

INSPECTION REPORT

TOWNSEND CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117555

Headteacher: Mr A Wellbeloved

Lead inspector: Mr D J Thompson

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th March 2004

Inspection number: 259182

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	842
School address:	High Oaks St Albans Hertfordshire
Postcode:	AL3 6DR
Telephone number:	01727 853047
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Everest
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Townsend Church of England School is a smaller-than-average mixed comprehensive school, with 842 students on roll. It is situated on the outskirts of St Albans and serves a very wide catchment area to meet the needs of students who wish to attend a Church of England school. The school has gained several awards including the Schools' Achievement Award, Charter Mark, Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark Silver and Investor in People. There are very good links with the community and the school's facilities are used by other organisations. The school's socio-economic characteristics are above average. Students have recently entered the school with above-average standards but older students previously entered with average standards. Students are predominantly white British; the proportion with English as an additional language is slightly higher than average but only one student is at an early stage of acquisition. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above the national average but the proportion with a statement of special need is below average. There is a variety of special needs, including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, dyslexia and physical difficulties. The school meets the needs of these students well. There is a significant number of deaf children, who are on the roll of a different school but receive their teaching at Townsend, and these students are very well integrated into school life. Mobility is very stable; the school is over-subscribed and many more students remain throughout their secondary education than in the national picture. Post-16 provision is made as part of a consortium partnership with other local schools and a college.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15640	Mr D J Thompson	Lead inspector	
9865	Ms S Howley	Lay inspector	
2715	Mr R Hancock	Team inspector	English Drama
3691	Mr P Mason	Team inspector	Design and technology
17132	Ms J Copas	Team inspector	Health and social care sixth form
15594	Ms J Felce	Team inspector	Business education Citizenship
19858	Mr J Follett	Team inspector	Physical education
10327	Mr P Garnham	Team inspector	Science Biology sixth form Chemistry sixth form Physics sixth form
7431	Mr M Lewis	Team inspector	French German Russian
12969	Mr I Middleton	Team inspector	Art and design
22038	Ms H Spurrier	Team inspector	History
12957	Mr J Stout	Team inspector	Geography
32335	Mr A Sortwell	Team inspector	Science
32807	Mr J Clarke	Team inspector	Music Mathematics sixth form
33137	Ms T Nightingale	Team inspector	Mathematics
33023	Ms G Corbett	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language
33097	Mr G Watt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Townsend Church of England School successfully provides a good quality of education.

Good leadership is producing a very positive ethos and an effective school where teachers, students and members of the community work together in positive partnership. The school is not complacent, and a keenness to improve has ensured that the quality of teaching and students' achievement have both improved since the previous inspection. The school receives below-average income per student and uses this effectively to provide good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the headteacher and senior leadership team provide strong, yet sensitive and supportive, leadership; this has produced a very positive ethos which enables students to be confident that they can do well;
- the very effective provision for students' personal development results in good attitudes and behaviour which make a very positive contribution to their achievement;
- the school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, giving every individual an opportunity to extend their learning and succeed;
- students achieve well, especially in Years 10 and 11, where standards are above average; this is because effective teaching produces good learning and students build on this well, using the extensive support beyond lessons;
- there are very good links with the community and a very effective partnership with parents; these have a significant, positive impact on students' achievement;
- teaching is good overall, but there is scope for improvement in challenging gifted and talented students in some subjects, widening the range of teaching styles, including the use of ICT, and using assessment to let students know how they can improve;
- boys achieve above average standards but occasionally do not achieve as well as girls in some subjects, and standards are too low for both boys and girls in French, music, citizenship and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology; and
- procedures for monitoring and supporting middle managers have improved substantially since the previous inspection, but the impact of subject leaders on provision and achievement is still too inconsistent, varying from excellent to unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school was judged to have many strengths in the last inspection and standards and teaching have both improved since then. Year 11 GCSE results were in line with the national averages in 1998 and are now above average. There is a higher proportion of very good lessons now, than in 1998, and a smaller proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. The school has made good progress on most of the key issues identified at the previous inspection; there are much better arrangements for monitoring; special educational needs provision has been substantially improved; all National Curriculum requirements are now met; and standards in geography have improved. Standards in French are still not high enough and there remains too large a gap between boys' and girls' achievement in history.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students achieve well overall. Students achieved well in the most recent Year 9 national tests, to attain above-average standards. Current Year 9 students, taking into account all subjects studied, are attaining average standards, representing satisfactory achievement. The school's very positive

ethos has an increasingly positive effect in Years 10 and 11; progress accelerates so that students achieve well to attain above-average standards. In 2003, students attained their best GCSE results in English language, geography, ICT, physical education, and the food aspect of design and technology. Students did not do well enough in French, music and resistant materials. There is an improving trend in results at GCSE, and above-average standards have been maintained in Year 9 national tests. Overall, standards are above those of similar schools. Sixth-form students achieve well to attain average standards. The school's policy of allowing any student to join post-16 education is not successful for all, as some are admitted on to courses with little chance of success and fail to gain a grade. Boys' standards are higher than the national average but boys occasionally do not achieve as well as girls. Students with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well in all years.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development, are good. Students are proud of their school, enjoy attending and are keen to make good use of the opportunities available. Older students are effectively involved in mentoring and supporting their younger colleagues. All students work together very well and their moral development is very good. They have a good understanding of different cultures and their spiritual development is strong. Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good and make a positive contribution to students' achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good overall and leads to effective learning. Teaching in lessons is often satisfactory; the very positive ethos which teachers have created, and the high quality support provided for students beyond lessons, enhance the overall quality of teaching and enable students to learn and achieve well. The impact of the ethos and support increases as students settle into school life, so that sound teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 becomes good in Years 10 to 13. Students benefit from teachers' expert knowledge and are prepared well for tests and examinations. Teachers know students well and set realistically high expectations, resulting in a clear sense of purpose and a strong desire to learn. Some teachers use assessment effectively, but too many provide students with too little information on how they can improve. Some teachers use a wide range of methods to maintain interest but many do not, including insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning. There is, occasionally, too little challenge to stretch gifted and talented students. Teaching is of unacceptable quality in citizenship and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology.

The very high standard of care, guidance and support provided to students is fundamental to the school's success. The school's 'achievement for all, respect for all' approach is very well understood by students, teachers and parents. Individual needs are very effectively identified and very thorough monitoring and target-setting processes produce good personal development and positive academic achievement. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities provides very good opportunities for all students to succeed. Links with parents and the community are very good. The school builds strong relationships with parents which contribute successfully to students' learning. Partnerships with primary schools are very effective, enabling students to transfer between schools smoothly. Sixth-form consortium arrangements with other institutions provide a broader curriculum than would be achieved by a single school, and detailed plans exist to improve this further.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led well and managed successfully. The school's high aspiration for students' attitudes, personal development and achievements are effectively implemented. The introduction of improved monitoring arrangements has enabled the senior leadership team to be very aware of the quality of teachers and middle managers. Appropriate strategies are being used to improve provision but there is still too much inconsistency in the impact of some subject leaders on students' achievement. The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement in the school. Governors and school representatives work well together to improve provision.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is well regarded by parents and is oversubscribed. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of what is done to help their children succeed. Students feel privileged to be members of the school. They have high regard for their teachers and feel that they are given a good chance of success.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to provide more focused monitoring and support for teaching in order to widen the range of teaching styles, including the use of ICT, to improve challenge for gifted and talented students in some subjects, and to make better use of assessment to help students improve;
- to work extensively with the leaders of subjects where management is not good enough, so that provision is improved;
- to raise standards in French, citizenship, music and resistant materials, and to improve the achievement of boys in instances where it is significantly lower than that of girls;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a full programme of citizenship and improved reports on students' progress.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is of below average size. A partnership with other local schools and a college is providing a satisfactory range of opportunities for students.

Effectiveness in the sixth form is satisfactory. Leadership and management of the partnership arrangements are both satisfactory. Good teaching is generating good achievement, but the curricular provision is only just satisfactory, with some students' vocational needs not being met. Below-average expenditure per student is used carefully, and Years 12 and 13 students are not being subsidised by others in the rest of the school. This makes the sixth form cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- students achieve well, from a low starting point, to attain average standards;
- students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good;
- there is a very clear vision for the future of the sixth form; and well advanced planning for improved provision;
- current consortium arrangements with other institutions provide a curriculum which is satisfactory, but there are too few vocational opportunities for students;
- some students are accepted on to inappropriate courses where they have little chance of success and fail to gain a grade;
- personal, social and health education, careers and religious education are available in Year 12, but not Year 13.

