

INSPECTION REPORT

OUNSDALE HIGH SCHOOL

Wombourne, Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124419

Headteacher: Mr Paul Jordan

Lead inspector: David Bate

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th November 2004

Inspection number: 271638

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1249
School address:	Ounsdale Road Wombourne Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV5 8BJ
Telephone number:	01902 892178
Fax number:	01902 892070
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Malcolm Edwards
Date of previous inspection:	9 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ounsdale High School is an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school serving the large commuter village of Wombourne in south Staffordshire, five miles west of Wolverhampton. The school was designated a specialist Performing Arts College in 2002 and has also gained both Sportsmark and Artsmark awards. It has 1249 students on roll (199 in the Sixth Form) and is bigger than most secondary schools across the country. Students are drawn from largely socially advantaged families; a below average number are entitled to free school meals. A small but significant proportion of the students come from an area in the village which has significant social and deprivation problems. There are low levels of pupil mobility. Almost all students in each year group attend throughout their school careers. The school is very popular with parents and is over-subscribed annually. A significant proportion of students come from out of area, including some from Wolverhampton and Dudley. Students are from predominantly White British backgrounds, with only a small number from other ethnic groups. The number of students for whom English is not their first language is extremely low. The attainment of students on entry is generally in line with the national average. The number of students with special educational needs is well below the national average, as is the number of students with statements of special educational need. Accommodation is generally unsatisfactory, but with the help of the specialist college funding the school is in the process of a refurbishment programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1545	David Bate	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
9189	John Horwood	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
1888 8	Jan Boulton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education Post-16 sociology
1222 6	Caroline Clarke	<i>Team inspector</i>	English Post-6 English
4426	Terry Fitchett	<i>Team inspector</i>	French German
2063 9	Roger Grant	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics Post-16 mathematics
2354 4	Gair Hedley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design Post-16 art and design
3311 5	Martin Horne	<i>Team inspector</i>	History Citizenship
2082 5	Brian Ogden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography
8360	Frederick Peacock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music
2489 4	Clive Petts	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology Post-16 food technology
2038 0	Neville Pinkney	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Post-16 physics
1080 7	Paul Quest	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education Post-16 religious education
3109 6	John Thornhill	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ounsdale High School is a **good school** which provides its students with a **good quality education**. Students consistently attain **high standards, achieve well** and make **good progress**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The school has made **satisfactory** progress since its last inspection and provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good standards are achieved by students in Year 9 tests and in GCSE.
- There are high levels of good quality teaching and learning.
- There are unsatisfactory procedures to ensure that students and staff work in a clean, healthy and safe environment.
- There are good curriculum opportunities, especially in Year 10 and 11, and good opportunities for involvement in enrichment activities and extra-curricular activities.
- Governance is unsatisfactory.
- Not all staff subscribe to the school's corporate ethos and vision.
- Provision for special educational needs (SEN) students is good.
- Students' attendance is very good.
- Provision for tutor time is inadequate.
- There are very good links with partner primary schools and very good induction arrangements for new students.

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory overall improvement since the last inspection. Standards have continued to improve and the school has responded effectively to key issues raised. The standard of the accommodation, although improving, remains a concern. The school still does not provide an act of collective worship. The provision for Sixth Form courses has improved significantly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

From their levels of attainment on entry students achieve well as they progress through the school.

In the end of Year 9 tests in 2004 the proportion of students gaining Level 5+ in English was an improvement on the 2003 figure, which was above the national average. In mathematics the proportion was above the national average, whilst in science it was well above average. The proportion gaining Level 6+ was lower than previously in English but was above average in mathematics and well above average in science. In comparison with schools with similar students the proportion gaining Level 5+ was close in mathematics and well above in science.

In GCSE in 2004 the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades was above the national average and represents a further improvement from the last inspection. It was also above that of other schools with similar students. The percentage of students

gaining A*-C grades was well above average in English, science and religious education, and above average in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education and citizenship. Attainment was close to the national average in French and German but below average in

information and communication technology (ICT). The points score achieved by students was well above the national average and above that of schools with similar students. The proportion of students gaining at least 5+ A*-G grades was above average, whilst that of students gaining at least one pass was in line with the national average.

Girls did significantly better than boys overall, and the areas where this was most pronounced were English, science and physical education.

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	B	B	B	B

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

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Students' attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Behaviour is good throughout the school, although there is a small minority of students whose behaviour is unacceptable.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of curriculum provision is good with good opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The quality of assessment is good. The quality of provision for students with SEN is good. Arrangements for tutor time are inadequate.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, although not all leaders and staff subscribe to or feel part of the corporate vision and direction of the school and this will be a barrier to future developments and improvement. The governing body, whilst being very supportive of the headteacher and staff, is unsatisfactory because governors have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements by providing religious education in Years 10 and 11 for all students, and an act of collective worship, and that there are effective procedures for ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements. Almost all subject leaders lead and manage their subjects well. Arrangements for school self-review, managing and analysing data, and performance management are good. Procedures for ensuring that students and staff work in safe, clean and healthy environments are unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents are satisfied with the school. They are particularly pleased with the arrangements to help children settle in well, that they are expected to work hard, that they are encouraged to become mature and that good teaching helps them make good progress. They expressed concerns about unacceptable behaviour. Students are supportive of the school but did identify some poor behaviour and bullying which was all well dealt with.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things this good school should do to improve further are:

- To introduce procedures which ensure that students and staff work in a clean, healthy and safe environment.
- To ensure that leaders at all levels subscribe to and feel part of the corporate vision and direction, which will enable the school to maximise its current opportunities, secure future improvement and raise standards further.
- To review the provision for tutor time in order to provide more effective pastoral care.

and, to meet statutory requirements

- The governing body must ensure the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 for all students, an act of collective worship, and compliance with health and safety requirements.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Sixth Form is good and cost effective. The number of students has been consistently high over a period of years. Results in 2003 were at the national average but showed girls as having attained significantly better than boys. There has been an overall improvement in 2004, and although there is still a variation between the results of boys and girls this has been significantly reduced.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in good achievement by students.
- Leadership within the Sixth Form is very good.
- A new Sixth Form block is under construction but the current accommodation is poor. The location or lack of available resources often make lessons less effective.
- Support and guidance systems are good and improving, but the current timetabling arrangement does not allow adequate and suitable time periods for their effective delivery.
- The provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements and there is not a daily collective act of worship.
- Students' attendance is very good but some arrive late for lessons.
- There are even better links with other educational establishments, and a growing involvement with the community as a result of the arts college status.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
------------------------	-------------------

English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good . Specialist staff are knowledgeable and plan well. As a result, most students are challenged to study a range of texts and develop their skills of independent learning.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Teaching is at least good and is matched to students who are anxious to learn. The good subject knowledge of teachers is used to provide lessons which both entertain and inform.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Teaching is very good and is well matched to students' abilities. Subject knowledge is very impressive and teachers plan lessons very effectively to deliver complex ideas.
Engineering, design and manufacturing	Provision in food technology is good . Teaching is very good and consistently presents challenge to students' thinking. Analytic skills are well developed and students display sound independent learning skills.
Humanities	Provision in sociology is good . Results and standards are above average. Students learn and achieve well. Marking is thorough and gives clear indications of how students can improve their work. Provision in religious education is good . Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject to plan lessons that challenge students to achieve good results.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is good . Teaching is at least good, and some is very good. Mature leadership has maintained a solid foundation of standards and expectations. Much of the success comes from the challenge of critical thinking during group analysis of students' work.
Other subjects	Other subjects in the school were sampled, including French, German, chemistry, biology, geography, history, business studies, health and social care, product design, music, general studies, government and politics, physical education, performing arts, critical thinking and key skills.

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.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The care and welfare of students are **satisfactory**. The dedicated pastoral team have very good relationships with the students, and these relationships, together with the developing assessment and reporting procedures, provide a very good system for support, advice and guidance. However, the timings and length of the daily tutor sessions, as well as the arrangements for the weekly tutor period, restrict its effectiveness. Students receive good preparation for and information about later stages of education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership within the Sixth Form is **very good**, and management of the Sixth Form is **good**. The students' interests are central to the aims of the Sixth Form leadership team, who encourage them to study appropriate courses. The current accommodation is poor both in quality and in suitability for the types of lesson; current construction of a new Sixth Form block should improve the situation. Finances are well managed, and as a result the Sixth Form is cost effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally supportive of the Sixth Form and the opportunities it offers them, although they do have a number of concerns. They enjoy being in the Sixth Form, where they find teachers accessible and helpful. They find teaching challenging and demanding, and they are helped to study independently and to carry out research. Careers advice is generally considered

to be good, although a number of students thought the advice on subject choice and the suitability of courses for their career plans was not adequate. Students are concerned that, although they are consulted, not all members of the school leadership team are prepared to listen to them. There was also a view that, although students get on well together within a year group, there are inadequate opportunities for joint activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

NB: At the time of the inspection there were no national comparators for English in the 2004 national tests, or for A Level (A2).

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Attainment on entry to the school is in line with the national average. By the time students leave Year 11 it is generally above average, which clearly indicates good progress across the school. Standards attained by students in almost all areas at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are above average. Girls attained significantly better GCSE results than boys in 2004.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Science results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above the national average.
- Teacher assessment shows that students in design and technology and religious education were attaining well above national expectations.
- In English the proportion of students gaining Level 6+ at the end of Year 9 in 2004 was lower than previously.
- In GCSE in 2004 the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades was above the national average.
- The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in English, science and religious education was well above average.
- Girls did significantly better than boys overall, and this was most pronounced in English, science and physical education.
- In religious education, literacy is very good, with lower ability students achieving very well and producing work well above expectations.
- Students' achievement is good as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11, which indicates that the school is adding good value.

Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 the proportion of students gaining Level 5+ in English was an improvement on 2003, which then was above the national average. In 2004 in mathematics the proportion gaining Level 5+ was above the national average, whilst in science it was well above average. The proportion gaining Level 6+ was lower than previously in English; it was above average in mathematics and well above average in science. In comparison with schools with similar students the proportion gaining Level 5+ was close in mathematics and well above in science.

2. Statutory teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicated that in religious education, ICT, and design and technology students were attaining well above national expectations, although there are clear indications that the assessment of ICT and design and technology was rather generous. Students were attaining above expectations in French, German, history and geography. Standards in art and design, music, physical

education and citizenship were in line with expectations. Whilst girls performed better than boys in English, there is generally little significant difference across other subjects.

3. In GCSE in 2004 the percentage of students gaining 5+A*-C grades was above the national average, and this represents a further improvement from the last inspection. It was also above that of other schools with similar students. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in English, science and religious education was well above average, and it was above average in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education and citizenship. Attainment was close to the national average in French and German but below average in ICT. The points score achieved by students was well above the national average and above that of schools with similar students. The proportion of students gaining at least 5+ A*-G grades was above average, whilst the proportion gaining at least one pass was in line with the national average.

4. Girls did significantly better than boys overall, and the areas where this was most pronounced were English, science and physical education. In most other areas there was little significant difference. This is a change from the last inspection, where boys achieved better than girls overall.

5. With the exception of ICT, where students are attaining below expected levels, almost all students are showing good standards in their class work, are achieving well, and are making good progress across Years 7 to 9. They are making very good progress in science. This is closely mirrored in Year 10 and 11, with students achieving very well and making very good progress in citizenship, music and religious education, and good progress in almost all other subjects. There is no difference from the general body of students in the achievement of students with ethnic minority backgrounds. Students with SEN generally achieve well and make good progress. The school has not yet identified those who are gifted and talented.

6. Students' achievement is good as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11, which indicates that the school is adding good value.

7. Standards of literacy are generally satisfactory across the curriculum, but in religious education literacy is very good, with lower ability students achieving very well and producing work well above expectations. Mathematics standards in other subjects are satisfactory.

