

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHFIELD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Kettering

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122113

Headteacher: Mrs C M Pinder

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 January 2005

Inspection number: 272629

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18 years
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	963
School address:	Lewis Road Kettering Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN15 6HE
Telephone number:	01536513063
Fax number:	01536 518487
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Groome
Date of previous inspection:	27 April – 1 May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Southfield School for Girls has foundation status, and was formerly Grant Maintained. It is located on the south side of Kettering, Northamptonshire, and provides education for 963 girls, aged 11 to 18 years, of whom 137 are in the sixth form. It is of average size for a secondary school. Sixth form provision is through a consortium of schools. The girls come from Kettering and from very many villages and 46 primary schools in the locality. One admission criterion is the allocation of up to 30 per cent of school places to students whose homes are outside the town of Kettering itself. The school is very popular and the numbers of students have increased by one third since the last inspection in 1998. A small minority of students have minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Indian sub-continent. No students are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of students who claim entitlement to a free school meal is below average. Students have a very wide range of social backgrounds and, overall, the socio-economic profile of students is typical of that of other secondary schools. The number of students identified by the school as having special educational needs is broadly average. Average numbers also have statements of special need; most of these have learning difficulties, but some have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few have physical impairments. The percentage of students who joined or left the school other than at the usual ages of 11 or 16, is below the national levels of mobility. Students' abilities span the full range but their attainment on entry to the school is above average in Years 7 and 8, and broadly average in other year groups. The school has the specialist status of a sports college and holds the Sportsmark Award. It is a centre for a school sports coordinator partnership with local primary and secondary schools, and provides opportunities for talented junior athletes. There is planning to increase the use of accommodation and facilities by the community for sports activities. Enormous difficulties occurred in 2003-4 when the buildings and facilities were contaminated by asbestos. This led to the school being housed in buildings on different sites for several months, followed by accommodation in many temporary buildings on the main site until the summer term 2004, when regular buildings were progressively reoccupied; little teaching and learning were possible in specialist accommodation for much of the school year. Almost all resources, equipment, records and most documentation were lost. The buildings have now been refurbished and new facilities are fully in use.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Lead inspector	
12682	Mr J B Griffin	Lay inspector	
14596	Dr A B Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education
32115	Mr J S Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Work-related learning
31693	Mr P T Hanafin	Team inspector	Art
11969	Mr J Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology Business (sixth form)
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics
15312	Mrs K Lord	Team inspector	Physical education
1994	Ms H A Olds	Team inspector	History Citizenship
12276	Mr T I Payne	Team inspector	Music
10941	Ms R Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
3731	Mr W G Robson	Team inspector	English
6432	Dr V M Sewter	Team inspector	Science
11300	Mr B R Smith	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Ltd

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	24
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	27
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	55

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Southfield School for Girls overcame extraordinary difficulties last year. The selfless dedication and highly professional commitment of the headteacher and staff enabled the school to overcome, in the most impressive way, a crisis arising from the loss of use of all buildings and learning resources from contamination by asbestos. Despite all the setbacks of last year, girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds are achieving well, and standards are above the national average. The teaching and learning are good and much is very good. The headteacher's leadership is very good, and management is equally very good. Having overcome the worst circumstances imaginable in which to sustain a good quality of education, **the school continues to be effective** and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in most subjects, and very well in history and modern foreign languages. Year 11 students attained well above average results in GCSE examinations last year.
- The teaching is good, overall; much is of very good quality and enables students to learn well.
- The headteacher's leadership is very good; the school's management is very effective.
- The school's ethos is very good, and reflected in students' very positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships; they are very well cared for.
- The rate of students' attendance has fallen to a level below the national rate.
- The school's specialist status as a sports college is supporting achievement and enriching students' experience very well, but poor accommodation for physical education and sport currently restricts further development.
- Curricular development across Years 10 to 13 has been set back by last year's difficulties, and there are insufficient vocational learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11.
- Although the school has now gained new resources for information and communication technology (ICT), these are not yet used extensively enough across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection in April 1998, the school has improved considerably. Standards have risen, despite exceptional difficulties in giving students an effective education last year. The quality of teaching and learning is good and often better. The issues of the last inspection have been very effectively tackled. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen and GCSE examination results were well above the national average in 2004. Standards in science have greatly improved. The teaching of mathematics is now good. Governors are now centrally involved in planning developments, and the school has bid successfully to become a specialist college for sport. Students with special educational needs are now well provided for. Statutory omissions identified in 1998 are largely met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

GCSE and sixth form results for 2004 are published, but they are not yet nationally validated. 2004 Y9 National Curriculum test results are not yet published, but reference is made to them below.

Girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well, overall. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly typical of those found nationally. By the end of Year 9, combined subject results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were above the national average, compared with results in all schools and in similar schools. Results in science have improved since the 1998 inspection, and were well above average in this subject in 2003. In the three subjects tested, English,

mathematics and science, results improved further in 2004. The trend in performance to 2003 was fully in line with the rising national trend. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, standards were above average compared with those in all schools and in similar schools. In 2004, results rose and the school gained its best ever performance in the percentage of students who attained five or more A* to C grades, and the school exceeded its targets. The trend in performance was above the national rate of improvement. Students gain results in French and history above those that they gain in their other examination subjects. Results in 2003 and 2004 in design and technology were well below those gained in other subjects. Few students attained GCSE grades of C or higher in ICT in 2003, but results were close to the national average in 2004. In the sixth form, students begin advanced courses in Year 12 often with modest GCSE examination results and go on to achieve well. Results of advanced courses are average, overall.

Students' personal development is very good. The vast majority has very positive attitudes to school and behaves very well. Relationships are very good. The provision made for students' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good, overall.** Although the vast majority of students attends school regularly, some parents do not ensure that their children attend regularly enough.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the school gives students a good quality of education. The teaching is good and often very good. It enables students from all backgrounds to learn well. The curriculum has a good range of courses, except for the lack of vocational opportunities in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for the enrichment of students' learning outside the timetabled curriculum are very good. Students are very well cared for, and support and guidance for them to improve the quality of their work are effective. Links with parents are generally good, and links with other schools and colleges are effective, although less so for Years 10 and 11. Community links are satisfactory, and improving rapidly through the increasing range of sports college activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good, overall. The lead given by the headteacher and her senior colleagues is very effective. Governors contribute well. They are interested, very committed to the school and lead development planning directly. However, some statutory requirements are not in place. Students do not receive their full entitlement to design and technology in Years 7 to 9, nor to ICT in Years 10 and 11. The requirements for subjects to use ICT to support teaching and learning are not met for many subjects. Not all students receive the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day. Sixth formers' entitlement to religious education is not yet in place. Nevertheless, **management is very good** and overcame, through great efficiency and much hard work, the major problems that, last year, threatened the quality of students' education.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally well satisfied with the quality of education and the standards that their children achieve. Some want to be better informed about developments and their children's progress. Students have a very positive view of the school and the vast majority enjoys attending it. A very large majority expects high standards of behaviour, but students recognise not all maintain these standards. However, they say that the school tackles misbehaviour and the rare incidents of bullying by a small minority of girls, directly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the attendance of the minority of students who do not attend regularly enough.
- Extend the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, with particular regard to vocational and work-related opportunities, and plan for curricular development across Years 10 to 13.
- Extend the opportunities for all students to use ICT to support teaching and learning in many subjects.
- Improve the poor accommodation for sport.
- Identify further the needs of the sixth form in planning.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Meet National Curriculum requirements for design and technology in Years 7 to 9, and for ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that every student receives the opportunity for an act of collective worship each day.
- Give sixth form students their entitlement to religious education.

SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is effective. Students achieve well and learn successfully to reach national average standards on advanced courses from the very good teaching that they receive. They have very good opportunities for personal development, and behave with impressive responsibility and maturity. Sixth form leadership and management are good, and day-to-day management is very efficient and effective. Standards and the quality of education have improved since the 1998 inspection, except for the accommodation for sport, which is unsatisfactory for sixth form students. The education provided is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well and reach, at least, the standards that might reasonably be expected of them.
- The teaching is very good and students develop very well the skills to learn independently.
- Students act most responsibly towards younger members of the school and have very mature and positive attitudes to learning.
- Accommodation for sport for the sixth form is inadequate.
- School planning for the future development of the sixth form should be extended.

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 literature and English language is good . Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes result in good achievement. In French , provision is very good . The teaching and learning are very good, and students achieve well to attain above average standards.
Mathematics	Good . Standards are improving and all students have passed advanced examinations in recent years. Good teaching encourages independent learning which has produced good achievement.
Science	Provision in biology is very good . Students respond very well to very good teaching and achieve very well.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Satisfactory . Results are below the national average but students' achievement is satisfactory because of knowledgeable, challenging teaching.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good . Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
Visual and performing arts and media	There is good provision in art and design . Students achieve well because they are well taught and their progress is very well monitored.
Hospitality, sports,	Provision in physical education is very good . The teaching

leisure and travel and learning are very good and students achieve well. Both physical education and dance courses are increasingly popular.

Business Provision in **business studies** is **very good**. Results are well above average. Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes help to ensure their very good achievement.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive effective guidance to enable them to make the most of their opportunities, and to learn successfully for themselves. Staff make themselves freely available to support individual students' learning, and relationships among staff and students are very good. Students generally receive helpful guidance to choose careers or opportunities in higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership is good, overall. Vision for the further development of the sixth form is clear in expectations of students' academic achievement and commitment to the school and wider community, but planning for the longer term direction of the sixth form is restricted. **Management is effective** in providing a good range of courses through the consortium of schools, although arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of provision across the consortium by governors and senior staff have been frustrated by major difficulties last year. Governors do not give students their statutory entitlement to religious education.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are pleased to be members of the sixth form and think that they receive good teaching and a good quality of education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

References throughout the report to 'average', 'above average', 'below average' etc. refer to comparisons with national standards. The national comparative results of the 2004 Year 9 National Curriculum tests are not yet available, but reference to the school's performance is made below. GCSE and sixth form 2004 examination results have been released, but are not yet validated nationally; reference to them is included in the commentary below.

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9; for Year 9, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly in their primary schools at the end of Year 6.

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In the main school, students achieve well in most subjects, irrespective of their social or ethnic backgrounds. Irrespective of the differences in their abilities all students achieve equally well. In the sixth form, students also achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, overall, and very well in history and modern foreign languages.
- Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were well above the national average, including the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C.
- Some students do not receive their full entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11, and this restricts their progress in this subject.
- Standards are below national expectations in design and technology throughout the main school.
- There is good value added for students following sixth form courses.

Commentary

1. Students have regularly entered the school at age 11 years attaining typical national standards. Years 7 and 8 differ from other year groups and had above average academic profiles on entry, especially in literacy. In all years, students' abilities cover the full range. The number of students identified by the school to have special educational needs is in line with national averages for a school of this size, as is the number of students with statements of special educational need. By the end of Year 9, students from all backgrounds and with differing academic potential achieve well. They make good progress and reached above average standards in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 (the last year for which national comparative results are available). Students' performance in science was well above average, and better than their results in English and mathematics. Compared with similar schools, students' attainment in the tests was above the national average, both in 2003 and in 2002. In 2004, the year that threatened intense disruption to students' education, the school's results showed improvement in performance in all subjects; however, no national comparisons are yet available for 2004.
2. During the inspection, the standards of students' work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9, overall, were above those usually found nationally. They were seen to achieve well in lessons and from the analysis of their written and practical work. They achieved very well in history and modern foreign languages to reach standards well above those typical for their age groups. Although achievement was never less than satisfactory in every subject in Years 7 to 9, standards were below those expected nationally by Year 9 in design and technology, because of earlier difficulties in staffing, and continuing difficulties in the best deployment of specialist teachers in this subject. Standards were also below average in music because one lesson each fortnight is insufficient time for students to reach the standards of which they are capable.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (33.3)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	n/a (36.2)	n/a (35.6)
Science	n/a (35.9)	n/a (33.6)

Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003). National results are not available for 2004.

- By the end of Year 11, students from all social and ethnic backgrounds continue to achieve well. In 2004, Year 11 students reached well above average standards in GCSE examinations, compared with the results in all schools and with similar schools nationally. This was a remarkable achievement for them, for the staff and for the school, because all students were in scattered accommodation for much of the year, and lacked access to the usual learning resources, all of which were lost from contamination by asbestos. However, no special concessions were made by the examination boards for the exceptional circumstances; students' performance was assessed in the usual way, except for practical coursework which was submitted as photographs of students' work which were held for photographs to be taken by workers in decontamination suits inside specially sealed chambers. In 2002 and 2003, GCSE examination results were above average compared with results in all schools. The trend in results over five years has been above the national trend. The school has sustained momentum in improving its performance, despite all difficulties, even though results were already at a level above and, in 2004, well above the national upward trend. The school has reached the challenging targets it has set itself.
- In the performance of students seen during the inspection, they achieved well in Years 10 and 11, overall, and they were seen to reach above the standards usually found nationally at this point in GCSE examination courses. In history and modern foreign languages, students achieved very well to reach standards well above those typical nationally for students of these ages. Students' achievement was satisfactory in citizenship and work-related learning in which their progress has been restricted because of the disruption last year. Poor accommodation has reduced students' progress in physical education, although the standards they were seen to reach were satisfactory. Staffing difficulties in design and technology have restricted students' progress, although their achievement in the work seen during the inspection was satisfactory. The restricted time for compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11 results in students achieving no more than satisfactory, despite the good teaching that they receive.
- Girls' very positive attitudes and good teaching enable all students to achieve well in most subjects and, despite all obstacles achievement is never less than satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

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	67 (56)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight	39.3 (38.1)	34.9 (34.7)

subjects)		
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There were 168 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2004 results are not yet validated nationally.