Sixth-form provision has been maintained as satisfactory since the previous inspection. Current proposals for new arrangements have good potential for improving opportunities for students. Department development plans and accountability of heads of department, which were key issues in the 1998 inspection, have both been improved.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is good in English. Effective teaching provides good opportunities for independent study and development of confident presentation skills, but not enough help for weaker students. Standards are above average in Year 12 and average in Year 13, representing good achievement.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory . Good teaching is producing good learning in lessons and students achieve well. There is too little co-ordination of systems to help students identify what they are achieving and how they can improve; this is preventing achievement from being higher.
Science	Provision is satisfactory in chemistry, physics and biology. Teaching is satisfactory in all subjects and achievement is sound. Previous students attained examination results in line with expectations, taking account of their prior GCSE performance.
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Good teaching produces good learning and students achieve well. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and inspire very positive student attitudes. On average, students attain one grade higher than expected at A2, when taking their previous GCSE results into account.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is poor . Teaching is poor, with unsatisfactory coverage of the syllabus and failure to ensure that students meet coursework deadlines. There is poor co-ordination of contributions by different members of staff. This results in unsatisfactory achievement and standards which are well below average.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory and is enabling students to produce a wide range of standards, in line with their varying capabilities. Achievement is sound. The most able students achieve high standards but the use of a narrow range of materials limits the achievement of lower abilities.
Business	Provision in business studies is good . Good teaching, with a well-planned range of activities, enables students to build up their knowledge and understanding effectively. They have positive attitudes and achieve well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Leadership and management of the subject are good, with a strong emphasis on raising achievement.
Health and social care	Provision is good . Teaching is consistently good, characterised by very strong subject knowledge and thorough planning. This produces effective learning, above average standards and good achievement. The subject is led and managed very effectively, resulting in a significant improvement in standards.

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 benefit from good advice, guidance and support. Preparation for university entrance is very good, and careers guidance in Year 12 is very effective, but there are no timetabled careers sessions in Year 13. Guidance into the sixth form for less able students is not always appropriate, as some of them have little chance of success and fail to gain a grade. Monitoring of students' personal development and academic achievement is good, enabling most to achieve well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form's shared consortium provision is led in a satisfactory manner and managed soundly. An effective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current provision has been undertaken. This has led to new proposals which will offer a wider range of courses, particularly in vocational areas. Prior to this decision, the school has been too slow to offer a sufficiently wide range of vocational choices, resulting in some students following inappropriate courses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students believe that the overall quality of the sixth form is good. They appreciate the opportunities to influence decision making, such as through the school council and meetings of the governing body. They also value their involvement in supporting the youngest and vulnerable students. They are aware that current consortium arrangements with other institutions broaden their curriculum choice, but have concerns about the limited range of vocational options.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve well during their years of statutory education, attaining above-average standards by the end of Year 11. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well, attaining average standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in national Year 9 tests, consistently attaining above-average standards in recent years.
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11, attaining above-average standards.
- Post-16 students achieve well, attaining average standards.
- GCSE results were significantly above average in English language, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and the food aspect of design and technology.
- Students' competence in English language and literacy skills, mathematics and ICT are all above average.
- Students with special educational needs, or those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well.
- Students are not achieving well enough in citizenship, GCSE French, music and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology.
- Boys achieve above average standards but occasionally do not achieve well enough, in comparison with girls, in some subjects.

Commentary

1. Students are currently entering the school with above average standards of attainment, but older students previously came into the school with average standards. In the most recent Year 9 national tests, students achieved well in mathematics and very well in science to attain above average standards in both subjects. In English, students' achievement was similar to the national picture demonstrating average standards. When all three subject results are taken into account, students' overall achievement was above average. Current Year 9 students, taking account of all subjects studied, are attaining average standards, representing satisfactory achievement.
2. When students reach Years 10 and 11, the school's very positive ethos has an increasingly positive effect, resulting in accelerated progress and high achievement. By the end of Year 11, students' standards are above average. In 2003, students' overall GCSE/GNVQ results were above the national average. The school's policy of offering GCSE courses to all students is very successful; the proportion of students gaining A*-G grades in 2003 was exceptionally high, being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In 2003, students attained their best GCSE results in English language, geography, ICT, physical education and the food aspect of design and technology. Students' lowest results were in GCSE French, music and resistant materials. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their citizenship skills and, consequently, standards in this subject are too low.
3. The school has agreed ambitious targets with the local education authority for its examination results and manages to achieve these. There is an improving trend at GCSE; standards matched the national average at the previous inspection and are now above. Year 9 test results have maintained above-average standards over several years.

4. Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Students with SEN and EAL achieve well and make good progress according to their abilities. This is due to the emphasis on identifying their needs and setting realistic, achievable targets. Students are involved in setting these and in monitoring their own progress. Parents and external agencies also contribute to students' learning.
5. The gap in achievement between boys and girls is too wide; in some subjects boys do not achieve as well as girls. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups. The overall achievement of gifted and talented students is satisfactory, but there are too many subjects in which the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is too low.
6. The school is successful in developing students' speaking, listening and reading skills. Above average standards are attained and this has a positive effect on progress in a wide variety of subjects. Spelling is not developed as well; there are too many instances of incorrect spelling not being corrected by teachers, with an adverse effect on standards.
7. Students develop satisfactory competence in ICT during Years 7 to 9 and then improve to demonstrate above average skills from Year 10 onwards. However, their skills do not contribute sufficiently to achievement in a range of subjects because there are too few opportunities to use computers. Competence in mathematics is above average.
8. Overall, the leadership team's vision of generating a very positive ethos and supporting this with strategies for raising standards through its 'achievement for all, respect for all' approach has been successful in producing good attitudes and raising attainment since the previous inspection.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.9 (35.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.6 (36.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.4 (34.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 144 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	58 (46)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.2 (34.3)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 130 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

9. Students achieve well in the sixth form. They enter with below average attainment and make good progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 13. A2 results in 2003 showed that students achieved well in business studies, chemistry, English, history and mathematics, in comparison with predictions based on their GCSE performance. They did not achieve well

enough in German and theatre studies. The school's policy of allowing any student to join post-16 education is not successful for all as some are admitted with little chance of success and fail to gain a grade.

10. Standards have improved since the previous inspection when they were below average. Most students achieve well because of good teaching and positive attitudes to learning.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.2 (81.2)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	19.2 (14.5)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	211.4 (199.3)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 44 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students are proud of their school and are encouraged and supported to reach their potential. Good attitudes and behaviour make a very positive contribution to learning and achievement. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes to learning and students' involvement in the wide range of opportunities are good. Students want to come to school and are proud of their achievements.
- Sixth-form students have very good attitudes to learning and are very actively involved in the life of the school.
- Attitudes in lessons are good and have a positive impact on learning, even on the few occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory.
- A positive achievement culture is promoted well, with suitable rewards and encouragement.
- Relationships are very good. Staff and older students provide very good role models.
- The school is harmonious. The support provided by the school ensures good levels of confidence and self esteem.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and exclusions are low.
- Behaviour management is very good. Very clear codes of conduct and high expectations are consistently applied.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Personal development is very good and students are prepared well for life after school.
- Students respond positively to the strong ethos and opportunities to reflect on their beliefs, values and actions.
- Spiritual development is not sufficiently planned for in subjects, and opportunities are missed.

Commentary

11. Students take pride in their achievement. They are keen to get involved in the many activities and opportunities made available. The majority of students have good attitudes to learning, even in the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. They are attentive and respond with enthusiasm to questioning and challenge. Younger students happily attend additional literacy sessions before school and good support provides many others with the confidence and self esteem to fulfil their potential.