8. Statutory targets for 2005/2006 are challenging and if achieved, as indicators would suggest, would place the school well above the national average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	62 (58)	53.4 (52.0)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (90)	88.6 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (96)	95.8 (97.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	314 (36.1)	282 (34.7)

There were 203 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth Form

9. The standards achieved by students in AS and A Level examinations show an improving picture. In all the target subjects in 2004 the proportions of students attaining A-B and A-E grades show clear improvements on the previous year. In English, mathematics and physics all students gained at least a pass grade in 2004. The standards of work seen in most AS and A2 lessons were above average. This indicates good achievement and progress by students across both year groups.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	[97] 87 (97)	89 (93)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	[31] 18 (29)	33 (35)
Average point score per pupil	[270] 229 (239)	234 (233)

There were 82 pupils in the year group. Figures in curved brackets are for the previous year. Figures in italic brackets are 2004 school results.

NB: At the time of the inspection there was no national comparison data for 2004.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**. Behaviour is **good** throughout the school. Students' attitudes to learning and relationships with each other and with adults are **good**. The number of fixed term exclusions is high. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is now very good as a result of very good procedures.
- Behaviour is generally good throughout the school, although a small minority of students in some classes have poor behaviour, which affects learning.
- There are very good initiatives to ensure that students who are at risk of exclusion are given appropriate opportunities and support.
- There is no racism or sexism within the school, and any harassment is dealt with well.
- The provision for the spiritual development of students is underdeveloped.
- Attitudes and behaviour in the Sixth Form are very good.

Main school

10. Students are supportive of the school and are keen to attend. Attendance is above the national average and the school works hard to maintain and improve upon this level. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is efficiently carried out. The school is addressing punctuality very well, with senior staff playing a proactive role in encouraging students to arrive on time. Monitoring and analysis of attendance records are very good, and systems are in place for the parents of 'poor attenders' who do not arrive at school to be contacted on the first day of absence if a reason is not received.

11. Behaviour around the school and in most lessons is good. In some lessons a minority of students have poor behaviour. This is mainly during the afternoon lessons following the relatively long lunch break, or where teaching is less demanding and stimulating. There are very good rewards and sanctions procedures in place to help

improve behaviour still further. Exclusions are relatively high but are used only when it is clearly the appropriate sanction; the school, which does not have access to an internal exclusion unit or a student referral unit, makes every effort to keep students in school. Students are very clear that there is no racism or sexism within the school. Whilst there is some bullying, it is well dealt with by the school and there are good systems in place to promote an anti-bullying culture.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.5
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6
National data	1.1

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

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1208	119	1
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	1	0
Mixed – Any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	34	4	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	7	0	0

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

12. Within lessons, students have good attitudes to learning, and these, supported by the good relationships, result in a good learning environment where they take an active part and achieve well. Students enjoy being at the school and take good advantage of the opportunities available to them. As well as helping within the classroom they have school responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council.

13. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory number of opportunities for students' personal development. The provision for spiritual development, however, is underdeveloped. Students attend only one assembly every two weeks. These make a good contribution but are too infrequent, and there are no regular or planned opportunities for reflection during the day. Not all students receive the necessary provision of religious education, but those who do benefit from very good opportunities for spiritual development. Whilst the spiritual element is clearly present in subjects such as music, dance and drama it does not appear sufficiently in others, such as art and design. Because provision is not co-ordinated, opportunities for reflection and exploration of the spiritual dimensions of life are often missed in lessons.

14. The school provides a good moral framework, placing a strong emphasis on relationships within the community, and this is reflected in students' relationships in class and around the school. Students are also actively involved in charity fund-raising. However, the poor state of the buildings and the low level of general cleanliness and tidiness within the school do not stimulate a sense of pride and respect.

15. Planning and provision for social development are good. Students work harmoniously in most classes, where group work and peer support are used in lesson planning. Social interaction at break and lunch time is harmonious, especially where clubs meet and give different age groups opportunities to form friendships. The arts college status also increases opportunities for a wider social involvement, as does provision within the citizenship curriculum.

16. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There are some very good opportunities within the school, such as through the Comenius project and the arts college links, but not all subjects pay sufficient attention to cultural development.

Sixth Form

17. Students in the Sixth Form have to register twice daily. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good except in the case of a small group of less motivated boys. Students have responsibilities as senior prefects as well as school

council roles. Through their enrichment activities, many have a role of supporting younger students. As in the main school, the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory, although there are more opportunities for some students to extend their cultural knowledge.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**. The quality of the curriculum is **good** and increasingly encourages a broad and balanced education. The school takes **satisfactory** care of its students. The school has **good** links with parents and the community. Links with other educational establishments are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching helps students achieve well in all years.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide tasks that extend students' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Good relationships between teachers and students promote effective learning.
- The poor behaviour of boys in a small number of lessons prevents them and other students from progressing as well as they should.
- Lessons are structured to give challenging tasks which extend students' learning.
- There is not enough differentiated material for higher attaining students.
- Good assessment and tracking of students' progress overall contribute to good achievement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 165 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	43 (26%)	69 (42%)	38 (23%)	8 (5%)	3 (2%)	0

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

Commentary

18. Teaching is good overall, and it is very good in religious education and in music in Years 10 and 11 and history in Years 7 to 9. Since the previous inspection the proportion of very good or better teaching has increased. The good quality of the teaching is matched by good learning, which has helped students to achieve well. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons which capture the interest of students. As a result, the students make good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. In the small number of lessons where the teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, teachers do not fully explain the lesson's tasks. In these lessons, students have difficulty in appreciating what they have to do, and so lose concentration.

19. The good use of resources and the different styles of teaching contribute to students' good achievement. Generally, students are enthusiastic about their work and concentrate well in lessons. Teachers work hard to create effective relationships with students, and in doing so they generate purposeful working environments. In the best lessons, teachers set challenging activities which require students to think about new ideas and clarify their learning through group and individual work. Students are willing to work together and support each other, but also ready

to work independently. In many lessons, students were keen to share ideas about what they were learning. Homework is used to confirm learning and prepare student for future lessons. In a small number of lessons the poor behaviour of groups of boys prevents them and other students from learning as well as they could.

20. The teaching and learning of students with SEN is good. Teachers plan carefully and generally make good use of support staff. Teachers provide a comfortable environment so that these students feel relaxed enough to make progress similar to that of other students. They receive good assistance to enable them to play a full part in lesson activities. The teaching does not always stretch higher attaining students, so the achievement of these students is only satisfactory. In some lessons there are not enough higher level tasks to challenge them and so they lose concentration and behaviour declines.

21. Assessment procedures are generally good. Very good assessment in music in Years 10 and 11 helps students to achieve well at Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, assessment is only satisfactory in English and science, and it is unsatisfactory in ICT. In most subjects students know what they can achieve, even though targets are not included in most planners. Teachers know how well their students are attaining but do not always use this effectively in their planning. Overall, assessment is helpful and complete enough to encourage students to make progress. However, students are not always given sufficient information in lessons about what they have to do to achieve different levels. The end-of-year reports do not always include the levels achieved. The quality of marking is generally good. Most teachers give helpful comments about what students need to do to improve. The monitoring and assessment of students' SEN is good.

Sixth Form

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching supports students and helps them achieve well.
- Teachers' subject knowledge inspires students to work hard.
- The good relationships between teachers and students promote effective learning.
- Good assessment and tracking of students' progress overall contribute to good achievement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons in the Sixth Form

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	13 (30%)	25 (57%)	4 (9%)	1 (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.

22. Overall, teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. The number of good or better lessons has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The good teaching is matched by good learning because teachers are effective in planning and presenting lessons. Teachers show a keen desire to help students to achieve well. Their up-to-date subject knowledge inspires confidence in the students. They create sound working

relationships, and students are taught good study skills. Despite the accommodation problems, there is a very good working ethos in the Sixth Form study areas. Students respond well to teachers and appreciate their hard work.

23. The quality of the assessment and marking of students' work is good. Written work is marked thoroughly and students know precisely how they can improve. In lessons there is regular feedback on progress, so students are always able to make adjustments to improve their work. Good monitoring and tracking of progress enables students to make the best of their time in the Sixth Form.

The curriculum

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is **good** and increasingly encourages a broad and balanced education, as a result of which students make good progress and achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The more flexible curriculum in Year 10 is very good.
- Opportunities for enrichment are good, with very good opportunities provided in history in Years 10 and 11.
- Participation in sport is excellent across a range of sports, including clubs, practices and fixtures against other schools.
- A whole-school arts culture is not sufficiently promoted, and this leads to only adequate participation on the part of students.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with very poor features in food technology, science and the Sixth Form.
- While overall provision of resources is satisfactory, resources for physical education are poor.

24. Overall, the curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities to suit the needs and aptitudes of students. However, statutory requirements are not met for religious education and work-related learning (WRL), the provision for personal, health and social education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory, and the delivery of citizenship in Years 7 to 9 lacks consistency. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in providing an alternative curriculum to meet the needs of students in danger of becoming disaffected. Improvements in the provision for ICT are tackling underachievement. All students take ICT in GCSE in Years 10 and 11, but the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, although not yet well enough established across the curriculum, is beginning to benefit from skilled, more effective management.

25. Curriculum provision is now very good in Years 10 and 11. The range of GCSE subjects has been extended to include music technology, dance, media studies and applied GCSE art and design. Students can also choose to follow vocational options: GNVQ business and health and social care. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, students in Years 10 and 11 may study two foreign languages, and technology is optional. An alternative curriculum for the disaffected operates in Year 11. The provision for religious education in the form of long or short course GCSE options is good, but there is no effective religious education for non-GCSE students. The provision for religious education within the citizenship course, which all students take, does not meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The establishment of vocational options and specialist options in performing arts reflects the school's commitment to a broader

curriculum. A strong feature of the curriculum is the excellent participation in a range of sporting activities.

26. Provision for PSHE is unsatisfactory despite a timetabled programme. The school deals with issues such as health, drugs and sex education and provides for careers education. However, there is not a coherent strategy or practice to link assemblies, registration and timetabled PSHE to provide effectively for students' personal development.

27. Opportunities for enrichment for all students are good. There is excellent participation in a broad and varied range of sporting activity, including clubs, practices and fixtures against other schools. Residential visits to the battlefields of Europe are very effectively used to support learning in GCSE history. Good support for learning is provided by drama productions and music clubs, and concerts are used to exploit strong links with primary schools. The schools' special status as a Performing Arts College is broadening the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, but the promotion of a coherent whole-school arts culture is insufficiently developed.

28. New curriculum developments are now included within the school planning cycle, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, systematic monitoring and rigorous review is not securely established. Implementation of new initiatives aimed at providing a better match for students' needs and learning styles is patchy and requires a whole-school corporate approach in order to further raise achievement. This will enable developments to be more closely targeted to meet the needs of all students, including the able, gifted and talented, those with SEN, and the disaffected. Access to opportunities for students to prepare for later stages of education, training and employment is satisfactory.

29. Provision for students with SEN is good. Students receive good support in lessons from caring mainstream staff. Support from learning assistants is good. Planning in lessons for SEN students does not always guarantee that the work is appropriate for students at all levels of attainment.

30. Teachers are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. A well qualified, experienced and hard working staff brings much expertise to the teaching. Support staff make a significant contribution to students' learning in lessons. However, the amount of support time available, including specialist technical support, is inadequate. The school has made significant investment in ICT over the last year and the ratio of computers to students is broadly in line with national averages, but because of accommodation problems many subjects do not always enjoy good immediate provision.

31. The overall quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school has gained some refurbished accommodation as part of internal reorganisation, and a Sixth Form block is currently under construction, but much of the existing accommodation is dirty, drab and unhygienic. Day-to-day care and maintenance of accommodation and external areas is poor and lacks robust, effective management. In food technology areas, standards of hygiene have been compromised. Storage and preparation areas in science are totally inadequate and the layout and specification of some ICT rooms are unsatisfactory.

