points scores. The standards achieved in 2003, where all entrants reached grade 'E' or above, were an improvement on the previous year. In the GNVQ Intermediate course, those students who completed the one-year course all achieved 'pass' grades. Results show an improving trend.

226. Most students achieve well, beginning their sixth form courses with below average GCSE results and then reaching average or above scores in AVCE or GNVQ courses. This

represents clear value added over the one or two years. The work seen during the inspection shows clear improvement and both Year 12 and Year 13 students are making good progress. In assignments already completed some students have already reached C grades, most have reached grade E. Attention is given to developing skills in literacy and ICT. Some still lack confidence in speaking during presentations, though this weakness does not extend into discussions in class. The attitude of most students is positive and this is a strength.

227. Teaching is good and there are some very good features, which ensures that learning is good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and the planning and preparation of lessons is a strong feature of their work, ensuring that the needs of all students are met. Teachers make effective use of a range of teaching and learning resources, including the most recent technology. Relationships across the groups are positive and productive, and promote good learning. The teachers recognise the need to seek further opportunities to gain real experience of the caring industry. The assessment of students' work is regular and thorough. Supportive teacher comments and tutorials ensure that all know very well what they need to do in order to improve.
228. The work of the department is well organised by a capable and committed leader. In addition to raising standards by improving teaching and learning, there is clear vision relating to other aspects of the course. In particular, the need to continue to strive to provide practical vocational experiences in the field of health and social care is rightly a high priority. This will add considerably to the students' knowledge and understanding.
229. Standards are rising and courses have been established that meet the needs of those students who choose them. This department clearly has the capacity to develop further.

#### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

230. Work in **general studies** was sampled and two lessons were observed. Both lessons were well prepared and thought-provoking, and promoted good learning and thinking skills. Students have very positive attitudes and standards are above average.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8	8
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	4	4

The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	3	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); not applicable to this school (8).*