6. The school makes very effective use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. This is apparent in the techniques that teachers use to enable students to learn and to achieve well. Students have good competence in the use of literacy and mathematics. Their skills in ICT are less well developed. This is partly a consequence of the loss of ICT equipment last year and lack of practice with it. However, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not ensure that all students receive their entitlement to ICT and, in some lessons seen during the inspection, students were not guided to use the ICT equipment that was readily available and that would have extended their learning.
7. In general, students of differing ability achieve equally well. Students with special educational needs achieve well. In modern foreign languages, special needs students achieve very well from good in-class support and the use of appropriate materials. In design and technology, students achieve well because in-class support assistants have good knowledge and understanding of those that they are helping. The achievement of special needs students is carefully tracked and individual success is recorded.
8. As a result of circumstances outside of the school's control provision for gifted and talented students is in its early stages. All departments have applied subject criteria to identify talented students. In addition, the school has used results of well established, commercial tests when students enter the school to form a register. The 60 students who meet the criteria set have been nominated for the National Academy for Gifted and Talented run by Warwick University. There has been an increase in enrichment opportunities for talented students, including visits to the Festival Hall and to local newspaper publishers. They have participated in Top of the Bench science challenges, master classes for mathematics at the local City Technology College and on-line courses provided by Cambridge University. These initiatives provided for talented individuals have given them the opportunity to excel, and they have often done so impressively. In the work of talented students seen during the inspection, most achieved well in higher attaining classes, where students were grouped according to their abilities – a practice common throughout the school.
9. There are very few students who use English as an additional language, and none is at an early stage of learning the language. The identified students have achieved well since joining the school. They are well supported and, where necessary, they are allocated to special lessons that focus specifically on the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs).
10. Since the last inspection in 1998, students' achievement and standards of work have continued to improve. Despite the unprecedented difficulties of last year, the school gained very impressive GCSE examination results that were well above the national average in comparison with those of all schools and for similar schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Sixth form

11. Students join the sixth form with GCSE examination results a little below the standards usually found nationally for students at the start of advanced courses. They achieve well in the sixth form from the very good teaching that they receive. In 2004, and the previous two years, results of A-level courses were at the national average. Results in advanced vocational courses are usually well above national standards.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.8 (93.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	37.2 (31.6)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	256.9 (243.9)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 52 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. Results are not yet validated nationally.

12. In the nine subjects reported in full in Part C of this report, students achieved very well in business studies, biology and history, and standard were well above average in these subjects. In ICT, standards and achievement were satisfactory; students have lacked the necessary experience in use of ICT in earlier years and progress has been slower than in other subjects. However, the situation is changing, and students are achieving at a satisfactory level. Overall, the very good teaching and students very positive attitudes to learning are ensuring that they achieve well, and often very well.
13. Since the last inspection, many more students now take advanced courses and their achievement continues to be good.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' personal development is very good. In Years 7 to 11, students have very good attitudes towards the school and their work. Their behaviour is very good and supported by very good relationships. However, the rate of attendance has not risen in line with the rising national trend, and is below what it should be. Sixth formers' personal development is very good and they have mature and responsible attitudes. Their behaviour is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students are proud of their school and show very good attitudes in lessons.
- The school's measures to deal with bullying are very effective.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school.
- Students' personal qualities are very well developed, especially in their response to moral and social issues.
- Authorised absence is too high. Students' attitudes and attendance are weakest in the classes for students of lower attainment in Years 10 and 11.
- Sixth form students make an impressive contribution to the life of the school.

Commentary

14. Students' attitudes to school and their studies are very good. Most students are proud of their school and like attending it. They are very positive about most of their teachers, and they rightly hold them in high regard. Relationships are very good. Students are particularly positive about the encouragement, help and support they get from teachers. In lessons, students' attitudes to work are very good overall. In most lessons, students listen very well and show very good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. They respond particularly well when expectations are high, lesson tasks are demanding and there is a good variety of learning activities. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is evident in art and design, drama, music and physical education lessons. Based on discussions with students, the proportion of lessons that are liked by students is significantly higher in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Some students in Years 10 and 11 would like the opportunity to take some vocational courses.
15. In lessons, the behaviour of the vast majority of students is very good. Discussions with students indicate there is some disruptive behaviour in a very small minority of lessons. This is borne out by exclusion data. Behaviour around the school during break and lunchtime is also very good. The very positive behaviour of nearly all students is an important element in the prevailing very positive atmosphere for learning. A strikingly calm, social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall and throughout the site during lunchtime and breaktimes. As a result, staff can confidently trust students to socialise without close supervision. Students confirm there is some verbal teasing and occasional bullying, and they think that incidents are handled sensitively and usually resolved effectively, once reported to staff. The Anti-bullying Campaign (ABC) group plays an important role in preventing bullying. There is no evidence of racism.

16. Students with special educational needs have very positive attitudes in lessons. They behave very well and respond well to the support they receive. This was seen in a Year 11 IEP lesson, in which teachers successfully involved a disaffected girl in useful and appropriate ICT work. Students with special educational needs are well motivated to succeed in learning, and they are fully involved in all school activities. Relationships are very good and help to raise students' achievement.
17. Very harmonious relationships among students, irrespective of their social or ethnic background or competency to learn, are a very positive feature of the school. Most teachers value students' work and effectively praise good effort. As a result, students are comfortable to express views and ask questions of their teachers and this much assists their learning. It also reminds students that their peers are keen to learn and that positive interest is valued by staff.
18. The school supports students' personal development very well, overall. Their spiritual development is good, and enhanced by the contributions from several subjects across the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, there is appreciation of the natural world from consideration of the origins of mathematics and number, and the speed of the earth through space. Religious education contributes strongly to the good provision in Years 7 to 9. Teachers often use meditation and stilling as part of students' spiritual development. In Year 9, a very good lesson about the pillars of Islam began with a meditation about places special to the students themselves, or their families. Assemblies and the 'Thought for the Day' sometimes add to spiritual development but not consistently so. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not fully met, either by assemblies or by the 'Thought for the Day'. Time for even brief reflection is not always given.
19. Students' moral development is very good and their very good behaviour during the inspection reflected this. Staff have very high expectations of students' behaviour and provide very good role models for them. Students move about the school in an orderly way and come and go from assemblies respectfully.
20. Students' social development is a very pronounced feature, and reflects the very caring and positive ethos of the school community. For example, in an upper school assembly, students provided live music of a high standard. Several individuals, both students and staff, addressed the audience about their worthwhile commitments and hopes for the future. The theme was centred around Martin Luther King and his "I have a dream" speech. Finally, the spirit of the school community was again captured excellently by references to the fund raising efforts for the victims of the tsunami disaster. A very large number of out-of-school activities provide very many opportunities for social development and collaborative work and play.
21. Culturally, the school provides well for students. Visits to exhibitions and galleries in art, music, drama, dance, modern foreign languages and religious education add considerably to students' experience. However, the focus on preparing students for life in multi-cultural Britain is satisfactory, although opportunities to promote this are missed. Nevertheless, students study world religions and customs, and experience art forms from various cultures. In modern foreign languages, they consider African communities, based on former French occupancy, and groups visit France and Germany. The PSHE course includes aspects of relationships and prejudice between people of different ethnic backgrounds, to give students understanding of the damaging consequences of racism for society.

Exclusions

There were no permanent exclusions in the last complete school year. The level of fixed term exclusions is low for a school of this size. The clearly staged sanctions system, including the use of internal exclusion, is effectively applied. The table below confirms students' ethnic background and the exclusions data, for the previous 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	664	17	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	20	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	256	0	0

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

Attendance

The table below provides attendance and absence data for the latest complete reporting year, when the rate of attendance was well below the national standard. Unauthorised absence does not present the same concern. In recent years, the attendance rate has not risen in line with the national rate.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (90%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	9.1	School data:	0.9
National data:	6.9	National data:	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (2003/4).

22. The school's data for the 2004 autumn term shows the highest rate of absence among some students in Years 10 and 11. Some 25 students across the school can be identified as habitual absentees, and last year's disruption was most unhelpful to ensuring consistent attendance. The absence rate is highest among some students in classes designated for lower attainers in Years 10 and 11. The school has recently created an appropriate action plan to tackle the absence rate; some parents are being reminded of their responsibilities to ensure the attendance of their children, and systematic first day contact with all parents in the event of absence has been

introduced. Students' punctuality is good to lessons. However, at the start of the day, an unusually high number of students arrive late for registration, partly because of transport delays.

23. Since the last inspection, the school's ethos, shown in students' very positive attitudes and behaviour, has remained very good. Surmounting last year's disruption is testimony to very positive relationships among staff and students. The school recognises that the rate of attendance is not high enough, and this is a key concern, unlike the situation six years ago.

Sixth form

24. Students' personal development is very good. When questioned as individuals and groups, their responses are strikingly mature, articulate and thoughtful. Students take much responsibility for their own learning. They are proud of their school. Its reputation for good examination results and students' charity work are significant reasons for their pride. They regard teachers as friendly and helpful and think they are treated as adults. In lessons, students are attentive and maintain interest, concentration and determination to complete set work. Their behaviour is excellent; relationships throughout the sixth form are excellent.
25. All sixth form students take responsibility, by helping younger students or the local community. For example, all in Year 12 support Year 7 students for a year. Some do voluntary work at a special school, while others focus their help for younger students in specific subjects in the school. Sixth form students take charge of the school council and its committees, such as that for fund raising. They have taken a leading part in the organisation of a school 'Olympics', which involved a variety of subjects and aspects across the school. Students visit exhibitions, and take part in residential trips - for example, visits to the Milton Keynes Discovery Centre. Some students undertake the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and go to help communities in Kenya and Tanzania; they work in building and plastering, and assist in community life in general. Provision for their religious education is, currently, unsatisfactory, but a conference on religious issues is planned for the summer term.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Students receive a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are good in the main school, and very good in the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The care taken of students is very good; the good support and guidance they get enables them to achieve well. Students are given a good range of learning opportunities, apart from in Years 10 and 11, where there is a lack of vocational courses. Links with parents and other schools are, generally, good. Community links are satisfactory, and improving.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11, and very good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching enables students of differing ability and from all social and ethnic backgrounds to learn successfully.
- Effective application of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has improved teaching across the school, but there is insufficient teaching and learning with use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Teachers manage their classes very well, because relationships are very good.

Commentary

26. The teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Almost four out of every ten lessons seen were very well taught, and a few were of excellent quality. There was little difference in quality across the five years of the main school. Teaching meets the needs of all girls from differing social and ethnic backgrounds equally and effectively. As a result, all students learn and achieve well. Teaching has improved significantly, since the last inspection; the proportion of very good or better lessons has almost doubled. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is now minimal.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 157 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	61 (39%)	67 (43%)	24 (15%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

27. Students extend their subject knowledge and understanding well from the good teaching they receive. Key strengths in teaching include the systematic way learning objectives are shared with students to guide their learning. Teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects enables them to plan lessons effectively and to explain and question students purposefully. As a result, students are encouraged, well engaged in their work and expected to learn. Students respond well to teachers and to learning. They have very positive attitudes towards their work and behave very well in class. Most students also routinely complete the useful homework that is regularly set. Teachers manage their classes very well and relationships with students are usually very good. As a result, girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well from the good teaching that they receive. Only two lessons seen were not satisfactory, and one of these was not taught by a regular teacher. The teaching in history, dance, geography and modern foreign languages was consistently very good throughout Years 7 to 11.
28. The teaching of students of very different ability and potential is good. Those with wide-ranging special educational needs are well and, often, very well taught. The planning of lessons for special needs students is equally thorough in situations where students are withdrawn from mainstream lessons, as in those lessons. Materials and methods are adapted to meet all needs. For example, this was seen in a Year 7 geography class, in which special educational needs students were suitably challenged and made good progress in strengthening their geographical skills and knowledge in work on earthquakes and volcanoes. In Year 11, the teaching of a profoundly deaf student helped to produce coursework of high quality. Liaison among support assistants and teachers is generally effective. However, in some English lessons the work of the special educational needs students is not closely enough coordinated with that of the rest of the class.
29. The teaching of higher attaining students is good. It is helped by the identifying of those who are gifted and talented and good guidance on how to give suitable learning challenges. The system of grouping students by ability is also generally helpful to teaching these students, although these groups still involve a relatively wide range of ability. In some subject departments, teachers are actively seeking ways of improving enrichment opportunities for their students. The English department is effective in teaching gifted students and providing them with additional learning opportunities. For example, a creative writing club attracts many students and there are writing workshops in Years 7 and 8. For those aiming to reach National Curriculum level 7 in Year 9, there is a revision conference at Easter. Teachers are aware of their responsibilities towards higher attaining students and in most lessons they learn very well. Most teaching stretches students to reach their potential by providing extension work either in class or as homework. In geography, the learning of gifted students is strengthened by their attendance at the Friday geography club.
30. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is effectively used, both in Years 7 to 9 but also to influence teaching positively in Years 10 and 11. For example, the teaching of literacy and numeracy throughout the school are good. However, the teaching and learning in ICT are not yet consistently practised across the curriculum. This is partly a consequence of the loss of all equipment from contamination by asbestos last year, and the lack of opportunity. The school now has good ICT; for example, there are sufficient computers to extend students' learning well. However, ICT is not yet used enough across the curriculum and, in some lessons seen during the inspection, the good equipment to hand was not used to enhance students' learning.

31. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory, overall, but practice is inconsistent in some subjects. There is an initiative to enable students to mark some of their own work to develop further their independence in learning, and for teachers to mark, in detail, specific pieces of work. Teachers then analyse particular work more closely to give more detailed comment on how students might improve. However, not all subject areas have reached the same stage of development in this aspect of assessment to support learning. Consequently, there is some, variation in the quality of the marking of students' work, particularly in English. The use of assessment in mathematics is satisfactory, in general, but practice is too variable. The best practice seen was in modern foreign languages, science and religious education, with good practice in many others. However, use of assessment was unsatisfactory in ICT and citizenship, where practices are not yet formally established. A weakness is that some departments do not yet communicate National Curriculum levels to students to enable them to understand how well they are progressing towards the target grades that are set.