12. Post-16 students have very positive attitudes to learning and strong commitment to success. They work hard and with enthusiasm. They are very involved in the life of the school, many taking on effective mentoring and supporting roles with younger students. They take these responsibilities seriously and the good rapport between students of all ages is a strength.
13. The strong ethos and very good relationships promote harmony and there is a strong sense of community. Students have very good opportunities to take on extra responsibilities in a wide range of activities. Students and staff are mutually supportive, for example in an assembly observed during the inspection, everyone was very still and attentive whilst a student did the reading.
14. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Very clear codes of conduct and high expectations are consistently applied, resulting in an orderly community. Students treat their peers and adults with respect. Parents and students are satisfied with the high standards of behaviour. The minority of students with identified behavioural difficulties responds well to the school's support strategies. Students feel secure and are confident that the small number of minor incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and well. Rewards and sanctions are effective and exclusions are low.
15. The school's very strong efforts to include all students in its very positive ethos results in widespread, effective development of attitudes and behaviour. Different groups of students, such as girls, boys, ethnic groups, those with SEN and EAL, all benefit.
16. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Social and moral development are very good. Good opportunities are planned in assembly themes, the thought for the week, form time, religious education and other subjects, to discuss moral and ethical issues. 'Respect for All' is constantly reinforced. Students are regularly involved in charity fundraising, including a long-term Uganda project. They learn and socialise alongside Heathlands School hearing impaired students, which has a positive impact on their personal development. Many are involved in supporting other students, for example Year 10 students are paired with Year 7 for reading, which develops social responsibility well.
17. Spiritual and cultural development are good. Assemblies are planned well and provide good opportunities to reflect on spiritual issues. They involve a wide range of staff and visitors, including members of a Christian charity, who work effectively with various groups in the school. Special services are held in St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church attended by the whole school and these are very reflective occasions. Cultural development is good and is enriched through drama and musical performance as well as trips and visits. Students are prepared well for life in a diverse, multicultural society. However, in most subjects, spiritual development is not sufficiently planned for and opportunities are missed.
18. Behaviour of students with SEN, or EAL, is very good, and attendance is high. On the rare occasions when behaviour is identified as an area of concern, effective procedures are put in place to address this. Students with SEN and EAL benefit from the ethos of valuing every member of the school community. These students are proud of their achievements and willing to respond to a challenge.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.4
National data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.7
National data	0.8

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

19. Attendance is good. The school promotes good attendance through effective rewards and thorough follow-up of absence. Clear links are made between attendance and achievement so that students are very aware of how poor attendance will adversely affect their achievement. Good individual arrangements are made for those students with specific difficulties. Parents are very supportive and ensure their children attend regularly. A significant number achieve full attendance. Punctuality to school and lessons is good.

Exclusions

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	752	35	3
White – any other White background	16	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	9	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	12	8	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	2	0
Any other ethnic group	6	4	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and leads to effective learning. Teaching in lessons is often satisfactory; the very positive ethos, which teachers have created, and the high quality support provided for students beyond lessons, enhance the overall quality of teaching and enable students to learn well. The impact of the ethos and support increases as students settle in to school life, so that sound teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 becomes good in Years 10 to 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is high quality teaching and learning in some subjects, including mathematics, some science lessons, drama, ICT, geography, history and physical education, and in English, mathematics, business studies, history and health and social care in the sixth form.
- There are weaknesses in teaching in the resistant materials aspect of design and technology and citizenship.
- Many teachers know their subjects well; they teach with confidence and authority in their lessons.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour, and successfully encourage students to take a positive attitude to their work.
- There are realistically high expectations of most students, so they achieve well.
- Some teachers use a wide range of methods to maintain students' interest, but many do not, including insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Some lessons do not include enough to stretch gifted and talented students and this has an adverse effect on their learning.
- There is insufficient use of assessment to help students understand how to improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 161 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1.2%)	20 (12.4%)	57 (35.4%)	65 (40.4%)	13 (8.1%)	4 (2.5%)	0

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

20. During Years 7 to 11, teaching is good in mathematics, drama, ICT, geography and history. It is very good in physical education and, although teaching in science is satisfactory overall, there are some good lessons. In Years 12 and 13, there is good teaching in English, mathematics, history, business studies and health and social care. Key strengths in these subjects are teachers' subject knowledge and their relationships with students; these make a strong contribution to positive learning.
21. An important strength of the teaching in many lessons is the confident and knowledgeable way in which teachers explain tasks. This was seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson when the teacher showed students similarities and differences of triangles in different orientations. He resolved students' misunderstandings skilfully and sympathetically. He then used the whiteboard effectively to demonstrate how to draw triangles. All students were then able to produce neat and accurate drawings, and to take a pride in their work. Similarly, in a Year 11 geography lesson, the teacher used her knowledge to help students gain a good understanding of world climate patterns. She gave them a chart to complete which summarised key details of climate and vegetation, and which really made students think hard about previous work they had done. She then summarised expertly, by showing students photographs of different places, to illustrate the effect of different combinations of rainfall and temperature.
22. Teachers also have a clear understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and specialist examinations syllabuses. Students benefit from teachers' expert knowledge, and are prepared well for tests and examinations. A good example was seen in a Year 13 history lesson. The teacher used her excellent subject knowledge and clear understanding of the requirements of the examination to give very well-focused advice on the qualities of a high-grade answer to a question on Chartism. She created a climate of high expectation and encouraged all students to take part in the discussion. This meant all students made good progress in their understanding of a key feature of 19th Century history, and in their understanding of the demands of the examination.
23. Teachers know their students well and build good relationships with them. They insist on high standards of behaviour and effort from their classes. They encourage and support their students at all times. Students respond well to this and work hard. This was seen in a Year 8 physical education lesson. The teacher explained the roles of particular players in a game of rugby, stressing the importance of warming up to prevent injury. He gave a good demonstration and moved expertly around groups of students to help and encourage them. Students took on their roles well, working with a very positive attitude. They therefore made good progress in their understanding of the game and in developing their own individual skills. Sensitive support for students was also evident in a Year 9 ICT lesson. The teacher circulated well, answering questions and challenging students further by posing searching questions. He also showed good class management skills, providing whole class guidance with the minimum of fuss. Students therefore made good progress in their understanding of the use of spreadsheets to explore temperature figures.
24. The school works hard to ensure that teaching benefits all students and this is largely effective, but there are occasions when boys learn less well than girls, and when gifted and talented students have too few opportunities to attain the highest levels. An important area for

development is the use of assessment. While there are strengths in individual subjects, including physical education, ICT, art and design and history in the sixth form, there are inconsistencies in others. The quality of marking varies, with some teachers not giving students enough help in understanding how to improve their work. Teachers do not make full use of data about students' prior attainment to help plan lessons which challenge all students to work at an appropriate level. For example, some teachers do not include enough difficulty for gifted and talented students, with an adverse effect on their learning. Many students know their target level or grade, but do not fully understand what they have to do to reach it. Some teachers use a good range of different teaching methods, and a variety of resources, to maintain interest and develop understanding. However, too many teachers rely on a narrow range of styles and miss opportunities to use different resources, such as ICT, resulting in mundane lessons where learning is hampered.

25. Teaching in the sixth form is good. There is a consistently high standard of teaching in mathematics, history and business education. Overall, teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects, so students are prepared well for their examination courses. Teachers have high expectations of students, and encourage them to try hard. Students respond well and work on both collaborative and individual work with equally high levels of determination.
26. Teaching of students with SEN is good. The 'Breakthrough to Learning' programme is implemented effectively and successfully and improves students' literacy skills. Students are learning well. However, some teachers do not match tasks sufficiently well to the needs of students and this limits their progress. SEN students are supported in some lessons by learning support assistants (LSAs). This is often effective, but, on occasions, LSAs have insufficient knowledge of the aims of the lesson, or of how learning can be assisted. Where this happens, and in a few other lessons, where support would be beneficial but is lacking, there is an adverse effect on learning.
27. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The proportion of very good teaching has increased and there is less unsatisfactory teaching. The whole ethos of the school is one which fosters positive relationships, and this is apparent in the classrooms, where students enjoy their work and try hard. There is still, however, a small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. There are still too many variations in the quality and use of assessment.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**, and is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The sixth-form curriculum is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are adequate and staffing levels are sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that all aspects of its curriculum are available to all students.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities.
- The Learning Resources Centre provides a very good learning resource to staff and students, especially for literacy development.
- The rolling programme of refurbishment in science and ICT is providing excellent accommodation and facilities but some other areas are still in need of refurbishment and the general cleanliness of the school is poor.
- The work-related and vocational curriculum for Years 10, 11 and the sixth form is insufficiently developed, although plans are well advanced for improved provision.
- The integration of ICT into subject teaching is too inconsistent.
- The programme for citizenship is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

28. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of opportunities to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of students of all backgrounds. Provision for personal, social, health education and careers guidance is good; the school provides effective coverage of health education, sex education and the misuse of drugs. Provision for citizenship has not been fully implemented, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11. The discrete teaching of ICT is good for students of all ages, although the integration of such skills into subject teaching is too inconsistent and needs further development.
29. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the quality of the curricular provision is good; students follow a wide range of subjects which includes the opportunity to study a second modern foreign language. In Years 10 and 11, following careful preparation and guidance in Year 9, students follow a broad and balanced programme of courses tailored well to most individual needs. These lead to success in GCSE courses. However, there is a lack of suitable work-related and vocational courses. Partnership with a local further education college has resulted in the successful, partly off-site, provision of a vocational course for a very small group of Year 10 and 11 students, but this is insufficient to meet all vocational needs.
30. The sixth-form curriculum benefits from a consortium arrangement with other local schools and a college of further education to provide a broad range of AS and A2 courses. Whilst this provides good opportunities for students to study GCE advanced level courses, at times the entry requirements are set too low, and in some subject areas a few students do not complete the course. There is also an insufficient range of vocational courses for students to study at appropriate levels to meet their needs. The school has recognised this and plans are well advanced to form a new consortium; including the college and fewer schools. This will widen choice, starting with the new Year 12 students from September 2004.
31. Students have very good opportunities to extend and enrich their learning through their involvement in extra-curricular activities. A very wide range of sport, drama, dance, music and residential visits exists, and these opportunities are taken up well. There is a wide range of study and homework clubs which enables students to enhance their learning beyond lessons. In the sixth form, whilst there is a timetabled period for Year 12 students to follow a personal, social and health education course, staffing difficulties this year mean that this is not the case for Year 13 students. There is, however, a good programme to enable these students to complete their higher education applications and investigate possible education and career routes. Sixth-formers are involved well in the management of the sixth form and the wider life of the school. There is a sixth-form council and students help teachers both in lessons and at other times, for example as anti-bullying counsellors, with younger students.
32. Resources for teaching and learning are generally satisfactory to meet curricular needs and have improved since the last inspection especially in the provision of up-to-date ICT equipment.
33. Accommodation is adequate. Areas which have been refurbished recently, for example science and ICT, are very attractive and are fit for their purpose. The sixth form benefits from a common room and a private study space with good ICT access in the library. The learning resources centre provides a very flexible space for teaching and individual reading and research for students. It is spacious and contains a good suite of computers. The range of books is sufficient to provide for the needs of all students including the sixth form and those with special needs. This area is particularly well used during the lunch break when students study, read and use the computers. The Learning Resources Centre serves as a very good learning resource and the librarian responsible for the Centre provides highly effective support to staff and students. There has been extensive refurbishment since the previous inspection and very good use of display enhances the environment well, but, in some other areas of the school, accommodation looks very worn and the level of cleanliness is poor.

34. Despite the national and local difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers the school has sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the current curriculum. All staff have the appropriate qualifications and experience to teach the courses timetabled for them. The school benefits from good administrative staff, but there are insufficient learning support staff and these are not always deployed effectively by subject teachers to meet every student's needs.
35. The curriculum provided for students with SEN or EAL is good. They have access to all subjects and, where needed, have additional help with literacy. In Years 10 and 11, a few students take a vocational course instead of continuing with a modern foreign language. Students are very positive about this practical programme and valuable skills are learned. In too many lessons, no additional or different equipment is offered to those with special needs who might benefit from this, and ICT is not readily available, with an adverse effect on progress.
36. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. Provision for SEN students is now much better, statutory requirements for geography are now met and an effective literacy programme *Breakthrough to Learning* has been introduced.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a very good standard of care based on very good knowledge of individual students. This is a strength of the school which contributes significantly to students' personal development and their academic achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Concern for individuals is given a high priority with a strong lead by the senior leadership team, and 'achievement for all, respect for all' is actively promoted.
- Students' circumstances are very well known and staff provide very good individual support. The school makes excellent use of external agencies and older students to support those who are vulnerable.
- Child protection arrangements are very thorough with very good support for students at risk.
- Academic tracking and monitoring is good and all students have minimum target grades
- Transfer and induction arrangements for Year 7 students are excellent.
- Careers guidance is very good. In the sixth form, UCAS preparation is very good, but guidance into the sixth form for less able students is not always appropriate.
- Students are very involved in the life of the school and have a strong student voice.
- Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory but the cleanliness of the school is poor.

Commentary

37. The school provides a very high standard of care. Arrangements for child protection are very good. Students are very well known as individuals and very good tailored support enables them to fulfil their potential. The school works hard to make sure its opportunities are open to all students with strong emphasis on 'achievement for all, respect for all'. Individual needs are very effectively identified and the school makes excellent use of a range of agencies and volunteers to provide good support and expertise.
38. Thorough policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students, but there is a poor state of cleanliness. Students are supervised well and particular care is taken at the end of the day, successfully ensuring the safe boarding of buses.
39. Very thorough academic tracking, monitoring and target setting provide good support for personal development and academic achievement. Performance data are used effectively to provide minimum target grades for all students, and termly progress checks are carefully scrutinised to identify appropriate intervention when students are falling behind. This is

particularly effective in Years 10 and 11 where students are routinely interviewed and supported by form tutors and heads of year. It is not having as great an impact in Years 7, 8 and 9, where it has been more recently introduced. In the sixth form, arrangements are too variable, with inconsistencies in tracking and supporting students' progress.

40. Students have very good access to well-planned guidance. Arrangements for transfer and induction into Year 7 are very good. Students are supported well when making choices for Year 10 options and have well-planned careers guidance programmes, work shadowing, work experience and individual action plans. Post-16 students are supported well, especially for university application, although guidance into the sixth form is not always sufficiently helpful for some less able students. Students find some of the current consortium arrangements unhelpful; planned changes have good potential to remedy this.
41. The school seeks and values students' views. Students have easy access to staff both in and out of lessons. They are able to make their views known through regular surveys and the school council which has influenced change. Post-16 students also have very good opportunities to influence decision making through active participation with younger students and in governing body meetings.
42. Students with SEN or EAL are cared for well, and guidance and support is very good. These students feel valued, encouraged to succeed and well-supported. Individual education plans (IEPs) and reviews comply with the national Code of Practice. Targets are realistic and manageable but some teachers are not using additional adult support well enough to improve achievement. In some areas, liaison between teachers and support staff is minimal and not sufficiently focused; this means that learning opportunities are missed.
43. Care, guidance and support are better than at the previous inspection. The high standards of care identified in the previous inspection have been maintained and guidance procedures for supporting academic progress have been substantially improved. Toilet facilities, which were criticised in the 1998 inspection, have been considerably improved.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community, are very good and make a significant contribution to learning and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Partnership with parents is a real strength and the strong parental support contributes very positively to students' learning.
- The school provides an extensive range of written information about the school and a very effective range of information sessions.
- There is a very good partnership with a very large number of primary schools and satisfactory management arrangements for the linked post-16 provision.
- Very good community links are effective in enhancing provision and promoting and endorsing the school's very positive ethos.
- Reports often provide good information about attainment and progress but do not fully meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

44. Partnership with parents is very good. Parents are very supportive of this oversubscribed school and their strong support has a significant positive impact on students' achievement. A successful parent teacher association (PTA) provides good support and parents' views are regularly canvassed through surveys and focus groups to contribute to change. Attendance at consultations and meetings is very good and parents are very supportive of extra-curricular activities and performances.

45. The school provides very good written information which is very well supported by a wide range of information sessions. Staff work closely with parents where there are any concerns, involving them early. Good termly progress reviews and a comprehensive annual record of achievement provide parents with good information about effort, progress and achievement. Annual reports do not comply fully with statutory requirements to report students' progress.
46. Links with a very large number of primary schools, from which pupils transfer to Townsend, are very successful and support excellent transfer and induction. Current management arrangements for the linked post-16 provision have resulted in improved choice and access for students over what the school could provide on its own. This is still not meeting the needs of all students and there are well-advanced plans for further improvement which have been very effectively led by senior staff at Townsend School. Management arrangements for the integration of students from Heathlands School are good.
47. The school is well regarded in the local community, and the swimming pool and other sports facilities are often used by local groups. Senior citizen volunteers provide good support for vulnerable students. The school has very good links with external agencies, for example the police and the school nurse, who provide good enhancement to the PSHE provision. Strong links with the Church are fundamental to the school and workers from STEP, a Christian charity, support good personal development.
48. There is very good liaison for students with SEN or EAL between the school and parents, primary schools and external agencies. This improves opportunities as the school is aware of all pupils' needs prior to students' entry. Good use is made of external agencies to help students. There are effective homework clubs for SEN and EAL students, which are used well.
49. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The very positive provision identified in 1998 has been maintained and extensive work has been done to produce detailed proposals for improving post-16 partnerships.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led well and managed successfully. There is a clear vision, supported by effective strategies, which results in a strong ethos of mutual respect and high achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is highly respected by all members of the school community.
- The senior leadership team has a strong, shared vision which is understood well throughout the school.
- The school's high aspirations for students' attitudes, achievement and personal development are implemented successfully.
- Governors are very supportive; they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are actively involved in decision-making.
- The senior leadership team has introduced effective monitoring arrangements which enable them to be very aware of the quality of teachers and middle managers.
- Improvement plans are significantly better than at the previous inspection but are often not sufficiently well focused on the beneficial impact for students.
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of subject managers, from excellent to unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for citizenship and reporting to parents are not met.