Sixth Form

32. Overall, the Sixth Form curriculum is very good. Well planned opportunities are provided and the school offers a very good range of AS and A Level options. Vocational programmes, however, are limited in their scope. Vocational options are not flexible enough in Years 12 and 13 to provide good choice. Work-related elements are not integral to GNVQ health and social care. The school recognises the value of greater collaboration with other local schools and is actively pursuing closer working arrangements with them. So far, specialist school status has had minimal impact on curriculum provision in Years 12 and 13.

33. Recruitment to the Sixth Form is good, with good retention levels. Many students go on to higher education at the end of Year 13. Skills in numeracy, communication and ICT are not systematically developed and assessed in Years 12 and 13. As in the main school, the Sixth Form curriculum is enriched by a good range of learning opportunities outside the classroom. Students are enthusiastic about playing a part in the running of the school, including the development of accommodation, but at school council level they feel their views on school development have been ignored.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes **satisfactory** care of its students throughout the school. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **satisfactory**. Systems to involve students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure that students and staff work in a safe environment are poor.
- Procedures to ensure the safety of students on school trips are very good.
- Pastoral staff are dedicated and caring but the arrangements of the school day restrict their effectiveness.
- Induction arrangements for new students are very good.
- Procedures to support students with difficulties are very good and reflect the inclusive nature of the school.
- Child protection arrangements in the school are very good.

Summary

34. The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensures that all staff are aware of requirements. The child protection officer is experienced and is named in procedures. The school works well with external agencies, and very good systems are in place to support the two students who are in the care of the local authority. The school is considering the viability of contacting all parents of students on the first day of absence to ensure their well-being. The current arrangements to ensure that all health and safety issues are identified and rectified are inadequate. Governors have not ensured that policies have been reviewed and updated with sufficient urgency and have not monitored actions closely enough. There is an urgent need to review the procedures and arrangements, including establishing a uniform approach to risk assessments, the comprehensiveness of audits, and their follow up actions.

35. Welfare provision in the school is satisfactory and there is adequate supervision at all times. There are enough staff qualified in first aid within the school, but the shortage of accommodation has meant that the medical room is not kept for its intended purpose. Appropriate use is made of external agencies to support the pastoral staff.

36. Support and guidance within lessons are good. The good systems of assessment and the developing systems for monitoring and reporting are providing a good basis for students to receive effective guidance. Whilst there are very good systems for individual guidance, and especially for supporting students with difficulties, the effectiveness of the tutor role is limited by the school day arrangements. The school has recently appointed a learning mentor who is in school for four days a week. The effective use of the student planners is restricted because of the shortage of time in lessons and tutor periods.

37. The arrangements for the transfer of students from primary schools are very good, as a result of the strong links established as part of the school's performing arts college status. The dedicated work of year leaders is supported well by departmental links. The pastoral arrangements ensure that new students and their parents are well informed about the school; the information they receive includes a variety of documents explaining things in an easy to understand way.

38. Information provided on further studies and careers is good. In addition to the well informed advice available from the pastoral and subject staff, students benefit from expert guidance within the PSHE/citizenship provision and from the Connexions Service, who have a presence in the school for most of the week.

39. As well as informal feedback to the staff, students can express their views about school issues through the year and school councils. Whilst this is a good facility and encourages students to discuss matters of interest, they do not all consider that it is very effective in bringing about changes.

Sixth Form

40. The welfare systems available to the Sixth Form are common to the main school. Year 13 students have good access to support and guidance from tutors and teachers. The smaller group sizes enable the one-to-one guidance to be more frequent and effective, with a well structured interview pattern. The work of tutors in the Sixth Form is more focused on learning, but the use of tutor time is variable. Students receive good and well planned careers advice through sessions within the schedule of tutor periods, and from the Connexions advisory service.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and the community. Links with other educational establishments are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Partnerships with other schools have been developed to benefit students at Ounsdale and at other schools.
- The performing arts college status has resulted in numerous opportunities for the community to benefit from the educational and social facilities.
- Parents receive very good information about the progress of their children.
- Governors have produced an excellent annual report for parents.
- Information about the school is well delivered by the local press, but there are no regular communications from within the school.

41. Responses to the parents' questionnaires and from the parents' meeting indicated that parents like the school and are very pleased with the way their children settle into it. They are pleased that children are expected to work hard by good teachers, who help them make good progress and become mature. Some parents were concerned about the information on progress and also about the lack of consultation with them. A number were also concerned about the arrangements for homework, the behaviour, and the bullying within school, as well as the way the school was led and managed. A number of parents made individual comments about the school which were considered by the inspection team and contribute to the findings of the report.

42. The reporting system to parents is an evolving one which is currently good but has the clear capacity to be very good when fully developed. The end-of-year reports are comprehensive, and together with the parents' meeting they ensure that parents are fully informed. Significant changes to this process are taking place as target setting and reviews become more established in the school, and parents should see the benefit of these changes when all systems are in place.

43. The information received by parents about the school is good. The prospectus and the governors' annual report are well presented and comprehensive; both fully meet requirements. There are currently no regular newsletters to the community or to parents, and this is an area the school could develop to further improve the partnerships. The school has a website which is basic in content and not fully up to date. The school uses pupil planners to allow parents to monitor work and to communicate with the school. There is a parents'/friends' association which is active in raising funds and

providing and supporting events. Consultation with parents is carried out as issues arise but not on a routine basis.

44. The school has developed very good links with other schools and educational establishments both local and further afield, including across Europe. Through the performing arts college status the school has developed some excellent partnerships with local primary schools, and these contribute to community involvement. There is significant interaction between Ounsdale and the local primary schools as well as other secondary schools in the area. The support given to the primary schools and the partnership developed with them are making a real impact on the appreciation of the arts in the area. Very good liaison takes place with the primary schools at curriculum and pastoral level, which contributes to this very good partnership.

45. The partnership with the community is good. The arts projects in the area are developing a greater awareness and provision of art and design across the area. The school is well used for community events and adult education. The creation of the Wombourne Inclusion Network has developed as a school initiative and involves the local support agencies. The school demonstrates its commitment to the community by showing a caring presence in the community during the school day. Students go into the community for work experience but the involvement with local businesses is limited, partly due to the rural location of the school.

Sixth Form

46. Students benefit from good links with other educational establishments and the community. There are good opportunities to visit universities, and many support the local community as part of the student enhancement programme. Opportunities for work placement for those on the health and social care course are limited.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management throughout the school are **satisfactory**. Although there is a good vision for the school, supported by the development plan, there is a lack of corporate responsibility at all levels in ensuring it is achieved. Governance is **unsatisfactory**. Management of most departments is **good**. Management of SEN provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management of most departments is good.
- The school self-review system is a well constructed and useful tool in school improvement.
- Management of SEN provision is good.
- There are poor procedures to ensure that students and staff work in a clean, healthy and safe environment.
- Governance is unsatisfactory because governors have not ensured that the school provides: religious education in Years 10 and 11 for all students, religious education in the Sixth Form, an act of collective worship, and effective procedures for ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements.
- Not all staff subscribe to or feel part of the corporate vision and aspirations of the school, and the result is that some staff at all levels fail to make full use of the positive aspects of the school. This is a barrier to further improvement.

Commentary

47. The governing body works hard on the school's behalf and holds it to account in relation to achieving examination targets and financial matters. However, it has not ensured that the curriculum fully meets statutory requirements, especially in providing religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11 and the Sixth Form and seeing that there is a daily act of worship. Nor has it ensured that the school responds urgently to health and safety issues. Governance is therefore unsatisfactory. The governors clearly share the headteacher's vision for the future direction of the school and fully support him in this respect. They have active sub-committees, but the curriculum and premises groups are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that statutory requirements are fully met. Whilst governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths, their grasp of key areas of weakness is superficial.

48. There are positive elements in the leadership of the school at all levels, including the vision and aspirations stated by the headteacher, the senior leadership team and some heads of department. However, not all staff subscribe to or feel they have a stake in the corporate vision and direction that will enable the school to maximise its current opportunities, secure future improvement, and raise standards further. Therefore the school is not capitalising fully on the positive aspects, such as specialist college status, good teaching and learning, good standards of student achievement, good curriculum provision and recent good initiatives to further improve teaching and learning. This is a barrier to further improvement. The newly developed senior leadership team is beginning to function effectively but will be crucial as an overarching body to pull together other leaders and staff. Subject departments, whilst functioning well within their specialisms, are too often 'stand-alone' entities and do not complement each other or the school as a whole in a corporate quest for improvement.

49. The management of the school on a day-to-day basis is satisfactory overall. Some aspects, such as the self-review process, performance management and the increasingly sophisticated data analysis systems, are particularly effective. These aspects are managed well by the senior leadership team. The management of almost all curriculum areas is good, and very good in history. The management of SEN provision throughout the school is also good. There is an effective professional development programme which requires personal as well as whole-school priorities to be met. The school is strong in its commitment to initial teacher training and is aiming to become a recognised 'training school'. However, the management of the poor buildings and the procedures for ensuring that students and staff work in safe and healthy learning environments are unsatisfactory. Processes for identifying and acting on health and safety concerns lack rigour and too often result in insufficient action to remedy the problems.

50. The school's finances, including specialist college funding, are well managed, both on a day-to-day basis by the designated administrator and senior manager and on a long-term basis by the governors' finance sub-committee. Decisions are clearly taken which enable the priorities of the development plan to be fulfilled, and which adhere to principles of best value.

51. As the unit costs are low and the quality of provision and outcomes is good, the school is providing good value for money.

Sixth Form

52. The leadership within the Sixth Form is **very good**, and management of the Sixth Form is **good**. The students' interests are central to the aims of the Sixth Form leadership team, and they are encouraged to study appropriate courses. The current accommodation is poor both in quality and in suitability for the types of lesson; current construction of a new Sixth Form block should improve the situation. Finances are well managed, and as a result the Sixth Form is cost effective.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,767,240.00
Total expenditure	3,760,860.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,011.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	- 24,000.00
Balance carried forward to the next	+ 34,230.00

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **unsatisfactory**; it does not meet statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of WRL is unsatisfactory; there is a lack of strategic planning, and management is fragmented.
- Curriculum areas have yet to identify the contribution they can make to WRL.
- Recently introduced vocational courses in Year 10 have significantly increased students' breadth of choice.
- Good collaborative arrangements with Connexions underpin the drive to develop employability skills.
- All students complete two weeks' work experience at the end of Year 10.

Commentary

53. Although leadership of work-related provision is unsatisfactory, recent staff changes in the management of Years 10 to 11 have led to the emergence of a clearer vision of the place of vocational education across the curriculum. Specialist performing arts status has led to development of a number of GCSE courses with an arts and vocational bias, for example, media studies, art and design and dance, but the need is recognised for more active promotion of a coherent vocational culture based on the school's specialist status.

54. Day-to-day management of both careers and work experience is satisfactory. Collaborative working with Connexions is good. However, the school has established too few links with local businesses, employers, training providers and organisations for education business partnerships. As a consequence, there are not enough opportunities to develop students' skills relating to business and enterprise as well as their personal skills.

55. All students in Year 10 take part in two weeks' work experience. Attendance rates are very good and students are positive about their experiences. Preparation for work experience is provided through the PSHE programme. However, there is not enough emphasis on the development of key personal skills that are valued in the work place. No strategies or methods have so far been developed to assess students' achievement while engaged in WRL.