Sixth form

32. The teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Almost half of the lessons seen were of very good quality, and almost all were, at least, of good quality. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Of the nine subjects reported in full in Part C of this report, the teaching of business studies, biology, history, French and physical education was consistently very good. Many of the lessons seen in sampled subjects were also very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and use this to challenge students to learn very well. Excellent relationships assist the process of learning and students have high levels of confidence in their teachers. Consequently, students take considerable responsibility for their own learning and make the most of their opportunities in a mature manner.
33. Assessment of students' work is regular and accurate. Teachers use their experience of teaching to advanced standard to enhance students' understanding of the assessment process. Potential targets are set early in Year 12, based on each student's average GCSE examination point scores. These are subsequently reviewed and modified in specific subject areas. Students receive constant feedback on their progress in a variety of forms, which include written comment and individual tutorials. Consequently, students receive regular support and advice on how they may improve their subject performance. Formal assessments also provide regular information on how students are progressing toward their target grades.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Students' opportunities to enrich their learning beyond the timetabled curriculum are very good. The school provides a good, inclusive curriculum in Years 7 to 9, but provision in Years 10 and 11 is no more than satisfactory, because vocational courses are lacking for students to pursue from age 14 to 18. However, an extensive range of advanced courses, including vocational opportunities, is offered in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is open access to the curriculum, in all years.
- No vocational courses are provided in Years 10 and 11, and clear curricular routes for students aged 14 to 19 have not yet been planned.
- An extensive range of enrichment activities promotes participation in sport, the arts and other interests.
- There is inadequate provision for ICT across the curriculum, and some students in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their entitlement to the subject.
- The sixth form consortium provides students with a broad range of advanced courses to choose from, but do not receive their entitlement to religious education.

Commentary

34. All students study the full range of National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good. In addition to the full range of National Curriculum subjects, there is good provision in drama, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This includes careers education in all years. The large majority of students study a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. However, the design of the two-week timetable sometimes leads to an imbalance in the distribution of lessons in particular subjects, for example, in music.
35. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is satisfactory. However, it has not been developed for these year groups to the extent that the school intends, because of the priority in maintaining essential teaching and learning during the year of disruption. Nevertheless, an extensive range of GCSE examination courses is provided, with additions of PSHE, physical education and religious education, although the time allowance for the latter is barely adequate, and this restricts students' progress in the subject. The child development course that is followed by many students makes a valuable contribution to the curriculum. Clear curricular routes for students aged 14 to 19 have not yet been planned. There are no vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Work experience is provided for all students in Year 11, but work-related learning (WRL) is not yet sufficiently well coordinated. However, an effective life-skills programme, which includes WRL, is effectively provided for lower attaining students.
36. Not all subjects are using ICT to support teaching and learning. Those students who do not follow a GCSE examination course in ICT do not receive their statutory entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11.
37. A comprehensive and valuable PSHE curriculum operates across Years 7 to 11. It includes all the required aspects of sex and health education, as well as some citizenship and careers education.
38. Provision for students with special educational needs has greatly improved since the last inspection, when it was a key issue for improvement. Identification of these students is thoroughly carried out in primary schools. All 46 schools are visited. The coordinator for special needs attends Year 6 reviews of statements in the primary schools. On entry to Year 7, further testing takes place to identify students' specific needs. Students are allocated to appropriate classes early in Year 7; this enables effective deployment of the learning support assistants. For some students with similar needs, group education plans are prepared, but for most students, the school prepares individual education plans (IEPs). These plans are devised by the school but are compliant with local authority requirements. The school has recently purchased new ICT equipment in preparation for future network links in the school. Although teachers, support assistants and students are provided with plenty of information, IEPs are not always available in classrooms. The support assistants assess students' progress regularly, and maintain good records that give an accurate picture of how well the students achieve.
39. The coordinator for special needs is ably assisted by another teacher and ten support assistants to ensure that students have good access to the curriculum. All are effective in their work. Individual personal interests and expertise are recognised in their deployment and these result in high levels of support, for example, in art and design, design and technology and mathematics. In timetabled ICT lessons, good support enables all students with special educational needs to be fully integrated into classroom activities.
40. Withdrawal of students with special educational needs from mainstream classes is limited, but there are special IEP classes in which students in all years are able to improve their numeracy and literacy and find extra time for examination coursework. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson in which special educational needs students were preparing for a mathematics examination. Students in Years 10 and 11 are able to follow a worthwhile Skills-for-Life programme.

41. Opportunities for enrichment of all students' learning beyond the normal timetable are very good. Most subjects offer good support for learning outside lessons. There are very good opportunities for sport and the arts, as well as residential experiences and outdoor pursuits, which are all enjoyed by large numbers of students. Many students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
42. Staffing is good. Experienced teachers new to the school, newly qualified teachers and those in training are well supported in their professional development. Recent appointees value the help they are given by the school. Staff development procedures are well organised. Recruitment has been difficult in some areas of the curriculum, for example in design and technology, but there is now a good match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the requirements of the curriculum., including in design and technology. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. Technical support is very good in ICT and science, but it has not been possible to appoint a technician in design and technology, because of the lack of applicants.
43. The school's accommodation is poor. Following the crisis concerning the accommodation last year, the school has worked hard to make the building an attractive learning environment with redecoration, displays and carpeting. However, the school is unable to realise fully its specialist role as a sports college with the accommodation currently available to the school and wider community. The indoor spaces are inadequate for the numbers of students using them. Changing facilities are overwhelmed by the numbers of students of different ages who must use them at the same time. Showering is difficult following exercise because of the restricted facilities available. Increasing numbers of students are creating pressure on some specialist areas and classroom space. Toilet facilities for students require major refurbishment, and many windows require replacement for safety reasons. Despite some narrow stairways, students move around the school sensibly and with consideration for others. The school is not fully adapted for students with physical disabilities but provides well for those with visual and hearing impairment.
44. The school is well resourced overall. This is mainly because departments have new resources to replace those lost last year. Considerable funding has gone into ICT resources, which include hardware, software, data projectors and interactive whiteboards. These enable students to have access to ICT equipment within departments across the whole curriculum, as well as within discrete ICT lessons. However, the equipment available is not used sufficiently in several subject departments, including in English and mathematics. Resources, overall, are particularly good in science, modern foreign languages and religious education. Several departments, including art, history, music and religious education are still in the process of restoring stocks of stimuli, artefacts and musical scores, lost in last year's crisis. The well stocked and well managed information and resources centre stocks: magazines, CDs, DVDs and videos, in addition to an excellent range of new books and up-to-date ICT equipment. The centre provides a valuable learning resource to support the students' independent learning.

Sixth form

45. Curricular provision in the sixth form is good. A consortium of schools provides many advanced academic subject courses and some advanced and intermediate vocational courses. However, only nine students currently attend courses at other schools within the consortium; 20 students, mainly boys, choose to follow courses at the school. All students follow the European Driving Licence course (for ICT skills), and recreational sport and physical education are timetabled for all Year 12 students. Provision in religious education is, however, inadequate. Conferences have now been planned to consider religious and ethical issues, but students have had, as yet, no opportunity to consider religious issues, and, consequently, they have not received their entitlement to religious education as required by statute. The great majority of students complete the courses that they embark on, and two-thirds continue their studies into further or higher education.

46. Enrichment of the curriculum is very good. A range of visits, residential study trips, outside speakers and conferences enhances students' learning. There are very good opportunities for personal development and leadership. All students act as 'buddies', to help every Year 7 girl, individually, with learning and managing life at school. Some help teachers in lessons, or run sessions at a local special school. The students are very appreciative of the many opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities.
47. There is a good match between the expertise of staff and the requirements of the curriculum. Technical support is also good. Most courses are taught in appropriate spaces and the common room and study area are both of good quality. A-level and recreational courses in physical education are adversely affected by poor facilities. For example, A-level dance is taught in a room, the size of which makes it unsuitable for the full range of movements that students should make. Overall, sixth form accommodation is unsatisfactory. The sixth form has benefited, along with the rest of the school, from the recent major improvements in resources. As a result, the resourcing of subjects for sixth form work is good. Students in the sixth form also make good use of the well-resourced information centre.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its students. It gives them good support, advice and guidance. There are good measures in place to involve students in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students who are vulnerable, or at risk of underachieving are very well supported.
- Students' induction to Year 7 is very good.
- The support, advice and guidance for students are good for both personal and academic matters.
- The school regards the views of students as important in its work, although some opportunities are missed to include students' views in subject and other reviews.

Commentary

48. The school takes very good care of students. Students feel safe at all times in school and rightly consider that they are very well cared for. The school is a safe place. Few accidents or injuries occur. These are usually of a minor nature and arise mostly from physical education lessons. In lessons, teachers properly emphasise the importance of safety considerations prior to practical work in science and design and technology. The formal policies and practices that relate to equipment, the Internet and school trips are applied effectively. Child protection procedures and all arrangements to safeguard students' personal well-being are properly carried out. The school very effectively manages the complex needs of a minority of students. It uses outside support, including Connexions, to help meet their needs. Students have confidence that form tutors, year coordinators and support staff can be approached with problems and that concerns will be taken seriously and resolved.
49. The induction of students at age 11 from 46 primary schools is very effective. All students are visited in their schools, Year 12 student 'buddies' support during settling in, and students are surveyed to identify any issues or concerns, towards the end of the induction process.
50. The support and guidance for students to achieve well are good. Monitoring their progress is frequent and thorough. Findings are regularly shared with them. In all year groups, students know their predicted subject grades for the end of the key stage. This information is well supported by targets set in a growing number of subjects. There is a clear flow of data to support students in their learning. This information is held centrally and provided to year coordinators and tutors to give an overview of students' progress. This process focuses the need for departments to work more closely with National Curriculum levels and targets. Recently introduced parents' meetings with tutors have proved effective in giving an overview of

students' progress, and the Year 9 review day last term ensured that all students gained a clear overview of their progress. In Years 10 and 11, reviews are departmentally based, so that more subject-specific support can be given. Students in need of support are given a mentor, booster lessons or extra revision classes to accelerate their progress.

51. The advice and guidance given to students about educational and vocational opportunities are good. For example, all students in Years 9 and 11 have an interview with a member of senior management to establish that their plans are realistic. Careers education is in place for students throughout the school, and the recently introduced statutory requirements are met. The school has had concerns about the extent and quality of outside careers support in the past. The situation is currently satisfactory.
52. Statutory requirements for the provision outlined in statements of special educational need are met. All policies are in place and reviews of statements are regular and effective. Support and guidance for special needs students are good and provided by sympathetic and expert staff who are well trained to support a wide range of needs.
53. Students have good opportunities to express their views on school priorities. The school council, run largely by sixth form students, has the confidence of students and staff. Specific surveys have taken place about induction, the range and quality of school meals and the move to sports college status. However, surveys on some issues central to learning or on a range of whole school issues are not a part of regular practice. For example, students' views are not taken into account prior to subject reviews or of reviews of careers guidance or assemblies.
54. Since the last inspection, the quality of care, support and guidance for students was shaken by last year's crisis. However, very effective management preserved the systems which are currently being refined and improved as more information about students' performance becomes available. Overall, students continue to receive the very good quality of individual care reported in 1998.

Sixth Form

55. Students receive good advice, support and guidance. There is good impartial advice and guidance to students prior to entering the sixth form. During Year 11, students are made aware of the standards expected for entry to particular courses, and all have an interview with a senior member of staff. The primary aim of the interview is to clarify whether their best option is to join the sixth form, or to move to a college, or pursue work-based learning opportunities.
56. Sixth form induction is satisfactory, although opportunities are missed to involve students in predicting their advanced course grades, where appropriate. Students have one-to-one tutorials in the first six weeks of the first term to check progress. A new electronic system for gathering assessment data gives an overall view of students' attainment. Tutors use this information to discuss progress with individual students and identify appropriate support needs. There is good support for preparation for higher education built into the assessment tutorials. Throughout the sixth form, there are frequent reviews of students' progress and students are helped to improve by identifying and working on key weaknesses.
57. The school's collection and analysis of data on sixth form students' academic performance now enable it to produce realistic targets for them to reach. Although statistically produced targets may not be a true reflection of each student's potential in each subject, tutors are trained to recognise that these are one indicator among many. However, not all students are yet made aware enough of how their subject potential is rated.
58. Guidance on students' education or career options is good. There is a strong emphasis on making decisions and completing application procedures in good time to allow the maximum time for study in Year 13. Although highly valued by students, the range of outside speakers from universities and other organisations is not extensive. However, students have the opportunity to make visits to inform their choices in higher education.

59. Although there are good opportunities for students to express their views on school issues, their views on some significant matters have not been sought, such as careers guidance or induction. As a result, opportunities are sometimes missed to hear and act on students' views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents. Community links are good for the sixth form, and satisfactory for the main school. Links with other schools and colleges are good overall, especially in the sixth form, but links to extend curricular opportunities in Years 10 and 11 are not yet operative.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with parents are improving.
- Links with other schools are effective for transfer at age 11 years; links to extend the opportunity for students to follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 are undeveloped.
- Community links are improving as a result of the school's specialist status for sport.
- Sixth form students benefit considerably from the wide range of courses through the consortium.