Commentary

50. The school is led well. The headteacher's leadership is very good; he is highly respected by students, parents, teachers, governors and the local education authority. The leadership team has formed a very strong partnership. Members of the team have successfully built on the school's long-standing 'respect for all' policy and effectively enhanced it to produce an 'achievement for all, respect for all' approach. They have worked very hard to ensure that the policy is widely understood and have been tireless in pursuing strategies for improvement. This has produced a very positive ethos, characterised by strong, mutual respect, positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships. Perseverance in developing recently introduced strategies for raising achievement, such as the use of target grades and academic monitoring, have led to a rising trend in students' achievement.
51. Governors carry out their roles well. They are very supportive of the school's ethos and the strategies being pursued to bring about success. They have formed a strong partnership with representatives of the school. Regular meetings, including high quality presentations by teachers, have enabled the governors to develop a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have used their knowledge well to shape improvement and have not been afraid to take difficult decisions when they can see how the provision for students can be made better. They have ensured that most statutory requirements are met, with the exception of implementing citizenship and some aspects of reporting to parents.
52. The leadership team has improved monitoring arrangements substantially since the previous inspection. There are now very thorough arrangements for observing the quality of teaching and learning, and for identifying the most and least effective subjects. These arrangements have been very successful and enabled the leadership team to produce a very accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Management of teachers' performance is well established and teachers' personal targets are appropriately linked to their professional development and the school's needs. The leadership team goes to considerable lengths to help weaker teachers improve and takes action to remove persistently weak teachers if they are adversely affecting students' learning. Extensive steps are taken to recruit new teachers and, despite difficulties, this is largely successful.
53. Financial management is good and several providers of services, such as catering and grounds maintenance, are considered so that the best possible value is obtained. The school increased its carry-forward of funds at the end of the financial year 2002-03, to be above the national average. This represented prudent financial management, in anticipation of proposals for the following financial year, and was successful in avoiding cuts in staffing.
54. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of middle managers. Management is successful in many areas, such as heads of year who provide very good care and support for students. Managers of a few subjects, such as physical education and health and social care, demonstrate energetic, enthusiastic commitment and generate high achievement. In a minority of subjects, such as citizenship, mathematics, music, design and technology and French, management has had too little impact on raising standards. Although improvement plans are better than at the previous inspection, they often do not sufficiently identify benefits for students, in terms of enhanced provision or raised achievement.
55. The provision for students with SEN is led well and managed effectively. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has very good knowledge of each student and works hard to meet their needs. Assessment and monitoring of their progress are thorough, and their support enables them to achieve well. Ineffective deployment, by a few subject teachers of support assistants, occasionally prevents learning from being as rapid as it should be. Overall, provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection, because of the vision and drive of the SENCo and senior leadership team.

56. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Overall, good leadership is producing a very good ethos and an effective school. A desire to improve, throughout the majority of staff, has ensured that the quality of teaching and students' achievement have both improved since 1998. The school uses its below average income per student to provide good value for money.

Sixth form

57. The consortium arrangements, with other partner institutions for shared sixth-form provision, are led in a satisfactory manner and managed soundly. There has been an effective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current post-16 provision. This has led to appropriate decisions on a new approach, and extensive negotiations have taken place to ensure the maximum benefit for students. The new arrangements, involving fewer schools and a college, will offer a wider range of courses, particularly in vocational areas, and represent a stronger partnership than currently exists, with a more coherent, shared vision, agreed funding and improved accessibility to appropriate provision. Prior to this recent decision, the school has been too slow in introducing a sufficiently wide range of vocational courses, and too many students have been accepted onto inappropriate courses, when their prior attainment indicates that they have little chance of success and alternatives would have been better for them.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,032,139
Total expenditure	2,932,222
Expenditure per student	3,474

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	46,690
Balance carried forward to the next	146,607

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results were above average in 2003 and all students achieved a grade.
- Good use of literacy initiatives, and of the library, result in above average standards of speaking, listening and reading.
- There are good opportunities for students to enjoy literature.
- Boys did not achieve well enough in GCSE examinations in 2003.
- Assessment is not used well enough to help students improve.
- Work is insufficiently challenging for some high attainers.

Commentary

58. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003. Students achieved results which were in line with those of similar schools. Given that standards on entry to the school were average, this was a satisfactory achievement. Results over time, prior to 2003, have fluctuated widely but there has been no significant difference between the results of girls and boys.
59. In 2003, GCSE examination results were above average and all students achieved a grade. The results of boys were far less good than those of girls, but students achieved well overall.
60. In Years 7 to 9, standards and achievement are average. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Standards of reading are slightly above average but standards of written work are barely average. Written work lacks accuracy, especially in terms of spelling and grammar, and it is not presented well.
61. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well to attain above average standards. Speaking and listening skills are above average; most students read confidently, accurately and understand and enjoy what they read. The standard of written work is average. Writing is less well developed than other skills because spelling errors are very common and sentence construction is often weak. Work is not presented well enough.
62. The achievement of students with SEN and those who are learning EAL is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. Both groups make gains in learning because lessons are orderly and teachers pitch their work at levels which help all students understand. However, learning support assistants are not used effectively to pinpoint and address students' specific needs and this prevents learning being better. In a significant number of lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, higher attaining students do not achieve enough because work is insufficiently challenging.
63. Teaching is satisfactory and leads to sound learning. Quality is good in some lessons, about one in five, but is also unsatisfactory in a similar proportion. Lessons have clear objectives and are well organised, resulting in purposeful activity for students. In the best lessons, students are expected to learn quickly, have good opportunities to work with one another to express and share views and opinions and good scope to enjoy literature. The unsatisfactory lessons were characterised by a lack of challenge for higher attainers and a failure to address the individual

needs of students with acute literacy difficulties; this limited students' achievement in Years 7 to 9. Marking is frequently superficial and does not always identify mistakes in spelling and errors in expression. The assessment of students' work is not always clear as to the levels achieved or what they have to do to improve.

64. Leadership is satisfactory and management is adequate. Teachers make good use of in-service training opportunities. The department supports literacy developments well through its work with the library and the *Breakthrough to Learning* initiative which is proving beneficial to students.
65. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory because standards are broadly similar and the department now has a plan to guide its development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of literacy, demonstrated in subjects across the curriculum, are above average. The library provides excellent support for literacy development. Students are also helped by the school's own initiative, *Breakthrough to Learning*, which is enabling them to read more confidently and write more accurately. Drama teachers use language clearly and help students to pronounce words accurately. Students use technical vocabulary in food technology and the use of descriptive language is well taught in sensory analysis. Key words are frequently stressed in ICT lessons. In a history lesson in Year 8, students were provided with ways of classifying ideas when they wrote about the causes of the French Revolution which helped them to organise their work more effectively. Weaker features of provision include restricted opportunities to write at length in history in Year 7, and science teachers omitting to correct misspellings in Years 10 and 11. Occasionally, weaknesses hold students back; for instance, progress in a mathematics lesson in Year 10 was limited because students had a poor understanding of the meaning of *equidistant*.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in Years 7 to 9 has improved to be at the national average.
- GCSE German results are slightly above average.
- Three languages are available, including Russian.
- French GCSE results were below average and represent a declining trend.
- There is too little challenge and pace, resulting in students working too slowly in some lessons.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.