56. A small cohort of Year 11 students currently follows an alternative curriculum. The programme makes good use of courses in construction and motor vehicle maintenance and of some GCSE courses at Wolverhampton College. Good individual support for students is given by a Connexions personal adviser who monitors placement progress and provides feedback to the school. However, the success of this alternative curriculum is not yet being effectively evaluated, and there is not enough discussion of good practice to plan better for the future. Opportunities are lost to extend accreditation of students' skills and experiences to help them to find employment or further training.

57. The school has made a promising start by introducing GNVQ Intermediate business and health and social care into the options programme for Year 10. This now provides breadth to curriculum alternatives. The number of students opting for the courses is encouraging, and teaching and learning are sound. The vocational culture requires more active whole-school promotion, so that staff and students are better informed, and a further expansion of the curriculum alternatives as resources allow.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were very good, and significantly above the national average. This represents good achievement.
- Teachers' specialist knowledge and knowledge of individual texts is good and supports and enhances students' learning.
- Most lessons are well planned and students are well supported.
- The pace of most lessons is good and this enables most students to acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of leadership and management is good and there is a clear vision for the future.
- In a minority of classes behaviour is unsatisfactory.
- Frequent staff changes and split classes detract from the learning experience.
- Co-ordination of literacy across the curriculum is at a very early stage.

Commentary

58. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE have improved since the last inspection. In 2003, results were well above the national average and above average for similar schools at Level 6+. Results in 2004 show an improvement at Level 5+ but a significant drop in the proportion of students achieving Level 6+. Results in GCSE in 2004 were very good, and well above the national average for both grades A*-C and A*-G. More girls than boys achieved the higher A*/A grades in 2004. These results represent good achievement by students as they progress through the school.

59. Current standards by the end of Year 9 are good. Standards seen in lessons and written work indicate that, for the most part, students can write accurately and effectively for a variety of purposes, including letters, discursive essays and diaries. Most students develop good speaking and listening skills, particularly when their classes are well managed. In the few unsatisfactory lessons seen, poor behaviour restricted oral work and students called out rudely or made little effort to contribute seriously. Standards in Year 11 are also good, as was evident in a lesson on 'The Crucible' where students enacted scenes showing how witchcraft began to spin out of control in Salem. At all levels, students are encouraged to read aloud and most do so confidently, particularly where the teacher creates an effective learning environment.

60. The quality of teaching is good overall. In all years students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who plan carefully. The pace of most lessons is brisk and generally holds students' attention. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, and as a result the students are familiar with the examination requirements and assessment objectives. They work in an atmosphere of support that inspires confidence and enables them to gain mastery of a wider general and specialist vocabulary. This was to be seen in a Year 11 study of the breakdown of civilisation and the development of savagery in 'Lord of the Flies'. Students often work well together in pairs or groups and are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves. In some lessons, however, they use the opportunity to drift off task and to misbehave, often calling out at random. Students' attitudes to their work are in the main good, and they enjoy sharing their ideas with others in work displayed in classrooms. Teachers' aims in lessons are clearly set out. They give praise, encouragement and support, and most sessions are marked by good relationships. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of the classes they teach and there is a clear marking and assessment policy. However, this is not applied consistently, and in one Year 8 class the students said their work had not been marked for a while because they had had a number of supply teachers.

61. Leadership and management of English are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the department and has spent considerable time with the team in developing comprehensive schemes of work for Years 7 to 9. There are also good paper-based resources for Years 7 to 11, department handbooks, and a moderation handbook for Years 7 to 9. As yet, however, there are no schemes of work for Years 10 and 11. It is particularly important that these be developed, in light of the frequent staff changes and the split classes that make continuity of learning a particular challenge for management.

62. Learning is also enhanced by a debating society, theatre visits and two school magazines, one of which, 'Ounsdale Outburst', is for Years 7 to 11. The library has a relatively small selection of texts and fiction, both junior and senior. Sixteen computers have been introduced to the department since the last inspection. These are in a classroom and have limited use, but they are available for coursework, and some departmental information to support students is on the intranet.

63. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in raising attainment and achievement by students and in generally better quality teaching. However, there is room for further improvement to overall provision.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. Arrangements for the co-ordination of literacy across the curriculum are at the earliest of stages, although there are good pockets of literacy practice in subject areas. In English, mathematics and science, standards of literacy are satisfactory or better, and students are able to use key words and have developed a critical and personal voice in their writing. Students are actively encouraged to draft and re-draft their work. An example was seen in history, where students were developing these skills in writing letters to Elizabeth I and using word frames for their essays. In modern foreign languages, physical education and mathematics, there is good emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary and on structuring work for extended writing. In religious education literacy is very good, with lower ability students achieving very well and producing work well above expectations.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching with some very good features.
- Improved standards overall and particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Strong management and leadership of the department.
- Students make good progress and achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in French and German.
- Students' confidence in speaking is underdeveloped at both key stages.
- The range of resources used to support students' learning is not wide enough.

Commentary

65. Since the last inspection, standards in French and German have risen in Years 7 to 9 and teaching has also improved. The department is, however, still developing in a number of areas and hence improvement is satisfactory at this stage.

66. By the end of Year 9, standards in both languages are generally above average and this is reflected in recent teacher assessments, which show a steady improvement over time. Levels of comprehension of written and spoken language are strong, and students in top sets are able to produce extended writing with accuracy and imagination. Most students have a solid grasp of grammar and tenses by the end of Year 9. Spoken language, despite good pronunciation, is limited in breadth because students are less confident to go beyond basic responses and rarely question or seek help in the foreign language. Students make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 and achieve well for their ability, particularly in their understanding of meaning and in the quality of writing.

67. Recent results at grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations have shown a substantial improvement, particularly in German. Results are now close to national averages, but there are not enough of the highest A/A* grades because oral skills tend to be a continuing weakness. By the end of Year 11, standards in lessons are also average and comprehension skills are stronger than those for speaking. Students in Year 10, however, are achieving well and are beginning to attain above average levels, because they pronounce very well and have the confidence to write in depth with increasing accuracy.

68. Despite a minority of unsatisfactory lessons, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good because of the preponderance of very good features in many lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Without exception, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and in the great majority of cases they present their lessons with confidence and enthusiasm. In the weaker lessons observed there was insufficient sustained motivation of students, and a slow pace of delivery. In many good or very good lessons the variety of planned activities and the careful structuring of the work, as well as challenging tasks and frequent praise, resulted in students making good or very good progress. A strong feature of many lessons is the regular feedback by teachers to ensure that students know how well they are doing and how they can improve. Teachers mark students' work conscientiously and make helpful comments. Teachers are not, however, consistent in their use of the foreign language for classroom instruction. Moreover, there is limited opportunity for using the wide range of visual, textual and ICT resources, with the result that students do not have enough exposure to the foreign language from whatever source. Teachers also need to do more to counteract the reluctance of students to speak the language unprompted.

69. Students generally have a positive attitude to learning; they usually behave very well and make good progress in most lessons. They collaborate well in paired or group activities but often lack the confidence to learn without frequent recourse to the teacher or textbook. However, where learning is very good, the students are beginning to take the initiative and apply previous knowledge and skills in new contexts.

70. The department is well managed and the new subject leader is a strong leader and role model to her colleagues. Much progress is being made to move the department

forward through a detailed development plan, following analysis of its strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and work to achieve consistency in teaching and assessment. There is also a focus on widening provision in modern languages to attract increased take-up in Year 10 and beyond. At present there are not enough opportunities for curriculum enrichment within the school or for students to be exposed to the foreign language through visits and exchanges.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision of mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Good use is made of homework to extend learning opportunities.
- Use of ICT within lessons is limited.
- Good relationships between teachers and students enhance learning experiences.

Commentary

71. The standard on entry is about the national average in mathematics. Evidence from lessons and the work scrutiny shows that by the end of Year 9 most students are working above the national average. The National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show that students are achieving above the national average. Compared with the standard on entry, this indicates that the achievement is good. The trend is slightly upwards over the last few years and there has been an improvement since the last inspection. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. However, the improvement in results in 2004 shows that girls are now doing better than boys.

72. GCSE results in 2004 show students to be attaining above the national average. There has been no overall discernible trend over the last few years, although over the last three years the examination results of the boys have been downwards. It is only in the last year that the girls have had results which have been significantly better than those of the boys. However, this is not supported by work seen in lessons and from an analysis of class books, where boys and girls are seen to be working equally well. The results show a slight improvement since the last inspection. The achievement of students with SEN and those from an ethnic minority has matched that of other children.

73. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between students and staff are good and there is a good atmosphere in the classroom. The genuine respect and liking between staff and students is evident and enhances the learning process. Lessons are well planned, with suitable activities for the students. Teachers have good mathematical skills and are able to provide interesting examples in their teaching to help students' learning. Books are well marked and contain comments which are appropriate and constructively helpful for students to guide their own learning. Homework is an integral part of the learning process and is set and marked regularly. The use of ICT within the department is limited.

74. Students show an eagerness for the subject which is exemplified in lessons by the way they ask and answer questions and by their general participation. Their good attitude is reflected in class books which are neat and well presented. In the best lessons students remain on task for the whole of the lesson and their work output is high. When given the opportunity, students work well in small groups, talk about their work, and help each other understand complexities of the subject. Students are enthusiastic and are quick to say that they like the subject and enjoy working with their teachers.

75. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are fully in place, with work identified for all levels of student in the school. Assessments are carried out regularly as a logical part of the teaching process and results are used to modify teaching

and setting for students. Homework, and the marking and assessment of work, is a strength, and the constructive comments of teachers are a valuable part of the learning experience. There is a genuine feeling of team spirit within the department, and the classes taught by more than one teacher are managed well and with professionalism. The staff turnover experienced by the department has also been managed well. Teachers who have taught temporarily have been well cared for and guided in their teaching. There is evidence of monitoring of teaching within the department, and a timetable for observations exists. Records are kept as a part of the performance management review. Resources are generally satisfactory, although the poor standard of accommodation for some lessons and the lack of ICT facilities are not helpful to the learning process.

76. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. Although there is no formal policy in place, there was until recently a numeracy co-ordinator and an understanding of the value of numeracy across departments. The school has attached members of the mathematics department to other departments to provide assistance and promote good practice. Good examples were noted in graph work in physical education, where students graphed heart rate, in calculations of average velocity in science, and in the accurate measurement of ingredients for menus in a cookery class.

SCIENCE

Science

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average.
- Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good and it is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Accommodation is poor and inadequate.
- Procedures for tracking students' progress in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

78. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. Standards have been sustained at a high level, and the quality of teaching remains a strength of the subject. However, the procedures for assessment of students' learning remain unsatisfactory and there has been no significant improvement in the accommodation for science. The lack of a range of ICT equipment is restricting the development of teaching and learning styles.

79. Results in the examinations at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above the national average, and well above average in comparison with those of similar schools. The results have been well above the national average for the last five years.

80. The GCSE examination results for double award science in 2004 were well above the national average, and well above average in comparison with those of similar schools. Girls performed significantly better than the boys in the examinations but this has not been a consistent pattern over recent years. A small group of students took the double award applied science course and virtually all obtained grades in the D-F range, which represents good achievement.

81. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. Students have acquired a secure knowledge base in the subject and have confidence in applying their knowledge, for example in designing genetic modifications of an imaginary 'Calypso fruit' to make it a commercially valuable product. Lower attaining students benefit from suitably modified tasks to reach standards in line with their ability.

82. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Students tackle the subject matter with confidence, and present their work with care. Most students have good knowledge and understanding of electricity and the function of the major organs in the human body, and apply their understanding of genetics to form balanced views of moral and social issues linked to cloning and genetic engineering.

83. Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9. On entry to the school in Year 7, students have average standards in science. Initially they are rather slow to adopt good working practices in setting out their work and to incorporate key words into their vocabulary. By Year 9 their subject knowledge is good, and work is very well presented.