Commentary

60. Links with parents are good overall. Induction arrangements for the admission of students to the school at age 11 are good, and appreciated by parents. Parents usually receive useful information on how well their children are progressing, although some say they would like more. Disruption to normal communication last year prevented parents from receiving the usual reports. Copies of main school annual reports were lost from contamination by asbestos and cannot be evaluated. Sixth form reports were issued last term. These are informative, and give good guidance on how standards may be improved. They are very thorough in assessing students' performance across a wide range of activities, including attendance and punctuality. This term, interim reports are being provided for the main school. These reports to parents are limited in the amount of information that they contain. A new end of year report is under development following the loss of all documentation. Parents' consultation days were held for two year groups last term. These are innovative and replaced the usual parent-teacher consultation evenings. Parents are, generally, responding favourably to the scheduling of individual consultations during the working day. They are also now receiving an informative newsletter each week, which contains valuable information on a wide range of school developments. An active parent-teacher association gives the school valuable support, including the raising of funds for additional resources to benefit the students.
61. Parents with children who are identified to have special educational needs are kept fully informed at all stages. Relationships between parents and special needs staff are very good, and parents' attendance at reviews is very high. Staff make themselves readily available and an 'open door' policy encourages and strengthens links between parents and special needs department. There are also valuable and productive links with a range of outside agencies, including the educational psychologist.
62. Currently, links with the community are satisfactory for the main school and good for the sixth form. Links with the local community have not been a strong feature of the school's provision in the past. However, the year of disruption required the school to seek alternative accommodation, and some community organisations gave invaluable support - for example, Wicksteed Park, Kettering Leisure Village, the Scout Centre and the local rugby club, and good relations continue with all of these. The school's specialist status for sport has given added impetus to the development of closer links with the local community, and these are now improving rapidly. The school had very good support from local sponsors for its application to become a specialist college. Sixth form students have well established links with the local community, and contribute voluntary service to a variety of good causes. Links with the wider-world community have long been part of all students' worthwhile experience, and they lead on

charity work – for example, for the recent tsunami appeal, which has led to impressive fund raising for this cause. Some have done community work in Kenya and Tanzania.

63. Links with other schools and colleges are good overall. Induction arrangements for the transfer of students from 46 primary schools at the end of Year 6 are well managed, and much appreciated by parents. Working with so many partner primary schools on curricular links is difficult to accomplish, and last year's difficulties greatly constrained further development. However, the local primary school visited during the inspection gave good endorsement to ongoing curricular links, particularly in dance.
64. At sixth form level, links are good. The school and its partners in the local sixth form consortium provide students with an extensive choice of advanced courses. Vocational courses are suitably represented in the school's own provision and in that of the consortium. Sixth form activities provide good links with local business, and students are regularly very successful in Young Enterprise activities. However, links are insufficient with other schools and colleges for Years 10 and 11. The curriculum lacks vocational courses at this level, and the absence of outside links for this age group is unhelpful to extending students' learning opportunities.
65. Since the last inspection, good links with parents have been maintained. The sixth form consortium is adding well to students' learning opportunities, but links with other schools and colleges to benefit students aged 14 to 16 years are insufficient. Community links are expanding, but the nursery that was available in 1998, has been discontinued.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's leadership is good overall. The headteacher leads very well. Governors and staff contribute well. The management is very good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, and its day-to-day management is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher gives the school direction and led it through last year's crisis very well.
- Key staff contribute well, and often very well, to their areas of responsibility.
- The governors give the school strong commitment and support.
- The sixth form is well led, and its day-to-day management is very good, but planning does not sufficiently distinguish sixth form priorities.

Commentary

66. Leadership is good, overall. The headteacher leads very well, with the active involvement and very good teamwork of her senior colleagues. During last year, when the school was dispossessed of its accommodation and learning resources because of contamination from asbestos, leadership was tested to the full to ensure the maintenance of standards and quality of education. Despite the challenging circumstances of the year, standards rose. Results in GCSE examinations improved to reach standards well above the national average. Sixth form advanced course results and Year 9 National Curriculum test results also improved.
67. The powerful commitment and determination of the headteacher and her colleagues ensured that students were not disadvantaged in the long term from the difficulties, of which none were of their own making. Leadership during the crisis was of high quality, and held fast to ensuring that meeting students' needs remained the highest priority. Staff received strong support to cope with the very considerable difficulties that they faced each day for many months. Staff and students responded very well, and the very positive ethos that was shared by all, and expected by the leadership, was very effectively maintained. Teamwork among the leadership group continues to be very good. All members are encouraged to contribute fully, and they do so with confidence that each person's ideas and initiatives will be taken further if they merit it. Leadership continues to be effective within the refurbished accommodation. Students are achieving well and the quality of education is good. The school's sense of purpose and ethos remain very positive.

68. The governors add strength to the school's leadership. During the difficulties of last year, they were highly supportive of the headteacher, staff and students, and they continue to be so. They are well informed, and contribute effectively to planning the further development of the school, a weakness at the last inspection. However, current planning does not distinguish sixth form development enough. The governors' loyalty to the school over time is beyond question, and they have ensured that its change of status – from Grant Maintained to foundation – has been effectively implemented, without incurring financial deficit. Last year's crisis held back developments, and there are some statutory omissions. Students are not receiving their full entitlement to design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and not all students are receiving ICT entitlement in Years 10 and 11. Although many assemblies and 'Thoughts for the Day' meet requirements for the provision of a collective act of worship each day, and some occasions are inspiring, provision is not universal and time for reflection is, sometimes, insufficient. Sixth form students do not receive their entitlement to religious education, although conferences are being planned to meet this need. Given the major disruption of last year, the governors have done well to restore curricular requirements to the extent that they have done. However, some matters remain to be resolved.
69. The leadership of subject departments ranges from very good to satisfactory. History and modern foreign languages departments are very well led and standards and the quality of education that they provide for students are equally very good. Citizenship and work-related learning have become national initiatives at the time when the school was coping with extreme difficulties. Consequently, development in these areas is not as well advanced as the school itself had originally planned.
70. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The special needs coordinator organises support for students very efficiently. Previous concerns about the deployment of learning support assistants have been met and earlier problems have been resolved. A strong team gives the correct level of support for all. Records and documentation are well organised and targets are clear. There is strong support from the designated link governor for the staff team.
71. The management of the school is very good. Last year, the difficulties of management were acute. The school operated for several months on multiple scattered sites, often unsuitable for education. It was reunited in temporary accommodation for several further months, before progressively reoccupying its decontaminated buildings. The logistical challenge of ensuring continuity in learning for the whole school was great, and the time, effort and commitment required of management were intense. Repeated timetabling and re-timetabling the whole school was done throughout the year to ensure that the best arrangements possible to sustain learning were adopted. The process was managed very effectively with a determined focus on the highest priorities of ensuring consistent teaching and learning; students and parents recognise and appreciate what was achieved. The stresses and strains on management were intense, and consequences of that situation continue to be felt.
72. Matters which could not receive the attention needed last year are now being tackled, and the school is going forward with a keen sense of purpose. The school has recovered well following the loss of all data and documentation last year. The initiative for promoting 'assessment for learning' is being woven into the recovery programme. Many departments have progressed well in this aspect and are contributing to the development of whole school policies on assessment. The senior managers and heads of department analyse examination data and take action to amend curriculum and teaching to improve attainment. The ICT support for assessment has been established and an assistant data manager has been trained in the operation of the system and can provide a variety of analyses as required. This is enabling the effective flow of data from departments to the pastoral staff. A well established monitoring process to judge the quality of teaching and learning was disrupted last year. Plans are in hand to revive the process with new methods.
73. The school evaluates its performance closely and management acts decisively where the quality of provision is questionable. For example, changes of leadership in science and design and

technology departments are effecting improvement in standards and the quality of education provided. Staffing is used well, and the professional development of staff is now, once again, being well managed. Performance management is well established. A restructuring of the workforce has taken place, and administrative functions are wholly in the remit of support staff. Senior management is able to focus wholly on educational priorities. For example, the useful role of data clerk to deal with recording data on students' academic performance arose from these reforms. A registrar is now closely monitoring students' rates of attendance and communicating with parents as necessary.

74. The school makes very good use of its modest income. Procedures are thorough. New equipment and learning resources have been bought to enhance students' learning opportunities, particularly in ICT. Funds are very well managed and deployed effectively. Additional funding arising from the school's specialist status as a sports college is beginning to enhance learning opportunities well. Although the building has now been refurbished at great cost, following its decontamination from asbestos, the school was not allowed to have a new building because the local authority was not eligible for government funding for this purpose. Consequently, the school has had to accumulate substantial funds to carry forward to meet the significant costs of refitting many windows, and other essential maintenance. The sums involved are justified and prudent given the expenditure anticipated for these essential improvements.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3089853	Balance from previous year	282187
Total expenditure	3137905	Balance carried forward to the next	234135
Expenditure per student	3363		

75. The school applies best-value principles well. Its performance *compared* with results in similar schools is very good. The *challenge* it gives its students is good through the curriculum, and enrichment of their worthwhile experience beyond the timetable is very good. The school *consults* well with its students, through a school council, and with parents, although processes were frustrated last year. It is skilled in making the most of fair *competition* for the services it purchases.
76. Since the last inspection, the very good quality of the headteacher's leadership has been sustained. The leadership group is a very effective team and the overall quality of leadership is good. Governors are more centrally involved in identifying and planning school priorities, a weakness identified in 1998. The overcoming of unprecedented difficulties during the 2003-4 academic year is testimony to the school's very effective management. Improvement in provision for special educational needs, a weakness in 1998, has been well managed and the special needs team has the capacity and expertise to maintain the currently good quality of provision

Sixth form

77. The sixth form is well led and managed. There is clear vision to make the quality of education the best possible. Students' very positive attitudes, excellent behaviour and sense of responsibility, and the very good teaching that they receive are ensured by effective leadership and management. Day-to-day leadership and management are very good. However, identifying and planning the longer-term development of the sixth form is not yet as explicit in school development planning as it should be. Although the priority of defining the development of the school's specialist status as a sports college is clear, the sixth form is not given the specific focus in the plan to make explicit its role within the priorities stated. However, the overall vision and strong commitment of leadership to the sixth form's impact on the school and the quality of learning opportunities it brings to all students remain, rightly, the overall focus.

78. The management of the sixth form is providing a very good range of learning opportunities through the consortium of schools, within which the school plays an active part. However, last year's disruption made monitoring and evaluation of the quality of what is being provided across the consortium less secure. Quality assurance across the consortium is left to each school. However, the head of sixth form has a very good overview of students' progress. The exchange of data within the consortium is generally good and prepared at appropriate times. Data collated on students' progress provides a good basis for individual tutorials and discussions of reports and progress.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-Related Learning (WRL) in Years 10 and 11

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The careers education and work experience programmes are good.
- The 'Skills-for-Life' programme contributes very well to the WRL of some students.
- WRL is not yet led and managed well enough to ensure the necessary development of the subject.
- No vocational courses are provided in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

79. All students benefit from a good programme of careers education, which helps them to gain an understanding of employment and the world of work. This knowledge is complemented, for all students in Year 11, by a fortnight of work experience in their chosen area of interest. Work experience is thoroughly prepared and reviewed, appreciated by the students, and makes a significant contribution to their personal development.
80. Some departments have not yet begun to plan their contribution to WRL, but others have identified curriculum activities that connect with the world of work. In modern foreign languages, an extensive module on careers and the world of work is timed to coincide with the end of work experience; students regularly use their work experience as a coursework topic. The mathematics department has installed an eye-catching display of careers that use mathematics. This raises students' awareness of work-related opportunities effectively. The science department has very useful contacts with a local farm. Industrial practice is studied as an integral part of design and technology, and the design process develops students' problem-solving skills. Students who are following the ICT GCSE examination course use industry-standard hardware and software. They study business procedures and complete a project on a business of their choice. In a PSHE lesson seen, students were introduced to procedures for risk assessment. The 'Skills-for-Life' course provided for low attaining students features a comprehensive programme on the world of work, and makes a very good contribution to WRL. Year 10 students have the opportunity to gain the Junior Sports Leader Award.
81. However, no vocational courses are currently provided in Years 10 and 11. WRL is not yet formally led and managed and, consequently, the cross-curricular aspects of WRL are not yet well enough focused for development.

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

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to learn and achieve well.
- GCSE examination results are consistently well above average.
- Almost all students work hard and are keen to learn.
- Marking and assessment procedures are not consistent enough.

Commentary

82. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were in line with the national average but below those gained by students in similar schools. Results improved considerably in 2004 and students attained similar standards to those in mathematics and science. Current standards in Year 9 are above those expected nationally. Students have very good listening skills and many articulate speakers contribute very well to class discussions. Many students read widely and most have a good understanding of literary techniques used by writers and poets. They write at length, in a range of styles and the narrative writing of high attaining students is highly imaginative and mature. However, low attaining students produce little writing and rarely use any punctuation.
83. GCSE examination results in English and English literature in 2004 were well above the national average and well above results in similar schools. Current standards in Year 11 are above those expected nationally. Students listen very attentively and use English accurately and confidently. They understand the plot, themes and social context of set texts well and provide good evidence to back up their views. High attaining students produce mature analyses of how writers use language for effect and their own use of persuasive writing is excellent. Students' writing is generally accurate. They have good note taking skills and structure their essays well. Low attaining students can also write at length but their responses to literature are descriptive rather than analytical.
84. Students from all social and ethnic backgrounds and those who use English as an additional language achieve well. Students enter the school with average standards in Year 7 and consistently achieve well above average results in GCSE examinations. Last year's disruption and current illnesses of staff in the department affect achievement, but students are still doing better than might reasonably be expected. Gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs achieve well. However, some lower attaining students in Year 9 do not achieve as well as they should because of their poor attitudes and lack of guidance from teachers about how to structure their writing.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In several lessons it is very good. Most students are keen to learn and work hard and productively. Teachers plan lessons very well and use a variety of whole class and group activities to keep students working at a good pace. They work closely with teaching assistants, who are able to support students with special needs effectively as a result. Teachers know their subject well and ask searching questions to help students to develop their understanding. However, their marking is inconsistent. Some is very helpful and supportive, but much work remains unmarked. Some teachers refer to levels and

grades but others do not, with the result that many students do not know how to improve. They do not provide enough opportunities for students to use their ICT skills in English.

86. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are working very well as a team to overcome difficulties caused by recent disruption and staff illnesses. They have made excellent progress with replacing schemes of work, which had been destroyed. However, partly because of this disruption, there is not enough monitoring of teaching to ensure a consistent approach to the assessment of students' work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

87. Standards of literacy are above the level usually found nationally. Students listen attentively and participate well in class and group discussions, making good use of subject specific vocabulary. Many students read widely. They are able to read from a variety of sources in different subjects with good understanding. They take pride in the presentation of their work and develop their ability to write well in a range of styles. In science, for example, students sometimes record experiments in impressively creative, imaginative descriptions as well as the more traditional, objective style. In art, they write good evaluations of their own work and that of other artists.
88. Teachers implement the Key Stage 3 National Strategy well and encourage good literacy skills in all subjects through careful planning. All subject teachers emphasise the importance of using key terminology correctly. Support for extended writing in different styles is a particular strength in history, geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In art, Year 9 students are helped to link images of war with war poetry and produce very impressive work as a result. Overall, subjects make a good contribution to developing students' language and literacy skills, but even more could be done to develop students' speaking skills in modern foreign languages.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching enables students to achieve very well.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- GCSE examination results in French are very good.
- There is room for improvement in students' speaking skills.

Commentary

89. Students enter the school with no experience of modern foreign languages and average capability. In Years 7 to 9, students of differing capability, including those with special educational needs, from all social and ethnic backgrounds, achieve very well in French. They attain standards well above those usually found nationally. A large majority of students takes up German in Years 8 and 9 and achieves very well.
90. Most students choose to continue to study a language in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, GCSE examination results were well above average in French and below average in German. In 2004, results in French rose even higher, and there was a considerable improvement in German results. In both years, students did better in French than in the other subjects for which they entered the GCSE examination. By Year 11, students attain well above average standards in their chosen language. They achieve very well. Their reading, writing and listening skills are very well developed. Speaking skills, although clearly above average, are less well developed.
91. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers plan lessons very well, and present new material very effectively. They stretch all students with very challenging work and ensure that all are included as active participants in lessons. Students benefit from many opportunities

to develop independent learning skills. Lessons are fun. Teachers' excellent classroom management ensures high standards of behaviour. Marking is good. In the most successful lessons, teachers speak the foreign language extensively and develop their students' listening skills very well. Students then gain the confidence to use the language themselves. However, in some lessons teachers miss opportunities to use the foreign language, and students are not required to practise speaking sufficiently. Teachers are beginning to use ICT effectively to enhance learning, but they do not yet show enough confidence and skill in using the newly installed electronic whiteboards.

92. The department is very well led and managed. The leader is a very good role model, who monitors departmental progress closely and takes appropriate action. The use of assessment to guide teaching and learning is already very good. The curriculum is enriched by annual study visits to France and Germany. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2004 GCSE examination results were well above the national average.
- The teaching is good and engages students well in learning.
- Assessment processes are of variable quality within the department and, in some cases, these reduce students' understanding of how well they are progressing.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and many lessons take place in non-specialist rooms which restrict access to resources.

Commentary

93. In 2004, Year 9 National Curriculum test results were well in line with those gained in 2003. Standards were maintained despite the massive disruption during 2003-2004, arising from accommodation difficulties, and some staffing problems. In 2003, results were in line with those for similar schools, and this represented satisfactory achievement. Results were similar to those in English and science but more students achieved higher grades in mathematics. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE examination results were well above the national average, an improvement on 2003 results, and represented very high achievement by students.
94. Achievement in lessons is good. By the end of Year 9, standards, overall, are above those expected nationally. However, there is a full range of abilities represented. Work seen is well presented and shows students have very good attitudes towards the subject. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average overall, representing good achievement during Years 10 and 11. The modular course provides students with incentives constantly to improve their standards. There is no difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic or social backgrounds. All those with different, challenging learning needs and low attaining students are achieving well and all are entered for GCSE examinations.
95. Teaching and learning are good, and much is very good. Very good lessons support students' differing learning needs well. All lessons are challenging and focus on developing students' understanding. Teachers ensure all students are included in the learning process, enabling them to progress at an appropriate pace. Teamwork between classroom support assistants and teachers enhances the learning of low attaining students. Good use is made of computer presentations to stimulate students' interest. The encouragement of students to mark their own work is developing their independent learning skills well. However, the marking of books by teachers is variable in quality and often lacks suggestions of how students may improve.
96. Leadership and management are good. The department was well led through the disruption of last year and is recovering well. Working documentation has focused on priority areas to ensure

students' learning continues uninterrupted. Now, there is a full complement of well qualified teachers who work well as a team to raise the standards of attainment. The assessment system, however, does not yet provide National Curriculum levels or short-term targets. ICT is not yet used enough by all students. These shortcomings are recognised and are priorities in departmental planning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient rooms dedicated to the teaching and learning of mathematics, and these have insufficient storage for resources. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All issues from the last inspection have been overcome and implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has improved the quality of teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

97. Students' mathematical skills are above average and support their learning in other subjects well. For example, geography, history and science departments make good use of students' numerical skills and develop them well. In science, students use equations, graphs and many forms of units well. In geography and history, students produce a wide variety of data analyses and high quality presentations. In business education lessons, students are confident in their use of business-related calculations. Most other subject areas help students to practise their skills satisfactorily. The formal development of the numeracy initiative was interrupted last year; a re-launch is intended.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above those found nationally.
- Good teaching engages students' interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Leadership and management are very good and science has a positive and exciting image.
- ICT is not used enough by students.
- Extra-curricular activities are well developed and enjoyed by students.

Commentary

98. Overall, students achieve well by the end of Year 9. On entry to the school at age 11 years, their attainment is usually typical of that usually found nationally, and their standards by Year 9 are well above average. They continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Students' results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved. In 2003, they were well above the national average, including attainment at level 6 and above. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average. Results in the GCSE double award examinations have also improved considerably over the past five years. They were the best ever achieved in 2004, when the percentage of students gaining higher grades was substantially above the national average. In a recent innovation in Years 10 and 11, one group of students each year takes three separate science subjects; three-quarters of these are predicted to gain passes in the range A* to C in their first examination in 2005.
99. Standards in lessons are good and students of different ability from many social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Students in Year 7 quickly develop practical skills in using the microscope and lower attaining students in Year 10 work very well together and are successful and confident in their work on extracting copper from copper oxide.
100. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good overall with many examples of very good practice. The clear explanation of learning objectives and the successful use of starter and plenary activities are well developed from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Thorough and detailed planning of lessons, often with effective and illustrated presentations and focused questioning, helps students to learn well. Students are well motivated and enthusiastic and use

equipment with care and enjoyment. They work hard both independently and in small groups, and are confident and competent learners

101. The leadership and management of the new head of department are very good. Documentation has been very recently reviewed and updated following last year's crisis. It is clear and helpful to teachers. Departmental organisation is very effective and supportive. The subject leader treats people with sensitivity and the team of teachers and other colleagues are very well supported. There is a keen sense of purpose; knowledge and understanding of science are high. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching are underdeveloped and the sharing of good practice is not yet sufficiently used. The team of three technicians provides excellent support to practical science, although technician time is generally low.
102. Since the last inspection, there have been major changes in staffing, responsibilities and resources, which have brought about very good improvement in the way the science curriculum is organised. All courses have been reviewed, updated and resourced, and some recently improved ICT facilities are now in use. Assessment is regular and rigorous and assists students to understand what is required for improvement. However, liaison with other establishments is not well developed and, following the recent widespread contamination of equipment from asbestos, students' use of ICT is not yet practised well enough. Students' work of good quality is on display throughout the department and supports a popular and positive image of women in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2004 GCSE examination results were of average standard, and much better than those of 2003.
- Good teaching is encouraging successful learning.
- Students' very good behaviour and attitudes help them to achieve well.
- Assessment is not well enough established.
- Students' use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

103. Standards by the end of Year 9 are at the levels usually found nationally. This shows good achievement given students' attainment on entry to the school. In Years 7 to 9, students use word processing and multi-media software packages to present work. They use databases and spreadsheets to process information and are confident users of the Internet to research topics. Higher attainers work quickly, talk knowledgeably and produce ICT work of good quality. Lower attaining students have satisfactory technical skills but complete less work in lessons. Gifted and talented students achieve well themselves, and readily help others. In the lessons seen, students from all backgrounds and of different competence, including those with special educational needs, made good progress.
104. By the end of Year 11, students who study for the GCSE examination are confident users of a range of ICT applications. Their levels of skills are average, but they achieve well. High attaining students in these groups have a good understanding of computers and their uses. They are able to give good descriptions of how they have used various packages. Lower attaining students produce work that shows their satisfactory technical skills. The GCSE examination results of the 57 candidates in 2004 were at the national average. This was a considerable improvement on the well below average results in 2003. ICT has been underdeveloped in the past, and standards and achievement are now rising.

105. Teaching and learning in the lessons specially timetabled for ICT are good. Lessons are well structured, the pace of learning is brisk and clear learning objectives are met. The use of data projectors is now having a good effect on students' learning, because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. All teachers have good understanding of the subject and use this to positive effect. Regular checks on individual progress are made in lessons and provide students with good support and guidance. Good use is made technical support in ICT. However, a scheme of assessment is not established well enough. Consequently, students are not sure how well they are achieving in Years 10 and 11, and some do not know the National Curriculum levels at which they are working.
106. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a strong commitment by all staff to raising students' attainment further, but effective assessment arrangements are not yet in place. The satisfactory improvement since the last inspection has been helped by the significant increase in the numbers of computers and the use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. Most students use ICT. However, their skills are not being recognised sufficiently or built on in their learning across the curriculum. The crisis brought about by the asbestos disaster set back the implementation of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum. Subsequently, computer resources have been replaced and updated and the ratio of computers to students is now well above the national average for secondary schools. Technical support is good.
108. Opportunities are missed to use ICT to support learning in art, English, media studies, science, mathematics and religious education. In a few subjects, for example, in music, students have good experience and practice in the use of ICT. However, most other subjects have yet to achieve this level of use. Computerised projectors are increasingly being used well to present information to students in ICT lessons and in a few other subject areas. This equipment has only very recently become available in the school and, consequently, teachers with access to it, as in modern foreign languages, are slowly gaining the experience and confidence to use it effectively. Taking measurements and the use of controlling devices with ICT are underdeveloped in design and technology, for example. Overall, students' use of ICT across the curriculum is insufficient.
109. Not all students in Years 10 and 11 receive their statutory entitlement to ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching promotes very well the learning of students of all levels of attainment.
- Students have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Leadership and management are restoring the department to a strong position.
- Marking is not monitored enough.

Commentary

110. Students enter the school having attained the standards broadly expected nationally in the subject. The work seen during the inspection indicates that by the end of Year 9, standards are above the national expectation for this age group. Teachers' assessments confirm this. These standards represent good achievement by students of different competence and from all backgrounds.

111. In Year 7, an intensive course of study sees basic geographical and numerical skills put in place. From Years 7 to 9, a strong emphasis on developing students' written and investigative skills results in good project work. This activity increases students' understanding of geographical processes and patterns, and prepares them well for coursework in future years. Although still requiring further development, ICT is used well in much of the students' work, particularly homework. Their understanding and confidence in the subject grows rapidly.
112. Recruitment to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is good, but has not usually included the highest attainers from Year 9. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are in line with the national average and GCSE examination results in 2003 confirm this. In 2004, results improved and were a little above average. By the end of Year 11 overall, achievement is satisfactory. Lower attainers and students with special educational needs reach their targets. During Years 10 and 11, students consolidate their investigative techniques and learn skills to enable them to realise their potential in the GCSE examination. In work on the town of Kettering, they are able to hypothesise, gather and analyse data, devise suitable methods for the investigation, and reach well founded geographical judgements. Much emphasis is placed, throughout the course, on students learning to think and plan for themselves, as demonstrated well in discussion in the classroom.
113. Teaching and learning are very good for Years 7 to 9, and good for Years 10 and 11. Teachers use their subject knowledge well and the pace and momentum of lessons keep students motivated and interested. There is constant challenge, for students at all levels, to go further with their studies. Students are very attentive and they work well individually and in pairs. There is good use of the methods of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and regular reinforcement of learning. Teachers have high expectations of students' effort and behaviour, and the response they get does not disappoint. However, standards reached are influenced by the restricted numbers of higher attaining students who take the subject in Years 10 and 11. Learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is very good, but insufficient attention is given to the monitoring of marking, and the setting of targets.
114. Leadership and management are good. The staff are a united team, under a new leader, capable of completing the restoration of the department following recent difficulties. There are clear priorities and energetic guidance with particular commitment to equality of access to the curriculum. This team is continuing the good progress made since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in history and consistently attain well above average results in GCSE examinations.
- Students receive very good teaching; students appreciate this and enjoy their lessons.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Use of ICT is not yet practised enough.

Commentary

115. Girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve very well. Students enter the school with levels of attainment broadly similar to those found nationally. By the end of Year 9, many girls achieve well above the national standard. This represents very good achievement in their first three years in the school. In Year 7, students begin to recognise the importance of chronology and draw evidence from historical pictures to appreciate the qualities of leadership. By Year 9, all students, including those with special educational needs, apply a deeper knowledge and understanding of history and interpret sources of evidence competently. Students appreciate, for example, how the acquisition of the vote for women was to change their role in British

society. The most able students practise styles of persuasive writing, and then listen attentively to their peers. Students enjoy their lessons and often contribute enthusiastically to discussion. Students with a variety of special educational needs all manage a good quantity of work and begin well to combine bullet points into structured writing.

116. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average and GCSE examination results are consistently well above the national average. In 2004, results improved further when a third of the girls achieved an A* or A grade. For many students, history is one of their strongest subjects. This is very good achievement for students of all competences, including those with special educational needs, most of whom gain an external qualification in history. Their work includes vibrant descriptions of Elizabethan theatre. Individual, well considered coursework compares the façade and interior of the locally situated Boughton House with the Palace of Versailles.
117. Teaching and learning are very good. They are never less than satisfactory, and three lessons observed were excellent. Teaching is very well informed by impressive subject knowledge. The very thorough planning of lessons promotes a positive learning ethos within a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Students are guided sensitively to interpret historical events and challenged to achieve high standards. They enjoy independent study and work well in small groups. However, very occasionally, less successful lessons show less effective management of students, and too little time is given for students to record homework assignments. Nevertheless, teachers know their students very well. Marking is supportive and assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection.
118. The department is very well led and managed. The history team has responded very effectively to restore the departmental ethos following the difficulties of last year. Revised schemes of work have been designed to promote student self-confidence and success. Students' ICT skills and the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice were restricted last year and more is to be done. However, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are above average.
- Teaching is good, and some is very good.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well.
- Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum well.
- ICT is not used enough.
- The allocation of time to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is barely adequate.

Commentary

119. By Year 9, students from all , social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well and make good progress. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. They learn facts about the religions that they study and apply their knowledge and understanding to their own lives. For example, Year 9 students were asked to think of their own special places, leading on to understanding why Muslims find Mecca special.
120. In the present Year 11, the students who are following the GCSE examination course (30 per cent of the year group) also attain above average standards, and they are achieving well. Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 for the 30 per cent entered were above average. All students achieved well. However, standards of the work seen during the inspection for the 70 per cent of the year groups not following the GCSE examination course are average. The barely

adequate allocation of timetabled time for the subject severely restricts the amount of work that can be covered. So, although achievement is generally satisfactory, students do not achieve as well as might be expected from the good teaching that they receive. This lack of time is often countered by lively debates, such as the one heard in Year 11 about abortion. Nevertheless, analysis of students' work shows that very little has been recorded by Year 11 since the beginning of the autumn term.

121. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and some is very good. Teachers provide imaginative activities that involve students fully. They frequently encourage students to give their own opinions and ideas. For example, Year 7 considered life-changing events in the lives of some religious founders. They sat quietly and thought about events or places that had affected on their own lives. Good use is made of religious objects. This was seen in a very good Year 8 lesson, where a very well prepared Seder table enabled students to see the objects that they later researched in books.
122. Leadership and management are good and ensure much very good teaching takes place. In spite of losing all the department's documents in the difficulties of last year, schemes of work are now largely in place again. Much work has been done to restore all planning and systems. The head of department is well aware of how to take the department forward and leads a good team. For example, although the use of ICT is unsatisfactory at present, this has already been identified as a priority and the department is working to rectify the shortcoming. The inclusion of visits to places of worship, and visitors to talk to students enhance the curriculum well. The visitor to Year 9, talking about the Hajj for Muslims, enabled all students to learn well from someone who had first-hand experience of the pilgrimage.
123. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The allocation of only one lesson per fortnight for Years 10 and 11, and its consequences, have reduced the overall provision, and the rate of improvement, from good to satisfactory. Nevertheless, teaching has improved, results in GCSE examinations remain above average and the department is steadily strengthening after a year of great difficulty.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes to the subject are good in all years and help to maintain satisfactory achievement.
- Teachers ensure that behaviour is good and that students work well together.
- National Curriculum requirements are not met, because systems and control are not covered sufficiently.
- The lack of a subject specialist leader and some non-specialist teaching adversely affect the standards achieved.
- There is no technical support, and this impacts badly on teachers' workloads and affects the delivery of the curriculum.

Commentary

124. Students' attainment on entry to the school is below the standards usually found nationally. Few students on entry to Year 7 reach the levels expected in all aspects of the subject. During their first three years in the school, students make sufficient gains in skills, knowledge and understanding but their standards remain below nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9.

125. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were below the national average for those gaining grades A* to C. In resistant materials, results were broadly average. Textile technology results were below average and, in graphic products, they were well below. The standards of work seen during the inspection were below average. Despite the difficulties of the previous year, GCSE examination results were better than those of 2003, and a number of students gained A* and A grades.
126. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students achieve satisfactorily. Design work reflects the needs of the end-user and students use machine and hand-tools with accuracy. Students with special educational needs are given good support and achieve designs comparable with others of their age. Students from all cultural backgrounds perform equally well. Achievement is also satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Design work shows some evidence of ICT being used to support presentation, but there is little done to aid the design or manufacture. All groups of students were restricted last year in the amount of practical work possible, but opportunities are now better. The range of materials used remains limited, with wood and MDF being the dominant media. Achievement is equally satisfactory across all groups of students in Years 10 and 11.
127. The quality of teaching in design and technology is satisfactory. Some good and very good lessons were observed. Specialist teachers have a good command of the subject. In the better lessons, planning was effective, time used well and management of students was good. Students were fully involved in lessons because teachers used targeted questions to challenge and test their knowledge and understanding. Other lessons lacked structure and variety of teaching methods, resulting in slow pace and lack of motivation. The pace was often determined by the students, who in Years 10 and 11 did not always know how well they were doing or what the deadlines were for completing the work. Students' attitudes were positive, with enthusiasm very evident in the lower years, particularly in Year 7 textiles and food.
128. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of faculty is effective, but has no specialist head of subject to guide curricular development and its delivery, as there were no applicants for this post. The head of faculty has begun to create an effective young team, but some are timetabled to work outside their subject specialism. Assessment is inconsistent across the disciplines. The curriculum does not cover all requirements of National Curriculum for design and technology, because there is insufficient use of systems and control. The subject has no technician to support it, and this puts pressure on teachers who have to prepare resources for lessons and maintain tools and equipment for themselves. As a result, some aspects are neglected because materials are not available when required. Although staffing and other difficulties have adversely impacted on the potential progress of the subject, overall, improvement has been just satisfactory since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

129. The focus was on art and design, dance and music. Drama and media studies were sampled.
130. The school teaches **drama** to all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 for one lesson every two weeks. It is also a popular option in Years 10 and 11. A high proportion of students chooses the subject as a GCSE examination course compared with national figures, and results were above average in 2004. Students begin the course in Year 7 with little experience of the subject and their achievement is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, they achieve well and develop enthusiasm and enhance well their skills of performance and evaluation. In a Year 10 lesson seen, very good teaching enabled students to develop their understanding and interpretation of characters in John Godber's *Shakers*. The students supported each other very well and, objectively, evaluated each other's work. Drama clubs, theatre visits and regular productions provide good opportunities for students to develop their skills further.

131. The school provides **media studies** as an option for students in Years 10 and 11 and approximately 50 students take the subject in the GCSE examination each year. Results are consistently well above the national average and the vast majority of students achieved grades A* to C in 2003 and 2004. One lesson was seen in which Year 10 pupils expressed interest and enthusiasm for the course and developed a good understanding of technical terms used in newspaper layouts. However, they did not use the ICT equipment available to enhance their learning.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have enabled the subject to recover from the crisis of last year.
- Students studying for GCSE examinations are very well monitored and supported, so that they achieve well.
- The deployment of non-specialist staff in Years 7 to 9 adversely affects the standards attained.
- ICT is not used enough.

Commentary

132. As students join the school in Year 7, the standards of their work match those found nationally, reflected in their earliest work in the school. Girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well because they follow a structured course, which establishes and develops their basic art-making skills. By Year 9, students can draw well enough, using a good range of media and they write well in evaluations of their own and different artists' work. Standards could be higher still, but for the deployment of non-specialist staff in Years 7 to 9. Students' access to ICT in making and modifying their work was lost during last year's crisis and has not yet been re-established.
133. In Years 10 and 11, students use a good range of media and techniques to explore broad themes and the work of artists. Standards are above those typically seen nationally. There is a high level of technical competence, particularly in drawing, painting and mixed media approaches. Though some students use ICT to develop their work, this is not sufficiently developed in most students' work. Girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well because their progress is closely monitored and they are well supported.
134. GCSE examination results in 2004 matched the national average. However, many students gained the highest grade and none were awarded the lowest two grades. Standards were maintained from earlier years, despite the difficulties of working in temporary accommodation last year.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and some very good teaching of the GCSE examination course was seen. The work is challenging. Lessons are well structured to ensure the interest and involvement of all students. However, in some lessons, non-specialist teachers do not have sufficient command of the subject. Assessment is used well to encourage and to give specific advice on improvement. In Year 11, it is very well used so that students are clear about what they must do to improve.
136. The subject is well led and managed. The difficulties resulting from the crisis of accommodation and lack of resources last year were well managed so that GCSE examination results were maintained. Teachers are given good support and the work of the department is well monitored. With standards rising from the last inspection, improvement has been good.

Dance

Provision in dance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are impressively high.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are extensive.
- Cramped accommodation is unhelpful to standards and achievement.

Commentary

137. Most students enter the school with little experience of dance. By the end of Year 9 students are performing at a high level and achieve very well. They develop basic skills and learn to work well together. They move with increasing fluency and control to develop quality and expression in their actions. Standards are above those expected nationally in all lessons and students from all ethnic and social backgrounds achieve, equally, very well. GCSE examination results were well above average in 2004, when almost all the 14 candidates attained A* to C grades, and half gained A* and A grades. Standards are aided by the recent extended provision of dance throughout Years 7 to 9.
138. Teaching and learning are very good in all lessons. Expert subject knowledge enables teachers to deliver well planned developmental activities to help students to acquire a very good understanding of choreographic principles. Students achieve very well, showing great interest and enthusiasm for their lessons. Extra-curricular clubs are oversubscribed, and some 130 students attend lunchtime and after-school clubs. Seven students have passed rigorous auditions for the County Youth Dance Company.
139. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher-in-charge has exceptional expertise and experience to inspire and motivate students. She provides an excellent role model for those aspiring to follow dance courses in higher education.
140. Accommodation is a converted classroom, small in size for large groups, with no designated changing room. Flooring is good, but it is laid over concrete, so care has to be taken with elevated jumps. The dimensions of the room restrict the use of long, traveling, step patterns. Consequently, students' understanding and development of choreography are hindered. Despite these practical difficulties, improvement has been very good since the last inspection. Dance is now firmly established in the curriculum, where it is an increasingly popular GCSE examination course and it also gives students impressive extra-curricular opportunities.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below those expected in Years 7 to 9, because insufficient lesson time is allocated to Year 9.
- Teaching is mainly good and, in GCSE examination work, it is very good.
- Opportunities in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes and behave very well; relationships are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good. Teachers have complementary strengths and work well as a team.
- The accommodation does not have enough practice areas or adequate soundproofing.

Commentary

141. A number of instrumentalists enter the school attaining above the standards typical of students at age 11. Most students enter with standards below those typical nationally.
142. By the end of Year 9, standards are below expected national levels, and teachers' realistic assessments confirm this. Most students are working at National Curriculum level 3 or 4, rather than the expected level 5, but a few talented students reach higher levels. Year 9 students, whose work was disrupted by last year's crisis, only receive one music lesson every two weeks from the current timetable. This is inadequate and adversely affects their achievement. Some classes in other years have lessons timetabled irregularly within the fortnightly timetable, with two lessons in one week and none in the next, for example.
143. Students sing in lessons and make good use of keyboards and other musical technologies. However, they do not use their own instruments enough in classwork to exploit the instrumental tuition they receive or to strengthen classroom work. Students enjoy composing, but their understanding of devices and music-reading skills are below average. They listen respectfully to recordings and to each other in practical work. More experienced students use technical vocabulary in appraising music, but general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, artists, forms and well-known pieces of music, is below average. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9.
144. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well. GCSE examination results have usually been above average, as are current standards in Year 11. Standards in Year 10 are well above average. Students enjoy singing, but have very variable instrumental skills in Years 10 and Year 11 from beginners to instrumentalists at Grade V111 of the Royal School of Music examinations. Most have understanding of harmony, devices and structures and create imaginative compositions. They use music technologies well (including keyboards or computers at home) to develop pieces and notate work. They listen very respectfully and show good general musical knowledge. All are well supported by instrumental lessons.
145. Teaching is good overall. In examination work and extra-curricular work, much teaching is very good. The best lessons are well planned and teachers demonstrate, accompany, direct or conduct skilfully. Most lessons are lively and students remain interested because of the practical approach, varied activities and teachers' good management of classes. Instructions are clear. Expectations are usually high so that students are challenged and enjoy lessons. Students from all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated in lessons. Students are good humoured, work productively and support each other well. They respect staff and relationships are very good at all levels.
146. Leadership and management in music are very good. The new subject leader is hardworking, innovative and committed to raising standards. Staff are working well as a team to introduce a more balanced curriculum. The accommodation lacks soundproofing and sufficient teaching areas for work in small groups. Assessment is accurate; a strong feature of it is the effective use of video to record performances. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Music makes a most valuable contribution to students' personal development, especially their social and cultural development and the ethos of the school. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, commitment of parents and the enthusiasm of the many talented musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school and this developing department.
147. Provision for instrumental tuition, which is subsidised by the school, is good. Approximately 140 girls, about 15 per cent, a high number, receive lessons from seven visiting teachers. Standards are broadly average and the achievement of students is good in relation to their ages, the time they have received tuition and the short 20 minute lessons. Teaching is good as seen in violin and wind tuition.

148. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is good and developing. Standards and the quality of teaching are good and often very good. Instrumental and school staff give good support to these groups. The school promotes many musical events including regular concerts involving many students. Groups perform at local events and performed last summer at the Festival of Youth in London. Students have attended workshops given by visiting musicians.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Quality of leadership and management is very good.
- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good, and few students come unprepared for lessons.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- The accommodation is poor.