Commentary

67. French, German and Russian were inspected in Years 7 to 11, at a time when the department was experiencing, or had recently experienced, illness, absence and bereavement. Teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed a major improvement, with the proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above reflecting the national figure. GCSE results for Russian in 2003 regained their customary good level after a drop in 2002. German results continued to show a steady improvement, with the proportion of A*-C grades slightly higher than the national average, and with boys achieving results slightly better than boys nationally. French results continued their declining trend, with A*-C grades in 2003 about 20 per cent below the national figure.
68. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 reach standards that broadly reflect the national picture. Standards in writing have improved, especially in Year 8, where many students have produced

extended compositions and have a good command of grammar. In Years 10 and 11, standards overall are satisfactory. There are fewer examples of outstanding work and of extended composition than usually seen. Many students are still operating at a simple word and phrase level, and their speaking lacks accuracy and confidence. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but there are not enough opportunities for the most able linguists to demonstrate excellence.

69. Teaching is satisfactory and learning is adequate, but with a number of important weaknesses. In the most successful lessons, lively presentation and practice of key words and phrases engages interest and gives students early confidence with new material. Objectives and targets for the lesson are carefully explained, so that the class knows exactly what it is doing and why. Activities develop learners' confidence and expertise gradually, going step by step from simple to more complex language. Where lessons are less successful, it is mostly because there is a low level of challenge, risk and urgency, so that students work slowly and do not progress beyond basic use of language. In many lessons the proportion of teacher-centred, whole-class oral work is too high. Students have to listen for too long so they lose interest and do not practise the language intensively enough. They do not learn the pronunciation of essential words, and do not develop full confidence when speaking. In some lessons, the first few minutes lack impact, and initial activity is not focused on the language, so that the class is not immediately engaged in learning, and makes a slow start.
70. The provision of three languages, including Russian, is better than in many schools. Resources for learning are inadequate. Rooms contain good displays which celebrate students' achievements, offer good models of work and support day-to-day language learning. German resources are outdated. All languages show a shortage of varied activities and materials to engage students' interest and support more active practice. Walls, doors, paintwork, fittings and stairways in the immediate area are dirty and dilapidated, and provide an unsatisfactory environment. There is too little use of ICT. Assessment procedures using end-of-unit tests are good but, in marking and in lessons, students do not receive enough feedback about their performance and how they can improve.
71. Leadership is satisfactory and management is sound. The head of department has worked hard to shape a coherent and effective team, and her policies and procedures have started the process of improvement, with clear impact in Years 7 to 9. New schemes of work clearly target expected standards, but lesson plans and objectives shared with students do not articulate these. Monitoring and evaluation of provision have already had an improving impact, but have not been sufficiently focused on specific weaknesses. The improvement plan contains many wise aspirations, but its targets and strategies lack precision, and some of its outcomes are not easily measurable.
72. Improvement since the previous inspection has been significant in many respects, but is unsatisfactory overall because developments are incomplete and there are still important areas of weakness. Attainment and achievement in Years 7 to 9 have improved, especially with written work. The quality of teaching has improved. Homework is now an effective medium of learning and behaviour management is usually effective. The critical issue of poor GCSE French results remains unresolved and there is still too little use of ICT. Pronunciation and speaking are still a relative weakness in students' attainment. Marking, although now up to date, is still not effective.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 national tests were above average.
- Standards in GCSE examinations were above average and all students gained a grade.
- Teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and deliver effective lessons.
- Students have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Provision for less able students is good.
- The department is not being led effectively.
- There is inconsistent use of marking to help students improve.
- There is too little use of ICT to enhance learning.

Commentary

73. Over recent years, standards in the national tests at age 14 have been consistently above the national average. In 2003, this represented good achievement when compared with end of Year 6 results. Standards in the GCSE examination in 2003 were above the national average and all students in the school gained a pass grade. This represents good achievement. The performance of girls at the highest grades was better than that of boys.
74. The standards of work in current Years 7 to 9 are above average, representing satisfactory achievement. Able students in Year 7 have good understanding of multiples and factors. Low attaining students in Year 7 make satisfactory progress with measures of time. Middle attaining students in Year 9 demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of combined transformations. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good and standards are above average. The most able students in Year 11 solve problems involving direct and indirect proportion, which is exceptional.
75. Teaching is good and this leads to good learning. The provision for less able students in all years is good. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, students were challenged and supported by both the teacher and the learning support assistant to apply their geometric construction skills very well to difficult problems. In the better lessons, teachers have realistic but challenging expectations and use effective questioning skills to assess students' knowledge and understanding and develop their thinking. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on linear graphs, higher attaining students used ICT effectively to investigate gradient and intercept. On the few occasions where teaching was unsatisfactory, students made insufficient progress as lessons lacked structure and pace and explanations were not clear enough. Teachers use a wide range of resources and teaching styles, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, to meet the needs of all learners and this is improving students' interest and motivation. There is too much inconsistency in the marking of students' work; teachers do not give students sufficient guidance on how to improve.
76. Both leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The head of department is new to the school and although aware of the key priorities for her team, has not established a clear vision or strategy for improvement. She has insufficient knowledge of the achievement of specific groups of students, through lack of detailed analysis of performance data. Development plans are not linked to student-focused outcomes, and schemes of work contain insufficient detail to support teachers. Whilst there has been some monitoring of teaching, there has been too little focus on improvement. The quality of teachers has prevented this from impacting too adversely on learning but an improvement in subject co-ordination would have good potential to raise achievement further.

77. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection with improved provision of textbooks and resources. Use of a consultant, as part of the national strategy for raising achievement, has had a positive impact through increasing pace and challenge in lessons and improving the use of questioning. Curriculum planning remains a weakness and there are still too few planned opportunities for students to develop mental calculation and problem solving skills. There is still too little use of ICT.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. The contribution of subjects, other than mathematics, to the development of mathematics is good. There has been whole school training to raise awareness and develop the use of mathematics across the curriculum but there is no policy for, or plan to, develop this further. Students' calculation strategies are adequate to support their work in other subjects including complex calculations in relation to radiation and electricity in Year 11 science. In geography, students plot scatter graphs with lines of best fit and develop skills in the analysis and evaluation of data. In science and physical education, students make good use of graphs for determining rates of change. In ICT, students are confident in their use of formulae in spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average, and represent very good achievement.
- GCSE results are above average.
- Very good quality of teaching in a number of lessons provides positive role models within the department.
- Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour assist their learning in most lessons.
- Three newly refurbished laboratories provide a positive environment for learning.
- Boys' attainment at GCSE is below the national average, whereas girls' is above.
- Marking is undertaken regularly but does not offer sufficient advice on how students can improve.
- There is too little use of ICT.
- The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and assessment for learning framework is at an early stage of development.

Commentary

79. Year 9 results in the 2003 national tests were above the national average and represented very good achievement when compared with students' previous performance in Year 6 tests. Girls achieved slightly higher results than boys.
80. The results of examinations for the double award GCSE science, in 2003, were above average with 58 per cent of students attaining grades A*-C. This represents satisfactory achievement when compared with students' performance in Year 9 national tests. Girls achieved better than boys, especially at the higher grades, and this has contributed significantly to the continued improvement trend since the previous inspection.
81. Current students achieve well in Years 7 to 9, to attain above average standards, and then maintain these standards during Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students of all abilities have learnt new skills, and have an adequate knowledge of scientific ideas. They are using newly developed skills to investigate with increasing confidence. Most students in all year groups have at least a basic understanding of the topics they are studying and, in many, a good understanding of key scientific concepts. For example, in a Year 11 lesson looking at

inheritance, all students described how cells divide and how characteristics are inherited. Standards are highest in lessons that are well paced, actively engage and place intellectual demands on the students. Practical skills are less well developed; most students work with care but there are too few opportunities for students to acquire higher level skills to enable them to complete fair tests and to explain their results using scientific knowledge.