84. Achievement by students in Years 10 and 11 is good. They build well on their secure knowledge base and are more mature in their attitude to their studies. They carry out investigations accurately and plot good quality graphs of their results. Most students are well on course to meet or exceed their target grades. Some higher attaining students appear to find the work lacking in challenge at times.

85. The quality of teaching is overall good in spite of the poor quality accommodation. Teachers display good subject knowledge and use it to good effect in their confident delivery and in their questions to assess students' understanding. Lessons are well planned, and are appropriately modified to meet the needs of all students. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks. In some lessons there is a small minority of students, both boys and girls, who quickly drift off focus, and this slows down the rate of learning for the great majority. Marking of students' work is inconsistent. There is no clearly applied marking policy. Target levels or grades are not evident in students' books, and marking rarely comments on the quality of the work in reference to the targets. This is particularly evident in Years 7 to 9.

86. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The subject has lacked stability in leadership in recent years, but in the short time since his appointment the new subject leader has produced a good development plan based on the departmental review of 2003, with key areas clearly prioritised. A new scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is being introduced, and the issue of the monitoring of students' progress is being addressed. The accommodation is poor and inadequate. Some lessons have to be taught in ordinary classrooms and all laboratories are in poor condition, with dilapidated furniture and shabby decoration. Teachers do their best to enliven the rooms with attractive and informative displays. Technical support is barely adequate and the storage and preparation areas are too small to meet demands.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Achievement in all years is satisfactory.
- Students respond well where lessons are engaging and well structured.

- Inappropriate behaviour by a small number of boys prevents them and other students from progressing as well as they should.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Good resources support learning.
- Insufficient explanation of lesson tasks prevents students from achieving as well as they could.
- Students are not sufficiently involved in the assessment of their work, so they do not always know how to improve.

Commentary

87. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Hardware and software have been updated, and, although serious problems with the network have been resolved, some difficulties still affect delivery of lessons. Good online resources support learning, and the National Strategy is raising standards. There is good use of the school intranet to provide schemes of work. The school has managed a difficult staffing situation well.

88. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004 were well above average, but these were based on the previous less demanding syllabus. Students' attainment on entry is below expectations and current standards of work are still below national expectations, although the National Strategy in Year 7 is beginning to raise standards. Students gain a range of basic ICT skills, such as creating presentations and inserting formula into spreadsheets. However, they do not use the acquired skills in other applications.

89. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. There was improvement in 2004 but results remained below average. These students had limited ICT experiences in Years 7 to 9. Girls achieved significantly better than boys. Current standards of work are still below average. Students can explain what organisations use ICT, and create simple documents for use in a business. They have less understanding of how ICT is used effectively in a range of situations.

90. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good lessons. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons in such a way that students can extend skills and knowledge in ICT. Good use of technology and helpful online resources support learning. However, lesson tasks are not always explained in sufficient detail, so students are unclear about what to do. The good lessons have structure and captivate the enthusiasm of students. In these lessons topics are presented in small units of work, so students are able to progress their learning in manageable stages. In some lessons weak management of the poor behaviour of some boys affects their progress and that of other students. Poor timing and pace prevent teachers from always conducting a final review of students' progress.

91. Students with SEN achieve as well as others, but the effectiveness of support staff varies. There is not enough differentiated material to allow higher attaining students to achieve as well as they can. Boys and girls make equally good progress. Assessment procedures do not involve students in setting or assessing their own targets, and there are no specific targets for each piece of work, so students do not know what to do to reach higher levels. The use of comments in marking to help students improve is inconsistent. Good use of word processing develops literacy skills, but there is not enough use of key words and related word walls. Numeracy skills are mixed, and opportunities are missed to check the validity of formulae.

92. Leadership and management by the subject leader are unsatisfactory. A lack of clear vision and underdeveloped assessment procedures hinder improvement in standards. There are no references to National Curriculum Levels or GCSE grades in classrooms. The revision of schemes of work is not fully completed. Greater emphasis

on constructive observations will secure more effective teaching and classroom management.

93. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with all students receiving separate ICT lessons. However, the amount of time in Years 9 and 10 and the double lessons in Years 10 and 11 have an adverse impact. The accommodation is good overall but the layout of one room prevents effective monitoring of student progress and classroom management.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

94. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Only very few subjects, such as geography and history, make good use of ICT to support students' learning. The number of computers distributed around the school is in line with national expectations. Difficulties in accessing ICT rooms in a number of subjects mean that students are not gaining sufficient experiences or competence in using ICT. There is no co-ordinated strategy or policy for the development or monitoring of how other subjects provide ICT experiences.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have shown a rising trend, with above average numbers achieving higher grades in recent years.
- Developments in teaching methods, especially the use of the internal intranet resource base, make for a good quality learning experience for most students and encourages high standards.
- The link between assessment, target setting and what to do to improve further is developing well and is made clear to students.
- Poor accommodation, the number of split classes, and inadequate ICT resources for teaching modern geography restrict the progress that can be made with some groups.
- Some unsatisfactory behaviour is leading to the underachievement of some students and constraining the progress in some classes.

Commentary

95. Since the last inspection the department has continued to improve standards. Teaching has flourished with the use of new technology, and good assessment procedures are contributing to better teaching and better learning. Pace and challenge in lessons remain an area for further attention.

96. Standards in geography have been consistently close to or above national expectations over many years. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2004, 79 per cent of students attained the expected Level 5, with 52 per cent attaining Level 6. For GCSE, two courses run. In the short course, results have risen consistently, so that in 2004 65 per cent attained a higher grade A*-C. For the full course the higher grade figure rose to 67 per cent, which is above the national average, with 27 per cent at A* or A. All students gained a pass grade. Girls are performing better in GCSE than are boys.

97. The standards of work seen in lessons are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good for GCSE, and this reflects the impact of new teaching methods. High standards are expected, but the department's marking policy is not always consistently applied. However, the policy on assessment and target setting is working well because it indicates to students where they currently stand and what needs to be done to improve. Targets now set are based on each student's record of attainment and progress.

98. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, and sometimes good or very good. Learning follows a similar pattern. This reflects the experience of the specialist staff, who are transforming their delivery methods aided by the new technology of intranet and whiteboards. Accommodation

issues mean that such facilities are available in only one room, so other groups taught at the same time cannot have access to modern resources. This handicaps both teaching and learning and is now an issue for the school. In some lessons learning is also restricted because pace and challenge are too slow.

99. Teaching and learning are most effective for GCSE because interesting lessons encourage a variety of learning strategies and develop greater interest, understanding and geographical skills. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are sometimes compromised by larger class sizes, a disproportionate number of split classes, many being taught in non-specialist rooms, and the need to share texts. Lower attaining students, especially in the mixed ability classes of Year 7, do not yet make the same progress as others since they do not receive sufficiently differentiated materials. Attitudes and behaviour are normally positive, confirming good relationships, but teaching and learning are compromised in some cases because this is not so.

100. The leadership and the management of the subject leader are both good and determined. There is a clear vision and expectation for the subject, shared by the specialist team. This includes the strides to improve the quality of teaching, particularly by the use of the technology, and the development of sophisticated intranet resources, including assessment tasks and geographical enquiries for students. Administration is good. It takes account of the findings of the internal review, updated schemes of work, analysis of examination results and student performance, and a well constructed improvement plan to raise standards. Fieldwork is a strong point and a valuable aid to student enquiry. Further advances are now held back because of insufficient resources and accommodation issues.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a consistently high quality of teaching, leading to good quality learning.
- The subject leader has a passion for his subject and a clear vision of its future development.
- Field trips are a very strong feature of the department.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Very good relationships within the classroom increase students' enjoyment and motivate them to succeed.
- Development of individual research and interactive learning are held back by limited access to ICT.
- The quality of marking and assessment is good, encouraging students and showing them how they can improve.

Commentary

101. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, and at the end of Year 9 they are above average. Having listened to the story of Hereward, a mixed ability Year 7 class enjoyed working together putting a series of cartoons of the account into sequence and adding their own description to link them together. This lively lesson, using a range of learning styles, developed the students' historical, literacy and interpersonal skills. Students make good progress from Year 7, because these skills are developed, practised and tested in interesting, challenging and informative lessons as the students move through the school. Strong support from teachers and teacher assistants ensures that lower attaining students make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, students' oral and

written responses show depth of understanding and reflect their increasing ability to select, organise and use relevant information. The most recent GCSE results were above average, with 70 per cent and 63 per cent A* to C grades on the full and short courses respectively, and 28 per cent of all students gaining A* and A grades.

102. As at the last inspection, achievement is good both in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use various ways to interest and motivate their students, thus ensuring that they are engaged and challenged and make progress. In one instance, Year 9 students had completed a well structured assessment task on the expansion of trade and industry. The students' knowledge and understanding, and their ability to analyse the relative merits of different sources of evidence, were then tested. The teaching and practising of examination techniques in Years 10 and 11 help to raise achievement. Students with SEN are well supported by teaching assistants working closely with the teachers.

103. The consistently high quality of teaching remains a strength, as at the last inspection. There is strong specialist knowledge and enthusiastic teaching of high quality, together with very good relationships. These ensure that students of all abilities gain in confidence and learn and achieve in a supportive, purposeful and enjoyable learning atmosphere. There is a clear desire to accommodate the preferred types of learning of all students, with the result that the needs of individuals are very well met. On the school's intranet, the department has built up a wide range of Powerpoint presentations on topics for all years, but these enhanced learning opportunities are severely restricted because of limited access to ICT. Most students settle quickly, take pride in their work, co-operate sensibly and ask and answer questions willingly. Teachers assess and mark students' work regularly in ways that encourage and help them to improve. Teachers provide support and guidance readily.

104. The department has a debating society and a history club which give students the opportunity to pursue their interest in the subject; these, together with the department's commitment to field trips as a way of bringing the subject alive, are a real strength. Be it the trip to Ironbridge in the early years or those made later to the battlefields and concentration camps in Europe, the displays and the students' comments are testimony to the fact that the visits not only foster an interest in the past but can have a profound impact on them as individuals.

105. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a passion for his subject, is innovative, and strives constantly for improvement. He has a stable, committed staff who are encouraged to develop their individual talents, work well together, and take advantage of opportunities to continue their professional development.

106. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been built on, but limited access to ICT still remains an issue.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average.

- The standard of teaching and of learning is very good.
- The leadership of the department is excellent.
- The school does not provide sufficient time to cover the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for all students in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

107. Although there has been significant improvement since the last inspection, the fact that the school does not allocate sufficient time to meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11 means that the overall improvement is only satisfactory.

108. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above those set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Students of all abilities are achieving well. Assignment tasks indicate that students have a good knowledge of the beliefs and practices of three religions. The standard of the written work produced is very good. Students respond well in the classroom, confidently expressing their own view on important issues and showing a sensitive understanding of other life styles and beliefs.

109. For a number of years the GCSE results have been well above the national average. There has been a steady increase in the number of students, both girls and boys, taking the examination. In 2004 not only were the A*-C grades well above the national average but all students achieved A*-G grades. A significant number of students obtained A* grades, especially in the short course GCSE. Comparisons with predicted grades indicate that the achievement of these students is very good.

110. Students currently in the examination groups in Years 10 and 11 are working at well above average standards. They are able to evaluate and reflect upon the issues discussed and to use their knowledge of the beliefs and customs of other religions well. For example, a Year 10 group was examining the way in which various religious groups engage in environmental activities. Students of all abilities are achieving well.

111. For the remaining students in Years 10 and 11 the absence of any significant religious education means that the very good foundation laid in Years 7 to 9 is not built upon, and standards are unsatisfactory. For these students achievement is unsatisfactory.

112. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject to plan lessons that have good pace and challenge. Classroom relationships are positively managed and suitable homework, which is well marked, is used to extend students' understanding of the subject. Resources are expertly used. In an excellent lesson with Year 8 a teacher used a wall display to encourage students to focus on the Sikh festival of Divali. As a result, students were interested and motivated. The quality of their written work is very good and they are able to discuss issues confidently in a mature and sensitive manner. The needs of SEN students are well met, with good structured learning materials. A lack of facilities prevents teachers from using ICT in the classroom.

113. An enthusiastic subject leader provides excellent leadership. He leads a talented team who have a clear vision for the future. Innovations, both by the school and the county, are enthusiastically embraced. A good example can be found in the religious education intranet site. Good use is made of external visits. The decision by the school to reduce the time allocation for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

114. Since the last inspection standards have improved and the number of students taking the examination course has increased. The teaching is consistently better. However, the recent reduction of curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 means that the school does not fully meet statutory requirements for religious education.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The hygiene standards in accommodation for food technology are very poor, which results in a clear breach of duty of care.
- The standards in GCSE food and electronics are well above average.
- There is excellent teaching in food technology, incorporating brisk pace and challenge.
- A committed team of specialists teach effectively, despite poor accommodation and inadequate technician support, and this results in good achievement in Years 10 to 11.
- Computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM) are not systematically taught in all years.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used too little as a learning tool in lessons.

Commentary

115. Progress in raising GCSE standards since the last inspection has been good. However, progress in addressing acute accommodation issues has been very poor.

116. At the end of Year 9, the standard of work shows students' achievement to be good. Teacher assessments for 2004 indicate well above average standards, but level descriptors were found to have been generously applied. On entry to the school, attainment is average, with students displaying a variable base of technological experience and skill. Overall, students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Standards achieved by the end of Year 11 are above average. Standards at GCSE in 2004 were well above average in food and electronics, above average in resistant materials, and average in textiles. Standards in graphic products were below average, as a direct consequence of unsettled staffing, but standards over the previous three years were consistently above average. Students did well in comparison with other school subjects. Taken as a whole, this represented good achievement for all ability groups, including students with SEN. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys, but girls do manage their GCSE coursework more efficiently and make better use of homework. In lessons, students explore and test their own design thinking, and they complete practical projects to a high standard. Limited access to ICT and deficiencies in resources lead to variable standards in the quality of research, testing and evaluation. The insufficiently developed CAD limits the enhancement of student design work in Key Stage 3 and 4. The provision for CAM is currently inadequate.

117. Overall, teaching is consistently good and is characterised by thoughtful planning and a good match to students' needs. In Years 7 to 9, despite good teaching, learning is only satisfactory as a result of the unsatisfactory attitudes to learning of a small group of boys. While management of students is good, there is not enough emphasis on robust approaches to the management of this small group, underpinned by equally robust whole-school expectations. In the excellent teaching in food, highly effective teaching methods are used to challenge students to think, apply their knowledge effectively, and

extend their understanding to new situations. Teachers' subject expertise is very good and is well used to construct course booklets which provide a framework for design thinking. There is too little use of extension tasks to raise standards further in line with students' ability. Teaching methods are sound despite inadequate ICT resources. Assessment is good, with good guidance to students and developing use of targets for improvement.

118. Leadership from the acting subject leader is good, with a pragmatic vision for the subject. A strong team of staff are committed to consolidating and further raising standards. Evaluation of teaching is satisfactory, and increasing use is made of data to monitor the performance both of students and of teachers. However, in Years 7 to 9 not enough emphasis is placed on sharing the good practice of the national strategy to raise standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Safety monitoring is sound but needs to be more rigorous. The school has not responded satisfactorily to requests related to routine care and maintenance. Proposals for vital refurbishment to remove hazards have not been acted upon by governors and senior managers over a number of years. This has led to clear breach of duty of care in view of the hygiene hazards that exist in rooms used for food technology. The quality of technical support is good but time allocation for food, textiles and workshops is inadequate.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in Year 11 is above expectations.
- Teaching and learning are at least good and sometimes very good.
- Students with SEN are well catered for. They respond well and are successful.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9, which has a core of basic skills, provides a firm foundation for learning.
- The subject leader is very supportive. The team appreciates this.
- Programmes of study do not contain sufficient differentiation and challenge for the most able students.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in two rooms used by the department.

Commentary

119. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress.

120. Attainment on entry is in line with expectations. By the end of Year 9 attainment is in line with expectations. Students are able to explore ideas and collect visual information that supports the development of their work. They begin to understand the ways in which they can convey ideas, and as a result of their developing knowledge and the new skills they have acquired their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory overall. A well structured programme of study supports most of the ability range and this includes students with SEN.

121. In 2004, A*-C pass grades in the full GCSE course were significantly above national averages; this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The short course results are not as high but the most able students move to the full course so that they can achieve a full GCSE in art and design. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is above expectations.

Sketchbooks are a good record of research, with a range of media and techniques. This is well structured and leads to successful pieces of work, of which most are of a good standard. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is therefore good overall.

122. Students with SEN are supported well. They have good access to learning and clearly enjoy what they do. More able students achieve according to their ability. The most able students are not given sufficient challenge. Boys and girls generally produce work of equal quality at the top of the ability range but there are more boys at the lower levels.

123. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good overall. Some teaching and learning is very good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are always well planned. They generally start by establishing the connections with previous work and the objectives for the lesson. Students are expected to make comments on the work of their peers as well as their own. This is a very informative process. Teachers demonstrate the processes to be used; in some lessons students carry out this task themselves. The curriculum is well matched to needs, containing a range of opportunities to work in both two and three dimensions. Assessment is informative; dialogue is evaluative. Students are confident in their approach and are supported by a caring and dedicated team of teachers. Lessons generally finish with a plenary session. This is an aspect that is underdeveloped and does not take some of the opportunities to reinforce the learning or celebrate success.

124. Leadership is good. Teachers appreciate the support given by the subject leader. There are informal arrangements for them to support each other in both innovative teaching practice and discipline matters. Management is satisfactory. The department has recently introduced a vocational art and design course that is appreciated by the students. Enrichment opportunities are limited. Some innovative ways of developing teaching and learning are taking place but they are not consistently applied. The monitoring of teaching is carried out through informal lesson observation as well as performance management. Teachers appreciate the opportunities to visit each other's lessons.

125. Accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. One of the art rooms is shared with the science department, and other subjects use the main art room. Opportunities for display are thus limited; the shared room is used more for science than for art and design. The remaining art room suffers from excessive heat during summer months due the expanse of windows that do not have satisfactory blinds.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of good teaching, students are keen to learn.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, so they achieve well.
- GCSE results are above average, with a high proportion of A* and A grades.
- More regular singing would add variety to lessons.

Commentary

126. The teacher assessments in 2004 for students at the end of Year 9 were too high. Inspection evidence finds them average. The GCSE results were above average and continued a rising trend. Almost half of those entered gained A* or A grades, with the small number of girls achieving a little better than the boys.

127. Standards are broadly average in Year 9 and this represents good achievement, because students enter Year 7 with underdeveloped musical skills. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good because of the high standard of teaching and the regular attendance at the extra-curricular activities. As students of all abilities work well together this makes a good contribution to their personal development and builds up their self-esteem and confidence.

128. Because teaching has improved very much since the previous inspection, students in Years 7 to 9 learn well. The pace, challenge and management of students ensure that they are motivated and work hard. Students work on musical elements and rhythm, improvisation and composition which provide a good foundation for examination work later on. By working in pairs and groups they establish good attitudes and behaviour. More regular singing would add variety to some lessons. Students are gradually being exposed to ICT since the recent arrival of six computers installed with music software. Assessment is much more effective than at the time of the previous inspection and is helping to raise standards further.

129. Students in Years 10 and 11 like music because of the very stimulating teaching taking place. The numbers have increased and a high standard of work is being encouraged. With emphasis on the basics of medieval music, Year 10 students confidently prepare group compositions in the dorian or mixolydian modes that effectively mirror early music. Year 11 students experiment with minimalist styles that tax their ingenuity in creating interesting pieces from limited musical material. Teaching is so effective that students become engrossed in their work. As these students are also instrumentalists this complements the work done in lessons.

130. Since the previous inspection the profile of music has risen, particularly in the last 12 months, because the new subject leader has made music more relevant to students. The new handbook and schemes of work are almost complete and this gives teachers a more focused way to plan lessons. The instrumental and vocal scholarships that have been funded by the arts college initiative have allowed more students to have professional training in performance. There has been a good improvement in teaching, learning and assessment, and in leadership and management, since the previous inspection. The department should now consolidate the work done so far and complete the review of the documentation to underpin the changes already being made.

Dance

Dance was lightly sampled. Teaching and learning were found to be excellent, with high standards achieved by all the students seen.

Drama

Drama was lightly sampled. Teaching and learning were found to be very good, with high standards achieved by all the students seen.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average in Years 10 and 11.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good and leads to focused learning.
- Leadership of a strong team of enthusiastic staff is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- Too little time is allocated to physical education in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

131. Much of the effective practice mentioned in the previous report has been maintained and good improvements have been made. These includes the employment of several young enthusiastic staff, the steady rise in standards, the increased numbers

taking the GCSE course, and the improved extra-curricular provision. Although teaching is good overall, it is less consistent than at the time of the previous inspection.

132. GCSE results have been above average for several years and were well above average in 2002 and 2003. The number of students taking the examination in 2004 almost doubled and results were above average. Most students achieved higher grades than predicted and the achievement of girls was better than that of boys. Present GCSE students in Years 10 and 11 attain standards that are above average, and their achievement is good. They have high practical expertise and they take advantage of the way in which teachers link the practical elements of the course to the theoretical aspects.

133. Students have inconsistent experiences before joining the school but mostly attain below average standards. In reaching average standards by the end of Year 9, most students have made good progress and achieved well. Boys and girls build a secure knowledge of fitness and are able to warm up effectively and independently. Students gain this understanding through teachers' insistence on thorough warm-up activities at the start of every lesson. Many students are able to make constructive comments on their own and others' performances. Students in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards in core physical education lessons. Their achievement is good because they have continued to build their performance and evaluative skills in the very short time provided. The achievement of a small minority of boys in Years 9 to 11 is unsatisfactory in both core and GCSE lessons. They do not have the enthusiastic attitudes or the good relationships with their teachers shown by the great majority of students in the school. They are inattentive and disruptive. Individual students and teams achieve high standards in district, county and regional competitions in a wide variety of sports. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national average and they benefit from the excellent opportunities offered by their teachers.

134. Students' good learning is directly attributable to mostly good and sometimes very good teaching. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and make learning interesting and challenging. Their subject expertise is very good, allowing them to provide high quality demonstrations on which students model their skills. These visual images are particularly effective in helping students with SEN and those for whom English is a second language to achieve as well as their peers. Where learning is less effective, teachers become preoccupied with organising activities and managing behaviour to the detriment of improving students' basic techniques. Teachers do not consistently plan different tasks for the range of abilities in the mixed ability teaching groups. Although management of the department is good, there has been insufficient accurate monitoring of teaching to identify these weaknesses. The extensive indoor facilities have a positive impact on curriculum planning. However, theory lessons are taught all over the school, which is inconvenient and considerably hinders learning.

135. The subject leader provides very good leadership and has built a strong team of teachers who are fully committed to improving standards. Monitoring of results, target setting and assessment are good, and students in all years understand what they need to do to improve. Students who are not able to participate in all activities because they take a second modern foreign language are denied equal access to the curriculum.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies was lightly sampled. Teaching and learning were found to be satisfactory and students were making satisfactory progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum are satisfactory.
- All students have the opportunity to be involved in community service in Year 10.
- GCSE results are above average.
- Management is efficient, especially in the co-ordination of the various subject strands.
- Leadership is good, enthusiastic and sets high expectations.
- Systems for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of standards are not yet firmly in place.