Commentary

149. Year 7 students enter the school with attainment broadly in line with national expectations. They make good progress to achieve well by Year 9. The more able make better progress and many of these are already reaching standards above, and in some cases, well above national expectations. Extra-curricular activities before school are helping to raise standards among the more able and most motivated students.
150. By Year 9, standards show students of differing competence from all social and ethnic backgrounds at the nationally expected level. Higher attaining students achieve higher standards, as seen in Year 7 gymnastics, where paired sequence work shows good fluency and increasing control.
151. By Year 11, students achieve satisfactorily and reach standards in line with the national expectation. GCSE examination results in 2004 were below average, but the course, including its theoretical aspects, was badly affected by the crisis of last year. Predictions for GCSE examination results in 2005 are rightly positive. Standards in Year 11 theoretical work seen during the inspection show how changes in timetabling arrangements are having a positive impact. Standards in compulsory lessons in Year 10 are broadly in line with national expectations, as students develop new skills across a range of new activities, aimed at increasing participation and motivation, such as jazz dance and kick boxing. Although there is a good allocation of time for lessons in Years 7 to 9, Year 11 students are only timetabled for one hour each fortnight, well below the national expectation, and this restricts what can be achieved in the course that all students must follow.
152. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good, and sometimes very good. In Years 10 and 11, they are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Students enjoy their lessons and few come unprepared. Relationships are good. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been thoroughly implemented. It has had a beneficial impact on the planning of lessons. Methods of assessment are identified. Assessment booklets are used with Years 7 and 8 and target cards with older students. National Curriculum levels are on display in the changing rooms, so that students can see clearly what they need to do to reach higher levels. Teachers cover all strands of the National Curriculum, and plan the learning in short, progressive sections. They give students good time to practise and consolidate learning. Lessons are well resourced, with innovative ideas, for example, the use of dolls in Year 11 theoretical work to illustrate body type. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on health-related fitness in Years 7 to 9 so as to lay sound foundations for the theoretical aspects of GCSE examination courses.

153. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is dedicated, reflective, self-critical, ambitious and keen to learn. Self-evaluation is used well, and openness to change leads to improvement. Performance management is used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning, as is the link with initial teaching training. The department has strong links with governors. High priority is placed on developing skills and deploying staff. Procedures are established and monitored. Management is flexible to cope with change and committed to enabling the school to fulfil its vision as a sports college. There is a strong team spirit which enabled the department to cope with the difficulties of last year. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Specialist status has been achieved with additional specialist staff appointed.
154. Accommodation is poor and a constraint on students' achievement. Changing space is very cramped for the large number of students timetabled for most lessons. Mixed ages often have to share the same area. The shower area is used for changing, and some students choose to change in the toilets. The limitations of the indoor facilities - one gymnasium and some use of the multi-purpose hall during inclement weather, lead to lessons continuing outdoors whenever possible. The gymnasium is used as an assembly area and this leads to some delay to the start of lessons. The increase in the number of staff and the number of lessons has put a great strain on the indoor accommodation. Outdoor facilities are good. Classroom space for theoretical work is satisfactory.
155. The quality and range of extra-curricular provision are very good and many students from all backgrounds benefit from well structured activities, including competitive matches with other schools, and at which the school is very successful. Staff give willingly of their time to organise these activities. A significant number of students are successful at local, county and international level across a range of sports. Students can gain the Junior Sports Leader Award.
156. The school gained specialist status as a **sports college** in September 2004. A detailed plan is in place and progress in the current academic year has been very good. All staff are now in place and families established for the School Sports Coordinator initiative. The limiting factor is the accommodation. Without significant improvement to the accommodation, progress as a specialist college will be severely curtailed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

157. Five lessons in **personal, social and health education** were sampled during the inspection. The teaching and learning were consistently good and students achieved well. Lesson topics included preparation for work experience, health and safety risks when traveling abroad, and healthy eating. One very well taught Year 11 skills for life lesson for lower attaining students was seen that helped them to understand their rights and responsibilities as members of the community.
158. Two lessons were seen in child development in Years 10 and 11. Both lessons were well taught and students learned and achieved well. Methods from the Key Stage 3 Strategy were well applied in these lessons for older students. The Year 10 students assessed children's games and puzzles, although with some hesitation at first. The Year 11 students consolidated work on ante-natal care effectively. Child development is a popular and successful subject option in Years 10 and 11.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A well planned scheme of work has been incorporated into the PSHE programme.
- Experienced teachers are well supported by subject departmental contributions.
- The school fosters a good sense of community and social responsibility.
- The implementation of the citizenship programme has been delayed by the extraordinary difficulties experienced by the school last year.

Commentary

159. Students from all social and ethnic backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. Girls meet nationally expected standards by the end of Years 9 and 11. The school fosters a good sense of community and social responsibility.
160. Year 7 students satisfactorily develop a knowledge and understanding of moral and social issues relating to informed citizens. In Year 7 history lessons, they compare the qualities of a good Roman leader with today's leaders. By Year 9, students have a broad understanding of legal and human rights issues. They complete a major Francophone project and make good use of the Internet and ICT, although these skills are less apparent in other departments. PSHE themes consider health and safety issues encountered in foreign travel.
161. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students demonstrate good communication skills in oral and written work and communicate their findings effectively. For example, during the inspection, a Year 8 tutor group organised a sponsorship for the tsunami appeal. They discussed how the adversity caused by natural hazards brings together peoples of different religions. Students expressed their own feelings maturely. The very successful outcomes of a 2004 Olympic Day in September emphasised the opening of the sports college, when the whole day's event allowed students to work in mixed-age groups to produce a large collage.
162. Students enjoy the elections to the school council and they participate in a wide range of community events. They are very mature and sensible in their conduct around the school and in their work with the community. For example, Year 10 students organise a tea dance for senior citizens. They provide waitress service, and musical groups provide the entertainment. Students also participate in national events.
163. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory, with some good features in PSHE lessons. However, cross-curricular teaching does not always clarify the elements of citizenship well enough. Lessons are well planned. Question and answer sessions promote good learning and students achieved well within the few lessons observed. Lower attaining students benefit from a Skills-for-Life programme which helps to develop their skills as citizens well.
164. Subject leadership and management were strengthened in 2004 with an additional senior appointment to coordinate the subject provision and are satisfactory. The subject leader is well supported by an experienced PSHE team. Later this year the planned curriculum is to be introduced to supplement the cross-curricular contributions and a programme of visiting speakers is to be enhanced. The restricted allocation of lesson time is to be extended by full-day conferences. The department is well resourced. Assessment procedures are not yet in place and citizenship is at too early a stage of development for review.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

AS-level data refer only to Year 13 students who sat an examination in 2004; students in other year groups are not included.

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	4	50	78	25	22	22.5	28.5
Biology	1	100	63	100	10	50.0	19.8
Chemistry	1	100	70	0	13	20.0	23.0
Communication Studies	3	100	87	0	25	36.7	32.8
Dance	4	75	82	25	22	27.5	29.7
Drama	2	100	87	0	20	30.0	30.9
English language	5	100	85	0	16	26.0	29.0
English literature	3	100	86	0	17	33.3	29.7
Design and Technology	6	83	73	17	14	26.7	24.3
General Studies	1	0	74	0	17	0.0	25.5
Geography	4	50	75	0	20	15.0	27.0
German	1	100	82	0	19	20.0	28.8
History	4	100	82	50	21	42.5	29.2
Information Technology	7	57	67	0	9	14.3	20.6
Mathematics	8	100	60	25	14	38.8	20.5
Music	1	100	80	0	17	20.0	27.5
Other Social Studies	5	80	68	0	15	26.0	23.2
Physics	3	67	66	0	15	16.7	22.4
Vocational Studies	8	87	57	12	9	31.3	18.0

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	2	100	98	50	50	100.0	87.1
Biology	6	100	97	83	40	96.7	79.3
Business	16	100	92	34	24	83.8	67.9
Chemistry	3	100	98	67	50	100.0	85.7
Communication Studies	10	100	99	50	40	92.0	83.5
Drama	14	100	100	43	43	82.9	85.1

English language	11	100	99	27	36	80.0	81.1
English literature	12	100	99	58	45	88.3	85.5
French	9	100	99	33	53	82.2	88.9
Design and Technology	9	100	98	22	35	60.0	77.9
Geography	3	100	99	33	46	73.3	85.2
German	2	100	99	0	50	60.0	86.3
History	6	100	99	50	46	86.7	85.1
Information Technology	5	80	96	0	26	36.0	71.1
Mathematics	5	100	97	80	57	96.0	89.5
Music	2	100	98	0	37	60.0	79.5
Other Social Studies	11	100	97	64	42	98.2	81.6
Physics	1	100	97	0	45	80.0	82.6
Religious Studies	8	100	99	37	49	82.5	87.4
Sociology	1	100	98	0	45	80.0	84.6
Sports/PE Studies	2	100	98	50	31	90.0	75.4
Vocational Studies	4	100	91	75	24	100.0	67.1

During some days of the inspection, students in both Years 12 and 13 were involved in sitting AS or A-level examinations. This situation restricted the opportunities inspectors had to observe lessons. However, lessons were seen in all subjects, and students' work was analysed in the nine subjects reported in full below.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French, and German and Spanish were sampled. In the Year 12 **Spanish** lesson seen at GCSE examination level, the teaching and learning were good. Students attained above average standards and achieved well. In the Year 12 AS-level **German** lesson seen, the teaching was good. Students' learning and achievement were satisfactory; they struggled with aspects of the work. Their attainment was below average.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes; they work hard and are keen to learn.
- Teachers do not make enough reference to assessment objectives.

Commentary

165. The school teaches both English language and English literature courses at AS and A-level. In 2004, A-level results were above the national average in English literature and in line with the national average in English language.

166. Current standards in Year 13 are above average in English literature and students are achieving well. No English language work was available because of examinations during the inspection. Many students are very articulate. They are able to make a personal response to challenging texts and provide good evidence to back up their views. They are aware of the social and historical background to plays such as *Journey's End* and *Oh What a Lovely War* and

confidently discuss Brechtian devices used by the playwrights. However, some average and lower attaining students have difficulty structuring their writing to respond directly to essay questions.

167. Year 12 English literature and English language students are building well on their previous GCSE examination results. Current standards in English literature are typical of those found nationally, but are below this level in English language. However, this is because students' attainment on entry to the literature course is higher than those studying English language. For all students, irrespective of their social or ethnic backgrounds, achievement is good. English literature students are developing confidence in the analysis of writers' use of language for effect. English language students are developing a good grasp of specific terminology and language frameworks. They are beginning to use these well to analyse their own original writing, much of which shows good adaptation of style to purpose.
168. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons very well, with a good mix of activities that allow all students to participate and take responsibility for their own learning. Students' response is very positive. They are eager to learn, work hard and willingly complete homework in preparation for future lessons. Teachers provide very supportive guidance when marking students' essays; some of their advice is very lengthy and shows their obvious commitment to helping students. However, their use of assessment objectives is inconsistent and students are not sufficiently aware of precisely what they need to do to achieve higher grades.
169. Leadership is good and the management of sixth form courses is efficient. In particular, teachers have worked hard as a team to overcome difficulties caused by disruption and illness in the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results have improved in recent years and good teaching has been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

170. Standards of language and literacy are good. Students are articulate and contribute well to class discussions, using appropriate terminology and technical terms in all subjects. They read texts in the subjects of their choice with good understanding and are able to write at length in a range of styles. Teachers mark students' written work regularly and provide suitable advice to help them improve the structure of their essays.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Few students enrol for sixth form courses.

Commentary

171. Two students sat the A-level examination in 2003 and eight in 2004. Results were just above average in 2003 and remained close to that standard in 2004.
172. Students enter the sixth form courses with average competence. All six students currently in Year 12 are achieving well. They have attained standards above average for this stage of the course. Standards are just above average in Year 13, and improving. Students in both years write accurately and have a sound knowledge of grammar. They are committed students and take pride in their work. They develop a good knowledge of specialist vocabulary over a wide

range of topics. They learn how to express their ideas clearly in spoken and written French. Two of the three students in Year 13 benefit from close personal contacts with French speakers. All profit from the up-to-date reading material available and use the Internet for research and practice.

173. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers work well as a team, know their students well and give them good advice and help. They are fluent linguists, who use the language extensively to develop students' listening and speaking skills. Their enthusiasm and energy are infectious, and students enjoy the very well designed lessons. Teachers' priority is to improve the quality and sophistication of students' French. One Year 13 lesson on synonyms expanded students' command of the language considerably. Students are encouraged to use their initiative and to think about the way the language works. They develop very good independent study skills. Sadly, the small size of advanced course classes restricts the range of activities possible.
174. The course is well led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All candidates have passed the A-level examination in recent years.
- Good teaching provides well structured lessons and clear insights into new topics.
- Students have very mature attitudes which support their independent learning well.
- Individual targets are set using averaged point scores GCSE examination results, and these do not reflect students' subject potential well enough.