82. The development of students' numeracy skills is satisfactory, for example, in their use of graphical skills and scientific formulae. For most students, standards of literacy are adequate but, for a significant minority, there are weaknesses in writing extended pieces of work and in both using and spelling key significant terms.
83. The use of ICT to support learning is barely adequate, although there is clear evidence of students using their own computers to complete homework. The provision of wireless connections in the new laboratories will improve the opportunities for learning with, and through, the use of ICT.
84. Teaching observed is satisfactory and is producing sound learning. A quarter of all lessons observed were good with a very small proportion of lessons that were not satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge and used it well to challenge, broaden and enrich students' understanding of science so that they made good progress. Lessons were well planned, learning objectives clearly understood, teaching methods challenging and students worked at a good pace using appropriate resources that supported their learning. In a small number of lessons, however, there was insufficient time for practical activities to be successfully concluded, for results to be discussed and for students' to review what they had learnt. All staff in their marking use encouraging comments but there are too few suggestions on how students can improve and too many uncorrected scientific spelling errors. Homework is set regularly and used well to enhance students' learning.
85. Leadership is satisfactory and management sound. Schemes of work are good. The science development plan fits well within the framework of the overall school development plan. A newly established departmental scheme for monitoring teaching and learning is useful in promoting good practice. The head of department has a very effective system in place for monitoring students' progress and setting targets for improvement. The potential disruption to learning by refurbishing the new laboratories was avoided by careful management and room deployment. Technical support makes a positive contribution to providing a practical science curriculum, but too little time is allocated. There is too little use of ICT.
86. Since the previous inspection the science department has made satisfactory progress; for example, in improving results at both key stages and in the introduction of an effective lesson monitoring system. Timetabling of science lessons has improved. Marking continues to be unsatisfactory overall and there remain some shortfalls in using ICT to support learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results were well above average in 2003.
- There is good leadership by the head of department.
- ICT facilities are good.
- Whole-school use of ICT across the curriculum is in need of further development.
- Targets for attainment at the end of Year 9 are not sufficiently challenging.

Commentary

87. Standards of students aged 11 to 14 are in line with the national average and their achievement is satisfactory. Students enter the school with a wide range of ICT experiences gained in over sixty feeder schools. In Year 7, where the national ICT strategy has been fully implemented and teaching is challenging, students make good progress and standards are above average. In Years 8 and 9, where there is less timetabled provision and fewer opportunities for students to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding, standards are average and this represents satisfactory achievement. By Year 11, students taking GCSE ICT achieve very well to attain well above average standards. In 2003, 74 per cent of students entered achieved A*-C. Students have a good understanding of coursework. Teachers provide after-school support sessions and detailed feedback which leads to very good achievement for students.
88. All Years 10 and 11 students are offered the opportunity to undertake a revised key skills course. For these students standards are similar to those seen nationally and achievement is sound. In a Year 11 key skills lesson, with clear staff guidance, students confidently produced a business letter on behalf of the school prom committee.
89. Teaching in ICT is good and learning effective. Learning objectives are shared at the beginning of each lesson and key words are discussed. In the majority of lessons students are engaged from the start of the lesson, with a lively pace being maintained. Clear instructions and high expectations allow the students to complete their work in the available time. Students respond enthusiastically to this well-planned teaching; their attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They ensure that students understand the standards required by the National Curriculum and how they can improve work to meet their personal targets. Good use is made of the ICT facilities. Data projectors are used to provide effective 'starters' and also when new skills are being introduced. In a Year 11 ICT lesson, the teacher made very effective use of 'Tutor 2' to temporarily block off all individual monitors. This allowed the students to focus fully with the teacher, revising the correct sequence of activities required when mail merging their business cards. Learning is enhanced by the increased provision of computers and each student has access to their own workstation. Access to some of the ICT network rooms is provided during lunchtime and after school; this is very effective in enabling students to extend their classwork and complete their GCSE coursework.
90. Leadership of ICT is good. The head of department provides a clear vision and strong direction for improvement. Greater stability of staffing and sharing of good practice within the ICT team is adding to its overall effectiveness. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Management of ICT is good. Active support from the senior leadership team and governors is also helping to increase the ICT provision and this is having a positive impact on teaching and learning in most subjects. The ICT network manager maintains a robust network service.
91. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and the school's rolling programme of ICT investment has increased curriculum access for students and staff. The percentage of students gaining grades A*-C at GCSE has improved significantly. The use of e-learning credits is also helping departments to acquire appropriate curriculum on line software.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. A very high percentage of staff have undertaken additional ICT training. This is having a positive effect on the planning and teaching of lessons and has enabled them to make good use of the increased ICT facilities. However, at present the co-ordination and progression of ICT across the curriculum is in need of further development as use in subjects is too inconsistent. Some subjects make good use of ICT to enhance learning. In GCSE food technology, for instance, students confidently use word processing, spreadsheets, flow charts and concept mapping within their portfolio work. In physical education appropriate links are identified with their scheme of work. In mathematics, students achieve good learning outcomes by using

Autograph to investigate straight-line graphs. In most other subjects, students are offered too few opportunities to learn through the use of ICT.

93. The school's website is a good example of supporting learning and a number of subjects, mainly geography and ICT, use resources and web links that help students achieve well. There is also an online art gallery of students' work. Students are keen to take advantage of extra-curricular activities in ICT and make good use of the Learning Resource Centre.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in GCSE examinations and were well above average in 2003.
- Teaching in geography is good so most students learn well.
- Students have a good attitude to school which helps them with their work.
- Students are supported very well and encouraged to do their best.
- Lack of challenge in some lessons means some students are underachieving.

Commentary

94. The standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 in last year's teacher assessments is in line with that normally seen. Girls reached higher standards than boys. Last year's GCSE examination results were well above national subject standards. Students reached standards in line with their expectations, and better than in most other examinations they took. Boys did particularly well.
95. Achievement of current students aged 11 to 14 is satisfactory and standards are average. Students in Year 7 have a sound grasp of key vocabulary, and a basic understanding of settlements. They make satisfactory progress in Year 8, extending their knowledge of places. In Year 9, students get a sound understanding of life in different countries around the world. Students who choose geography in Years 10 and 11 achieve well to attain high standards. They have a broad knowledge of geographical terminology. Work on topics including settlements, climate and water, gives them a good understanding of processes which shape the world. Coursework in the local area and the Peak District helps them develop key skills of enquiry. Students with special educational needs are supported well in some lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, a learning support assistant helped a boy, enabling him to successfully complete work on difficult aspects of food chains in a polar environment. In some other lessons students with SEN receive insufficient support. Too few gifted and talented students are being stretched to reach their full potential. This means that, in both Year 9 teacher assessments and GCSE results, only a small proportion of students reaches the highest levels and grades. Geography makes a useful contribution to improving numeracy skills. For example, students in Year 11 use a good range of graphs to compare countries with different levels of development. Work in literacy is not as well developed. In particular, students are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their writing skills. There is insufficient use of ICT, restricting opportunities for improved learning.
96. Teaching is good and students learn well. Lessons are carefully planned to provide an interesting range of activities. Teachers manage their classes well and establish a good working atmosphere in which students are well behaved and try hard. A good example was seen in a Year 8 lesson. The teacher ensured there was a good orderly start. She insisted on high standards of attitudes and behaviour from all students. She reminded students of work done in the previous lesson by engaging them in an interesting and lively discussion on their understanding of ecosystems. She reinforced key vocabulary by setting a second activity in

which students revised key words. She also set a third activity which was very effective in making students think about links within a food web. All students worked hard, and by the end of the lesson had gained a good understanding of an unfamiliar environment. The main weakness in lessons is that gifted and talented students do not always have enough opportunities to explain some of the more complex relationships in the subject.

97. The leadership and management of geography are both satisfactory. During the head of department's current absence, on maternity leave, the senior leadership team is providing a high level of support to geography teachers. This is having a positive impact on the standard of teaching and learning. There is good progress on revisions to the scheme of work, but insufficient work on the use of assessment data to help plan teaching and learning targets for students.
98. The school has made good progress since the last inspection; standards of attainment have risen for all students taking geography.

History

Overall the provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and students are good and have created a positive climate for learning.
- Students have good attitudes towards the subject and are committed to their work.
- Boys are not achieving well enough, in comparison with girls.
- Progress is often limited by an emphasis on descriptive work rather than the development of analytical and thinking skills.
- Students are not given enough advice on how to improve.