Commentary

136. In Years 7 to 9, citizenship is delivered through PSHE, history, geography and religious education, English, science and design and technology. In Years 10 and 11 all students follow a GCSE short course in citizenship.

137. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average. Over the three years students acquire knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. They develop skills of enquiry and communication, and of participation and responsible action, in a range of ways in and beyond the classroom. Students in a mixed ability Year 7 class, working in groups, enthusiastically discussed issues that arise in a family with regard to a daughter's personal safety and responsibility. They presented their findings and were able to analyse and understand the points of view of other family members. After visiting a special school, students spoke in an assembly of their experience and the impact it had had on them. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average. A well chosen GCSE course which includes community service as coursework ensures that the knowledge and skills of all three strands of citizenship are acquired, developed and recognised. This is reflected in above average GCSE results, namely 68 per cent A* to C, 95 per cent A* to G and a very creditable 19 per cent A* and A grades.

138. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students study topics about which they have limited prior knowledge and make progress as expected in acquiring knowledge and understanding. Communication and reflective skills are well developed, encouraged by discussions as a class or in small groups. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is above average. Participation in community service designated as GCSE coursework motivates students, because, as well as the sense of achievement and increased confidence it can bring, their active contribution to the welfare of members of the community is recorded and recognised in their GCSE assessment. A strong team of experienced teachers use a range of approaches to match different abilities to ensure that all students make progress.

139. Overall, the quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and resourced and, wherever appropriate, encourage students to become actively involved and to put forward their points of view. Teachers have good

relationships with their classes, manage them well and create a good learning atmosphere. Most students have a positive attitude to the subject and work co-operatively with enthusiasm. However, the marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not help them in knowing what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work.

140. Students have the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the democratic processes. The school has active year councils which feed into a school council. Students are voted on to the councils, feel proud, and take their responsibilities seriously. Council members discuss issues raised by students, research them, draw up action plans and, through the school council,

present their findings to the headteacher. Information is fed back to the form groups. The councils have dealt with issues such as the state of toilets, litter, the introduction of vending machines, smoking and uniform, and organising fund-raising activities for charity. The school recently gave a presentation at the Schools' Council UK conference.

141. Leadership and management are good. Provision in citizenship is at present satisfactory, as parts of the course in Years 7 to 9 are still being formalised and evaluated. The most appropriate method of reporting to parents is being discussed, but there is every indication that citizenship in its broadest sense will flourish in the school over time under the committed, enthusiastic leadership and skilful management of the subject leader.

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. Most subjects were not sufficiently reported in the previous report to make it possible to clearly identify and quantify improvement.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. National comparative data for 2004 was not available at the time of the inspection.

Level 3 GCE A 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	20	100	98.6	40.0	50.2	87.0	87.5
Biology	10	90.0	96.4	20.0	39.2	62.0	78.6
Business studies	17	82.4	98.7	0	36.8	50.6	80.1
Chemistry	4	100	97.6	25.0	49.0	85.0	84.9
Drama	6	100	99.5	0	40.1	56.7	83.6
English language	7	100	99.4	14.3	36.3	77.1	80.9
English literature	9	100	99.5	11.1	46.5	68.9	86.5
French	1	100	98.8	0	51.5	60.0	87.6
Design and technology	23	95.7	97.8	21.7	35.0	68.7	77.9
General studies	11	81.8	94.7	9.1	31.0	49.1	73.1
Geography	10	100	98.7	10.0	44.5	66.0	84.0
German	1	100	98.4	0	47.9	80.0	84.8
History	16	100	99.0	6.3	44.6	65.0	84.6
Information technology	10	90.0	95.6	20.0	24.6	62.0	69.5
Mathematics	8	100	96.7	62.5	55.6	92.5	88.8
Music	5	100	98.8	20.0	38.9	76.0	81.1
Other social studies	19	94.7	97.4	21.1	42.7	64.2	81.8
Physics	14	100	96.7	50.0	44.6	87.1	81.7
Religious studies	13	100	98.8	38.5	46.7	83.1	85.6
Sociology	40	100	98.2	37.5	44.3	81.5	83.6
Sports/physical education Studies	8	100	98.0	0	30.9	47.5	75.2

Level 3 GCE AS Level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100	80.1	0	23.7	40.0	29.9
Biology	1	0	65.2	0	11.1	0	20.6
Business studies	7	85.7	76.4	0	16.3	24.3	26.2
Chemistry	2	100	72.7	0	13.9	30.0	24.1
English language	1	100	82.9	0	17.5	40.0	28.7
English literature	3	100	85.9	0	19.1	33.3	30.2
French	1	100	78.2	0	18.9	20.0	27.6
Design and technology	3	66.7	74.9	0	15.1	23.3	25.3
General studies	60	46.7	73.9	1.7	17.8	12.3	25.7
Geography	1	100	74.3	0	19.8	20.0	26.5
German	1	100	81.5	0	19.3	20.0	28.9

Information technology	3	100	67.0	33.3	10.9	36.7	21.4
Mathematics	2	100	61.9	0	17.1	30.0	22.1
Music	1	100	86.5	0	21.4	40.0	30.7
Other social studies	9	100	69.7	22.2	16.7	35.6	24.1
Physics	3	100	68.6	0	14.4	30.0	22.7
Sociology	5	60.0	71.8	0	18.4	24.0	25.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject was English Language and Literature.

English

Provision in English language and literature is **good**.

There is no comment in the report on improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment at A Level (A2) in 2004 was very good.
- Teachers are knowledgeable, and the range of activities effectively helps students to build their knowledge and understanding.
- Students have a good grasp of their work and most can make sustained and informed responses.
- The quality of leadership and of management is good.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory in a minority of classes in Year 12.
- As yet there are no schemes of work for Sixth Form English.

Commentary

142. Attainment at this stage, for both English literature and English language and literature, is better than in the last inspection, and in 2004 the pass rate was 100 per cent for both specifications. There was better attainment at the higher grades for English language & literature, with a number of students gaining grade A.

143. The observation of work during inspection showed that the standard of written work across all groups is good. Tasks set are sufficiently challenging and students are invited to give structured responses, although marking is not consistent. Most students are able to use the vocabulary, structures and grammar of standard English accurately in formal and informal situations and they are also becoming familiar with a wide range of literature. Students are encouraged to produce independent research, much of which is of a high standard, for example, the transformation of 'Othello' into a newspaper article about a football manager or 'Lord of the Rings' into a travel documentary.

144. In the Sixth Form most teaching is good. Teachers' specialist knowledge is impressive and they support students' independent learning and interest by a good range of resources produced in the school. However, although computers have been introduced to the department since the last inspection, they are in only one classroom and booking arrangements have to be made. A strong feature of most lessons is the way that students show an interest in the activities and enjoy English. Most students speak confidently about their work and show an assurance appropriate for this stage of the

course. In a minority of classes, though, the speaking skills of the most able are not being fully stretched and there is some misbehaviour. Learning is enriched by trips and visits to the theatre, a debating society, and the Sixth Form magazine, 'The Sixth Sense'. The school library has only a small selection of critical texts and little on language, but particularly praiseworthy are the contributions to a poetry anthology, 'Future Voices from Staffordshire', by Ounsdale students currently in Year 13.

145. Leadership and management of English in the Sixth Form are good. The subject leader has a clear vision, which is outlined in the English department handbook. This is still at draft stage but it clearly identifies policies, responsibilities and roles.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

146. Language and literacy across the curriculum are on the whole satisfactory. However, communication as a key skill is not taken seriously by the students, behaviour is inappropriate, and learning is limited. This is not helped by the lessons taking place in the Sixth Form common room. There is evidence of pockets of good practice in language and literacy, notably with the emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary, structured writing for extended pieces, and drafting and re-drafting, but co-ordination of literacy is at the very earliest of stages.

French and German

One lesson of each was seen. Teaching was good in both and in spite of standards in German being below average all students achieved well.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus subjects were mathematics and physics.

Mathematics

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A Level courses. One lesson of further mathematics was observed. The quality of teaching, learning and achievement in this lesson was very good.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Good use of homework extends learning opportunities.
- Use of ICT within lessons is limited.
- Good relationships between teachers and students enhance learning experiences.

Commentary

147. External results at AS Level have shown variation over the last few years, with no discernible trend apparent. Results across most years show that students are attaining better than others nationally. This is partly a result of the policy which, until recently, allowed students access to the course with a grade C at GCSE, so that attainment on entry was below the national average. This may also account for the poor retention rate of the course and the poor take up of the A2 course by those completing AS mathematics. This policy has recently been changed and there is a noticeable improvement in the retention rates this year. The success rate at the end of Year 13 is good, with all the students passing the A Level examination and showing good achievement. Numbers of students sitting both the AS and A Level examination were too small to make it possible to note differences between girls and boys,

148. Standards seen in mathematics lessons and in a scrutiny of workbooks are above average. These standards were exemplified by an AS lesson in Year 12 when pupils were

able to manipulate algebraic formulae with ease, and by a Year 13 lesson when students were able to take information from Pascal's triangle and predict, from deduction, the subsequent and extended lines of the triangle. The survey of the quantity and quality of students' written work showed that attainment is above average. There is no discernible difference in the work of boys and girls. Overall, achievement in both Year 12 and Year 13 is good and shows good improvement since the last inspection.

149. Teaching and learning are at least good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well planned, with variety and pace, and teachers are actively involved throughout. They encourage students to learn by asking them probing, open-ended questions which give a greater depth of understanding of the topic being studied. For example, with help, a Year 12 group successfully derived for themselves the formula for the integration of an algebraic function. Homework is set as a logical extension to the learning experience of lessons. All work is marked well, with helpful and constructive comments. Little use of ICT with classes was observed, but one student took great care to explain how work on curves of differential equations had been produced from software within the department.

150. Students enjoy their lessons and offer this information freely. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of good humour, enthusiasm and solid, hard work. Students remain on task for the whole of the lesson and their responses to questioning show that they understand the work as they go along. Perceptive questions from students also indicate good understanding of the lesson. Books are neat and give an indication of the quantity and high standard of work which has been produced this term. Students are kind to one another and are prepared to offer each other assistance if required. No one feels uneasy about offering an answer which could be incorrect.

151. Leadership and management are good. There is a shared philosophy within the department and this allows a seamless delivery by teachers throughout the course. Schemes of work are in place, and the management of the teachers who teach different aspects of the A Level and AS Level courses is good. Good analysis of students' progress allows the staff to provide appropriate support as required. Resources are generally satisfactory, although the poor standard of accommodation for some lessons and lack of ICT facilities is not helpful to the learning process.

152. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Numeracy across the curriculum

153. Students' mathematical skills in the Sixth Form are satisfactory. This allows them to make progress in other areas of the school. In physics, for example, students are able to calculate the half-life of an isotope in radioactive decay, whilst in chemistry they are able to calculate molar constants. Students in design and technology are also able to use their skills in accurate measurement and calculation for design projects. In all subjects sampled, students were able to interpret data presented graphically and produce graphs from their own data.

Physics

Provision for physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 13 are above average and students are achieving well.
- Recruitment and retention rates are good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Accommodation is poor.
- The lack of a range of ICT facilities is limiting the development of teaching and learning styles.

Commentary

154. In the 2004 AS Level examinations just over half of the 14 students achieved or exceeded their target grade and only one failed to achieve a pass grade. Results in the A Level examinations in 2004 were above the national average. Almost half the students gained A/B grades and all students successfully gained pass grades. The results were better than in 2003 and continued the steady upward trend over recent years.

155. Standards in Year 12 are average. Students have quite a wide spread of ability and take some time to adjust to the increased demands of the course. In particular, students not taking Post-16 mathematics do need particular support in the early stages but are making steady progress. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and their work rate is good. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students are enjoying their studies and display mature attitudes to work. Their files are well organised, with clear, succinct notes supplemented by a range of good quality photocopied background materials. Students respond well to the higher intellectual demands and are applying their knowledge and skills acquired in Year 12 very confidently, such as quickly designing 'mind experiments' and using their knowledge of Newton's Laws to develop understanding of circular motion.