Commentary

175. Results at A-level have varied in quality since 2002, but all students have been successful. Numbers recruited to the course have been low. In 2004, A-level results were above those expected from the average sixth form. All students completing Year 12 gained AS-level grades. Most students continue to study mathematics in Year 13.
176. Standards of attainment seen in lessons are well above those expected for A-level mathematics courses. The entry requirements to the course specify a grade B, or higher, in the GCSE examination. All students, from different backgrounds and with differing abilities, are able to benefit well from the course. This results in individual work of very high quality. Year 12 students cover their programmes of study well and produce very detailed notes to support their learning. Year 13 students are confident, independent learners with mature attitudes to their work. In lessons, they focus closely on their work and show good understanding of mathematical concepts and method. Their files and notebooks are presented methodically and reflect their aptitude and interest in mathematics.
177. Teaching is good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and experience provide well structured lessons, providing clear development of new ideas and methods. This enables good learning and provides solid foundations for further progress. All lessons have pace and challenge which extend students' understanding. Teachers know their students well and provide appropriate support when required.
178. Leadership and management are good. Course teachers are well qualified to deliver course requirements. There is good induction to the course and students feel they are well provided for. Open discussion provides understanding of how students can improve. However, targets set at the beginning of Year 12, based on GCSE examination results, in the form of an average point

score from a student's results in all GCSE subjects, are often not indicative enough of a student's mathematical potential. Consequently, individual students' judgements of their own progress are not always well founded. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

179. Students' mathematical skills are above average and support their studies in other subjects well. Very good numerical skills are evident in accountancy lessons. In the history A-level course, students handle statistical data well. In science lessons, mathematical skills are well practised across a broad range of topics, often complementing earlier work done in the mathematics department. There have been opportunities for re-sitting of GCSE examinations to improve grades and for students to experience mathematics as part of key skills. However, at the time of inspection, these particular courses were not running.

SCIENCE

180. The focus was on biology. Chemistry and physics were sampled. In **chemistry**, a well taught and well prepared lesson on enthalpy enabled the students to begin this new topic successfully. The Year 13 **physics** lesson seen on revision of waves, fields and nuclear energy was well taught and the few students achieved consolidation of their earlier learning of the topic.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work hard and achieve very well; their attitudes to the course are very positive.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan lessons very well.
- The assessment of students' work is very good and is used effectively to support learning.

Commentary

181. Students entering advanced courses generally do so with good qualifications from GCSE examinations. The number of students transferring from Year 12 AS-level courses to A-level in Year 13 is small, typically between two and five students; once settled on the course, they remain for the duration. The A-level pass rate is very good and all students usually gain high grades in A-level examinations at the end of Year 13. With the exception of 2003, the rate has been regularly well above the national average. There is no apparent difference in the performance of students arising from their different ethnic or social backgrounds.
182. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above the national average. Students achieve very well. Year 12 students have a sound appreciation of genes and genetic engineering and an increasing understanding of the base-pairing rules. In preparation for further work, others rehearse their knowledge and understanding of the mass transport systems in humans with impressive understanding. In their work on photosynthesis, Year 13 students show understanding of the function and activity of chloroplasts and are able to tackle, with confidence, the notion of light and dark stages of reactions. Year 13 students display maturity in the way they take notes from teachers' presentations, which are of high quality.
183. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers use a range of strategies well and they have high expectations of the standards to which students should aspire. The planning of lessons and laboratory organisation are very well done. Resources are used effectively, and the frequent use of focused questions helps students to learn very well. Teachers are very good role models and their enthusiasm is reflected in the excellent attitudes and high quality of work of students in both year groups.

184. A group of three teachers presently shares the responsibility for biology in the sixth form. These colleagues work very closely together and the quality of leadership is good overall. Teachers and technicians have a keen sense of common purpose, an excellent knowledge and understanding of biology, and manage the course very well. They encourage very high standards of commitment and, in response, most students produce well organised folders which contain detailed and useful notes.
185. Since the last inspection, there has been significant improvement in the way biology is organised and taught. There has been recent and major change in staffing and an increase in confidence in the use of ICT by teachers. Schemes of work have been revised and rewritten following the major losses of last year. Additional resources and lesson plans are now regularly produced. Assessment is effective and supports learning well. The biology field-studies week is popular and successful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students benefit from teaching that is knowledgeable and challenging.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject help them to learn.
- Pass rates on AS and A-level are below the national average.

Commentary

186. In the AS and A-level examinations in 2004, students' results were below average. However, the value added by these results to that shown by students' performance in their Year 11 GCSE examinations represents a satisfactory level of achievement for all groups of students. In 2003, results were also below average.
187. The standards of work of current students in Year 12 are reaching typical levels for this stage in the courses. Performance looks set to reach average standards and above in forthcoming examinations. More students are now following the courses than in previous years. Coursework seen indicates that the work of both Years 12 and 13 meets the examination criteria. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. It is not yet better, because, until very recently, students had no opportunity to follow examination courses in ICT prior to those followed in the sixth form. However, new facilities and increasing numbers of students following examination courses in Years 10 and 11 are ensuring better preparation for sixth form work.
188. Teaching and learning are good. In a Year 12 lesson students learned well in response to lively and well-informed teaching. They used the Internet confidently to research the job market in ICT. Lively discussion showing good technical knowledge resulted from this activity, in which the teacher held their attention throughout by very well directed questioning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it effectively to challenge students well. Students use ICT very well to enhance their learning and to gain understanding of the work. Their very positive attitudes are a strong feature of their learning.
189. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Students' needs are met and courses match the range of abilities involved. Students' value the opportunities for extending their learning that are given them with the aid of good teaching.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

190. Students have the opportunity to develop their ICT skills and study for an external qualification, the European Driving Licence. They use ICT regularly in their studies because teachers are usually confident users of the equipment available, as in business studies. However, there is no formal tracking of students' use of the provision. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily in their use of ICT in both Years 12 and 13.

HUMANITIES

191. The focus was on history. Government and politics, psychology and religious education were sampled. In the Year 12 lesson in **government and politics**, the teaching was good and students gained a better understanding of the British political party system. Students were able to make good progress in preparing a brief presentation for Year 9 students on this topic. In **psychology**, two well taught lessons were seen in which the students achieved well. The Year 13 lesson enabled students of varying competence to analyse the requirements of an examination question very effectively, to prepare them better for their forthcoming examination. In **religious education**, two lessons were sampled on creation in Year 12, and the theodicy of St Augustine. In both lessons, the teaching and learning were good, and the students achieved well, partly because their attitudes to the subject were so very positive.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level examination results are above the national average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and students develop very good independent learning skills.
- The subject is very well led and students value the support they receive from teachers.

Commentary

192. In 2003 students' performance in A-level examinations was well above average; in 2004, results were above average. Although numbers of students fluctuate from year to year, results in history are consistently strong. In 2004, four of the ten AS-level candidates gained an A or B grade and all students were successful. Most students continue to study history from Year 12 to 13. Students from all backgrounds achieve very well in relation to their performance in their earlier GCSE examinations. The few with special educational needs also achieve very well. Overall, students achieve very well over their two years of advanced study of the subject.
193. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average and achievement was very good. In Year 13, students confidently demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of the impact of the Bolsheviks' economic policy. Students analyse sources of evidence critically. The most able combine this understanding with their own interpretations to support their coherent contributions to well informed and focused discussion. Work in files is well organised and students complete documentary questions and essays competently. In Year 12, students analyse the achievements of the Liberals' social reforms at the beginning of the twentieth century to question whether this party established a Welfare State. They research using ICT and texts and skilfully to present group-findings orally to their peers.
194. Teaching and learning are very good. Students much appreciate the challenge and academic rigour generated from the teachers' confident subject expertise. Teachers' probing questions and high expectations draw all students into debate effectively to ensure that they better understand new topics. There is a strong emphasis on examination techniques. Marking and individual tutorials are thorough. The rapport between teachers and students is very good;

students realise that they are taught well and respond accordingly. Many express the intention to continue to study history beyond the sixth form.

195. The subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader has a very clear vision of how to enable students to reach their best standards. Resources have been updated and departmental planning fully reflects the current demands of sixth form history. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

196. The focus was on art and design. Music and media were sampled. Two lessons of **music** were seen, in which the teaching and learning were very good and students achieved well to reach above average standards for advanced courses. Students' learning is supported by their very positive attitudes. They involve themselves in a range of musical activities in and beyond the school. One gives classroom support to a Year 8 class. Students are focused, hardworking and supportive of each other. Work is enhanced by activities such as concerts, visits and workshops.
197. Two lessons were seen in **media studies**. The Year 13 lesson consolidated students' learning very well for their imminent examination; they achieved very well in discussion on a range of topics with confident use of subject terminology from the very challenging teaching. The well taught Year 12 lesson enabled students to organise coursework successfully; students' attitudes to the work were excellent.

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are able to work with increasing independence and develop individual styles because of good teaching.
- There is good knowledge and understanding of examination requirements so that students are well prepared and achieve well.
- Few students study the subject to A-level.

Commentary

198. The numbers of students studying art fluctuates. In 2004 with an entry of two, both of the students passed the examination and one gained grade A. However, with such low numbers national comparisons are unreliable. In 2003 a much larger group matched the national average.
199. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well and their current standards of work are above those typically seen. There are no apparent differences in the work of students from different social or ethnic backgrounds. Students produce significant bodies of work that reflect their own interests and backgrounds. They are very competent in a range of media and techniques, and some are able to use digital photography and ICT to generate and modify imagery to good effect. A style that is common to the school is avoided. The standard of written annotation, analysis and evaluation is good.
200. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good, and occasionally very good. Students take responsibility for the shape and direction of their work and are able to talk with confidence about it. Teachers use questioning very well to help students to understand concepts and to clarify their intentions for their work. Occasionally, better use could be made of time, when too long is spent on a single activity. Students are kept very well informed of their progress through ongoing discussion and regular, written feedbacks. They have very positive views about the quality of teaching and the quality of assessment and guidance that they are given.

201. Sixth form courses are well led and managed. A-level studies were successfully maintained through the difficulties of last year, when there was no specialist accommodation. Examination requirements are well understood, so that students are effectively prepared and achieve well. Less experienced staff have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of courses, and this gives them good professional development.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education and sport

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching was very good in all lessons seen.
- Students achieve well.
- Students achieve well to reach above average standards.
- Accommodation greatly restricts development to the course.
- Although Year 12 students receive experience of physical education, provision is not extensive.

Commentary

202. In the 2004 A-level examination, both candidates passed, one at grade A. The few students involved make national comparisons unreliable. Seven Year 12 AS-level candidates all passed the examination, some at the higher grades. AS-level results in dance were exceptional, and the six candidates all attained grades A or B. AS and A-level courses are now established and thriving. The standards gained act as inspiration for current students. Students achieve well in both Year 12 and Year 13 from the standards they previously gained in GCSE examinations.
203. The teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge. They plan very good lessons which build progressively on students' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well structured and resourced, delivered with lively pace and much animation. Students have commitment to learning, work well together and support each other very well. In dance, students from the consortium, including one male student who has not followed an examination course previously, are well integrated into the class.
204. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is clear vision for the further development of the subject as part of the specialist status for sport that the school has gained. The recent addition of a mobile classroom has given the department a valuable base for theoretical work. Access to practical accommodation and changing space is less spacious. Although examination classes have priority, changing often has to be shared with other year groups, and there is no changing accommodation attached to the dance studio, which is, itself, a converted classroom. The space is barely sufficient to provide for the needs of the students, especially when they are moving and developing choreographic principles. The floor, overlaid on a concrete base, prohibits elevated jumps.
205. The school has recently introduced a lesson for physical recreation for all Year 12 students, and students from all backgrounds participate. Attendance at one session per fortnight is compulsory. The aim is to encourage students to develop a healthy approach to physical activity and to establish life-long patterns of activity.
206. The development plan for the sports college includes expansion of provision for examination courses. However, this will only be achievable if further accommodation is provided. Intention to develop a Community Sports Leader course is also dependent on increased facilities.

BUSINESS

207. The focus was on business. **Accounting** was sampled. A Year 12 lesson was seen in which students learned and practised the correction of errors with use of a suspense account successfully. The teaching and learning were very good. The teacher gave rapid and very effective help and explanation to the students, who achieved well, although some found the work demanding.

Business Studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment is well above average and their achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subject, which supports students' very good learning.
- Student attitudes on both GNVQ and AVCE courses are very good.

Commentary

208. Overall, students' attainment on entry to the courses is below that expected for sixth form courses. Students have little prior knowledge of business studies. In 2004, results of the AVCE course (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) were well above average. The percentage of A and B grades was above average. This represents very good achievement. Students have a very good level of understanding of the business environment and can apply theoretical knowledge to existing organisations. AVCE students make very good gains in their knowledge over the two years of the course. There have been no GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) entries since 2002 and, therefore, comparison with national outcomes is not possible. GNVQ students are currently performing at a level above that expected for the qualification. Students from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve very well, including those who are identified with special educational needs. Work seen during the inspection was well above average for both courses. Those taking GNVQ develop their research skills well and quickly show a good understanding of business. Use of ICT for research and presentation of work is of a high standard.

209. The quality of teaching in business is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject and make good use of available resources in order to motivate and develop students to be effective learners. Links with the business community are strong and teachers ensure that resources are current and relevant to the courses. They have a very good knowledge of the specification, which ensures that internal assessments are accurate and support the learning process. Written feedback gives students a clear idea of where they are and what they need to do to improve their work. The variety of learning tasks provides for the very good learning that is achieved.

210. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for the subject and high expectations, which she shares with teachers and students. Development planning is very good. Students in Year 12 have the opportunity to run their own company through Young Enterprise. Current Year 13 students were successful in the regional competition, and were runners-up in 2004.

211. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in attainment, achievement, teaching, management and planning. Overall, progress has been very good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

212. **Health and social care** was sampled. One Year 12 lesson on human behaviour was seen in which the teaching and learning were very good. Students from other schools in the consortium formed part of the class. All students were well integrated and supported each other to achieve well.
213. Valuable reference was made to practical activities closely related to students' experience of placements in the workplace.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

214. The school helps students to develop personally and socially by encouraging their participation in a range of activities, outlined earlier in this report. In key skills lessons, students are provided with a suitable programme of personal, social and health education, but it was not possible to observe these during the week of the inspection because Year 13 students were taking examinations.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities; ethos		2
Attendance	4	5
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		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	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	6
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3

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

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