156. Achievement is good overall through Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 achieve satisfactorily, making a successful transition to the increased demands of the AS course. Nearly all are well on course to reach their target grade. In Year 13 students are increasingly confident of their knowledge base and approach their studies with considerable maturity. They research their subject matter well and tackle mathematical problems very efficiently.

157. The quality of teaching is very good in both years. Teachers display great confidence and understanding of their subject, and this generates confidence in the students. The teachers have high standards and plan lessons very thoroughly to get the best out of the students. They have high expectations and involve students in all stages of the development of the subject matter. Relationships are very good and the teaching has a relaxed but very focused tutorial style. Students respond very well to this approach, and this contributes very significantly to their learning.

158. The subject is well led and the team of teachers is dedicated to high standards. The curriculum is well planned and regular assessment of students' work ensures that they are well aware of their progress in relation to their target grades. Recruitment and retention rates are buoyant and the subject has a justifiably high profile in the school. Accommodation is, however, poor and inadequate, with some lessons having to be taught out of laboratories. Resources are generally adequate but the absence of a range of ICT equipment, both hardware and software, is seriously limiting the development of more progressive teaching and learning styles.

159. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. Results have continued to rise, the quality of teaching is very good, and student numbers have risen steadily. Accommodation remains poor and the development of teaching and learning is hindered by the lack of computer-based equipment within the department.

Chemistry and biology

One lesson was observed in each of these subjects. The quality of the teaching was good in both lessons and students are making good progress in relation to their prior attainment and current targets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There were no focus subjects in this area, but computing was sampled; teaching is satisfactory and ensures that students can achieve in line with their abilities.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

160. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Students do not have sufficient opportunities in other subjects to use ICT to enhance their learning. There is very limited access to computers in resource areas to support coursework and independent learning. There is no policy to develop and manage the use of ICT in Sixth Form subjects. This means that students do not have enough opportunities to extend their experiences and competence in ICT, and the quality of their learning and work is reduced.

HUMANITIES

The focus subjects were sociology and religious education. Geography and psychology were also sampled.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain above average standards and their achievement is good.
- Consistently good teaching is characterised by very good subject expertise.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- The accommodation for lessons not taught in the subject base is poor.
- Students do not regularly use ICT.

Commentary

161. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The number of higher grades attained at A Level has increased over time, and most students have achieved well in relation to their prior learning. In 2004, boys' and girls' results were very similar and both attained a higher than average number of A and B grades. This is a great improvement on previous years when boys' achievements were well below those of girls. Students achieve better in sociology than in most other subjects.

162. Present students in Year 13 are attaining above average standards and their achievement is good. Year 12 students work with interest but are more reliant on their

teachers. Higher ability students are confident and articulate and extend their thinking beyond the initial topic. They link their answers well to the question and demonstrate good evaluative skills. However, a few students accept only one perspective and do not always challenge or debate sufficiently. Students' files are organised and presented very well. They take pride in their work. Lower attaining students lack depth in their essays, especially in the evaluative content.

163. The consistently good teaching and students' very positive attitudes lead to focused learning. Teaching has clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students at the start of lessons. Interesting resource booklets have been developed to provide a structured framework for learning. These are particularly useful for Year 12 students and for the less able in Year 13. When booklets are used as the only learning resource, students are not given enough opportunities to carry out their own research and investigations. Teachers have very good subject expertise and are able to deal with students' responses in a way that further informs learning. There is a very good level of engagement in all lessons. Students are attentive and

want to succeed. However, some students do not undertake sufficient independent reading and research and this limits their progress. Marking is thorough and gives students a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. Teachers have a simple but effective way of checking students' understanding in lessons.

164. Leadership and management are good and ensure clear educational direction. The analysis of assessments, performance data and results is used effectively to ensure that individual students reach their potential and to guide future planning. Although the three teachers work very well together and share their good practice informally, there is not enough regular monitoring of teaching. When lessons are taught in rooms other than the subject base, learning is significantly hindered by the inappropriate accommodation.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject well to raise standards.
- The leadership of the subject is excellent.
- Students achieve higher grades than predicted.
- Limited use of ICT in teaching and learning hinders the development of independent learning skills.

Commentary

165. In 2003 A Level results were in line with the national average. No national comparisons are available for the AS Level results. Students at both levels achieved grades above those predicted. No national comparisons are yet available for 2004 but there was an overall improvement in the grades obtained.

166. The current Year 12 and 13 groups are producing work that is well above average. This is particularly so in Year 13. Students have a very good understanding of both the modules being covered. They are able to use specialised language well and produce essays that show very good evaluative skills. Their understanding of the complex philosophical teaching of such people as Hume on miracles is very good. Likewise, their understanding of source criticism is very good. Year 12 students were comparing the way in which both Matthew and Mark used the parables of Jesus in their teaching. Students in both years are achieving well and are on target for higher than predicted grades.

167. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their experience and their excellent knowledge of the subject to challenge students to produce work of a high quality. They use a good variety of teaching methods to make lessons interesting. Carefully prepared tasks are well marked, with very good feedback. The syllabus is very well structured but at times the students find the workload very heavy, especially in the source criticism section. Students are encouraged to do their own research, but there is a heavy reliance on lengthy reproduced extracts from textbooks. Although the school has an excellent religious education intranet site students do not yet use it enough.

168. The very good leadership of the subject is reflected in the growing number of students taking the course. Students appreciate the support they are given, in particular the way in which assignments are well marked, with good feedback. Regular departmental reviews are carried out and the school has been commended by the local authority for its high standard of work.

169. This subject was not fully reported on in the last report.

Geography

The teaching seen was good or very good. The quality of learning follows these standards, and the department is good at adding value to students' prior attainment. Fieldwork and developing independence in learning are strong points.

Psychology; government and politics

One lesson in each was seen. Teaching and learning were at least good and students made good progress. Students had very good attitudes.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on GCE AS and A Level food technology. Product design at AS and A Level were sampled. Both teaching and learning are good with students responding well to challenging design briefs.

Food technology

Provision in food technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Despite the very poor accommodation, good standards are achieved at both AS and A Level as a result of challenging teaching.
- All students show an enthusiasm for problem solving and manufacturing; they analyse design briefs thoroughly and develop a good range of ideas and solutions.
- Students demonstrate very good independent learning skills.
- The provision of ICT resources is totally inadequate to meet fully the requirements of the AS and A2 syllabuses.

Commentary

170. Results in AS and A Level in 2004 were good. National comparisons are difficult in view of small cohort sizes. Standards of work seen are above average, and the achievement of all students is good. There are no differences in achievement across ability or gender groups. In lessons, students use knowledge and skills effectively to tackle increasingly demanding problems. Analytical thinking is sound and is systematically applied to the exploration and development of new products. Students make good notes and use them to good effect when researching and recording essential knowledge. Students successfully test products and their performance against established criteria. However, the absence of direct access to ICT in practical areas hinders the development of more advanced testing and evaluation in line with good commercial practice.

171. Attainment on entry to the AS Level course is above average. In all aspects of work, students display a positive desire to learn and extend their manufacturing skills and understanding. They are self-motivated, show initiative, and demonstrate good independent learning skills when solving problems. In practical work students

demonstrate safe practice and take full responsibility for their work. As a consequence, achievement is consistently good.

172. Overall, teaching is very good. The subject command of teachers is very secure, and high quality demonstrations of skill and technique ensure that students know how to design and make a range of products successfully. Challenge and brisk pace are features of all lessons.

Very good emphasis is placed on encouraging students to try new ideas and to persevere when faced with a tough challenge. Multicultural influences are well integrated into all aspects of students' work. The lack of immediate access to ICT hinders the extension of teaching methods. Assessment of coursework is thorough, and students are given good guidance for improvement.

173. Leadership is good, with a very clear view of priorities for the consolidation of standards. Day-to-day management of practical areas is good despite the inadequate technician time available. Since the last inspection, both AS and A Level courses have been very successfully established. However, the school's failure to respond to inadequacies in accommodation identified in the last inspection has led to a clear breach of duty of care. This factor, combined with unsatisfactory access to ICT, hinders the rate of students' progress and the consolidation of standards of a highly successful course.

BUSINESS

There were no focus subjects in this area.

Business studies

One lesson was seen, where teaching and learning were only satisfactory as a result of students' poor motivation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject was art and design. Music and performing arts were also sampled.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning, some of which is very good, is exemplified by intellectual as well as technical challenge.
- The critical analysis of students' work is a significant feature of most lessons.
- Mature leadership creates a good ethos within the department.
- All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- There is an appropriate curriculum that interests and engages students. They clearly enjoy what they do.
- There is a lack of investment in ICT.
- There is little evidence of engagement with spiritual and moral issues within the curriculum.

Commentary

174. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. The number of higher grades (A-B) is in line with national figures. The average points score is also in line with levels achieved nationally. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Students do not have a study area where they can get on with their work outside their timetabled lessons.

175. Attainment at the end of Year 12 is in line with expectations. Graphic skills are clearly being developed and students respond well to the challenge of the programme. Achievement in Year 12 is therefore good. All students are supported well according to their needs. At this stage differences between the work of the boys and girls are negligible. Attainment at the end of Year 13 is in line with expectations. Students are encouraged to think deeply about their work and carry out in-depth research. They have mastered a good range of techniques and processes, and, although there is a wide ability range, the nature of the programme enables all to succeed.

Some of this success comes from the challenge of the critical analysis, a significant feature of the programme. Students have to present their work to the class, accept constructive criticism from their peers, and respond appropriately to the ideas that emerge. These are very successful sessions. Achievement in the Sixth Form is therefore good overall.

176. The quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form is at least good and some is very good. There are a number of important features. Projects challenge students to think deeply and try new materials and processes. Teachers support this by demonstrations as well as by challenging the students' thinking. Teachers' knowledge is good. They support group discussion and give additional references for further research opportunities. From discussions with students it is clear that their learning is very secure. The quality of assessment in the Sixth Form is good. It is detailed and informative. Regular critical analysis of work is carried out through peer review. A positive result from this process is the series of written comments that students collect. These are pasted into their sketchbooks for future reflection. Research is thorough and appropriate skills are developed. The quality of the curriculum in the Sixth Form is good. The programme offered, supported by very effective teaching, provides an interesting and engaging curriculum that students clearly enjoy.

177. Leadership is good. Teaching groups are shared amongst the department, and the co-ordination of this arrangement is good. The sharing of teaching strategies that takes place in earlier key stages, and the challenge placed on students, is extended at this level. Mature leadership maintains a solid foundation of standards and expectations. The team works well together. Innovation is achieved through a balance of experience and youthful enthusiasm for the subject. Management is good. All curriculum documentation is in place. Curriculum enrichment is good. There is a lack of investment in ICT within the department. Spiritual and moral aspects of the curriculum are not strong features of the work within lessons.

Music and performing arts

One lesson in each was seen. Numbers were small but students' attitudes to learning were excellent and they achieved very well as a result of very good and excellent teaching.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

There were no focus subjects in this area.

Physical education

AS and A2 courses are now well established and standards are rising. Teaching was very good in the lesson seen, and students are encouraged to be independent learners. There is no timetabled physical education for those not taking the full course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There were no focus subjects in this area.

Health and social care GNVQ

The course provides a route for students to continue education and progress to the next level, but in spite of good teaching the students' poor motivation and the lack of work placements limit progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth Form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the Sixth Form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is	3	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	4
Cost effectiveness of the Sixth Form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved	3	3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3	3
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	4
The quality of education provided by the school	3	3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3	3
Accommodation and resources	6	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	3	4
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school	4	4
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3	4
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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