Commentary

99. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with standards nationally. Girls achieve much better than boys and this gap in attainment is wider than nationally. At GCSE the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades was below the national average though results in 2003 were better than those in 2002.
100. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are demonstrating satisfactory achievement to attain average standards. Students in Year 9 achieve in line with national expectations at Level 5, with fewer than expected accessing higher levels because much of the work is descriptive rather than evaluative. An example of this is the work on a soldier's life in World War 1 in which students used the sources to describe conditions rather than explaining and evaluating them. The achievement of girls is close to the national average while the achievement of boys is well below the national average. The achievement of current Year 11 students is good and standards are above average. By the end of Year 11, students construct detailed, well-written, factual accounts of the topics studied but they are not given enough opportunity to explain why different interpretations exist or to infer information from their sources. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Work is effectively matched to different abilities, with students working from worksheets graded advanced, core or foundation.
101. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan carefully and share clear objectives with their classes, leading to purposeful learning. The range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow with too much emphasis on factual writing and this is limiting students' development of evaluative skills. Homework is effectively integrated with the work in class providing good opportunities for students to extend their work. The development of literacy skills is good, with effective use being made of writing

frames. The identification and explanation of key words specific to a topic, is improving students' use of extended vocabulary. In a Year 10 lesson on the differences between voting systems, for example, students were given a list of specialist vocabulary which they included appropriately in their work. There are too few opportunities for students to use numeracy and ICT, resulting in these skills being insufficiently developed. Teachers have high expectations of students and have established a positive working ethos. Students have good attitudes; they work hard and behave very well. Work is regularly assessed and common assessment tasks are undertaken but students are not given sufficient advice on how to improve their work. The department's target-setting sheets are not used consistently.

102. Leadership is satisfactory and management of the department is good. The acting teacher in charge of the department has been in post for less than a term and has adopted an organised and systematic approach to her tasks. There is scope for widening the range of learning activities and making more use of data to track students' progress.

103. The department has implemented appropriate strategies for improvement since the last inspection. Progress, however, has been unsatisfactory because, although the level of attainment at GCSE is rising it is now lower than the national average and the gap between boys and girls' achievement has widened. The time allocation for history has improved and this has helped to raise attainment at the end of Year 9.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in food technology and students achieve well.
- Students' ICT skills are applied well in food technology.
- Standards are well below average in resistant materials and electronics.
- The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and electronics.
- Assessment is too infrequent and too inaccurate in resistant materials and electronics.
- Designing and graphic skills in resistant materials are poorly reinforced across units taught in Years 7 to 9.
- Untidy workshops present a poor image.

Commentary

104. In 2003, and in recent years, results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been close to the national average, which represents good achievement. Girls' results have been considerably higher than boys, as nationally. Food technology results were well above average at GCSE in 2003, with results in resistant materials close to average and electronics well below average - a similar pattern to recent years. This has represented positive achievement for many students.

105. At ages 11 to 14, standards of students currently in Years 7 to 9 are below average overall. In food technology, however, standards are above average and students make rapid progress to achieve well when planning, making and evaluating food products. This was seen, for example, when they undertook a sensory analysis of scones in Year 7. In resistant materials and electronics, students' skills in developing ideas, presenting information graphically and using tools to make products are below average and students underachieve.

106. At ages 14 to 16, there is a similar picture. Standards are above average in food technology in Years 10 and 11. Students apply their design understanding conscientiously and use a good range of ICT skills when presenting their research, planning and evaluations in coursework folders. Gifted students work at standards well above average and all students achieve well. Standards in resistant materials and electronics are below average and many students underachieve. In Year 11, these students are well behind schedule in producing GCSE coursework. Weak graphic and research skills are evident in resistant materials design folders. Standards of making products using tool techniques are below average in a narrow range of materials. Students have weak knowledge and understanding in electronics. The achievement of students with special educational needs is similar to that of others in classes and good when they work with learning support assistants.
107. Overall, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, but it ranges from very good to poor. Teaching in food technology is mostly good and some is very good. Well-planned lessons proceed at a good pace. Expectations are mostly high. As a result, students make rapid progress, particularly with their GCSE projects. Students are eager to achieve well and demonstrate good levels of independence. They benefit from thorough assessment and feedback, keeping to the timelines set. In contrast, one half of teaching in resistant materials is unsatisfactory and teaching in electronics is poor. Expectations are too low. Most students work hard, but because of the inadequate planning and teaching methods their achievement is too low. Teachers often fail to provide exemplars of work that is undertaken. Assessment is mainly cursory and sometimes inaccurate. It provides little information to students on how they can improve.
108. Determined efforts have been made by the recently appointed head of department to raise the quality of students' experience through monitoring, evaluation and feedback to staff. Appropriate strategies have been provided to support and train recently appointed teachers where weaknesses have been identified, such as using an Advanced Skills teacher. Good support has also been given by the school leadership team. Raising the capability and expectations of some subject team members remains a very considerable challenge. The current capacity of the subject to provide students with a satisfactory learning experience in resistant materials is poor. Despite very conscientious efforts, leadership and management are unsatisfactory because of very limited improvements in staff performance. However, the leadership and management of food technology are both very effective.
109. Since the previous inspection, good standards and achievement have been maintained in food technology. In other aspects standards have declined markedly. Now, not all teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, lesson planning or demonstrations. Overall progress is, therefore, poor.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships develop from characterful teaching and students' positive attitudes to learning.
- A high proportion of students' chose the subject at GCSE and all achieved a grade.
- Specific learning objectives for lessons are insufficiently linked to long-term planning for progression of subject knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Connections between the work of artists and students are underdeveloped; first-hand experience of artists is particularly limited.

Commentary

110. Teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2003 show satisfactory standards. Taking account of the relatively high number of entries for GCSE and the success of all in achieving A*-G grades, standards and achievement are good. GCSE results have steadily improved, with the most recent proportion of A*-C grades being close to the national average, although too few students have attained the highest grades, especially boys.
111. Across Years 7 to 9, current students attain standards in line with national expectations, representing satisfactory achievement. Particular projects, for example, the multicultural mask work in Year 8 promote good quality investigative work, clear reference to related artists and care in making art. Students abstract images effectively, evident in Year 7 claywork inspired by sweet wrappers, Year 8 paintings developed from bikes and Year 9 cubist portraits. Boys and girls of all abilities make sound progress in lessons due to teachers' good knowledge of individuals. Their achievements in each year are sound, overall, although scrutiny of work and lessons across the key stage reveals that students make inconsistent progress. For example, Year 7 sketchbooks demonstrate a wide range of drawing skills linked to an understanding of Van Gogh's mark making. By Year 9, competent tonal work nonetheless lacks the creativity of earlier work or direct reference to the approaches used by different artists. Current Years 10 and 11 students are attaining average standards, representing satisfactory achievement. Students explore and creatively present a range of ideas in written and visual form. These are developed using a good understanding of visual composition and control of two-dimensional media. Students also use three-dimensional media expressively. Although effective, a high proportion of work is not taken far enough. Students rarely use mixed media, printmaking, photography or textiles to pursue ideas. Their ability to evaluate the work of other artists in order to show understanding is limited, due to little use of specialist vocabulary or critical use of ICT.
112. Teaching is satisfactory and produces sound learning, with some good features, where specialist skills are shared with enjoyment. Good relationships are established by teachers, who know students well, manage behaviour effectively and provide a good level of feedback on individual progress. Teachers' enthusiasm for students' art is evident, often used well as a stimulus in lessons. Reference to the work of artists, craft workers and designers is less confident. This aspect is rarely brought to life by the use of visits, visitors and video material, or the use of older and past students. Homework is rarely used to promote independence or as a tool to prepare for, or follow up, lessons. However, the work of several students has been clearly advanced by good parental support, such as shown in a Year 11 student's study of William de Morgan, stimulated by a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Teachers work hard in lessons to support all students and build effective relationships. This creates a context in which teachers' own work could be used more frequently to develop students' analytical skills.
113. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. There are good examples of work with art departments in other schools, for example developing an assessment language easily understood by students. The frequent informal contact between subject teachers, and the effective monitoring and evaluation by a representative of the senior leadership team, have also contributed positively to improving provision. Development planning, however, is insufficiently linked to analysis of lessons and work and has not sufficiently identified the need to improve the range of resources in relation to art media including ICT, technical/artist involvement and professional development. Facilities are good and provide the scope to promote a wider variety of teaching and learning approaches, including students' independence, while retaining the balance of support and enjoyment popular with the students.
114. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory; teaching has remained sound and students' attitudes have improved. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is still satisfactory.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are better opportunities to study drama than in many schools.
- Students enjoy this subject.
- Teachers relate well to all students.
- There is insufficient time in Years 8 and 9 for students to produce work of the highest quality.
- Students' drama skills are developed well but too little emphasis on processes results in these being insufficiently extended

Commentary

115. Standards by the end of Year 9 are close to national expectations. Considering that time for drama in Years 8 and 9 is less than the one period per week allocated in Year 7, this represents satisfactory achievement. The strongest characteristic of attainment is the quality of work students produce in applying the skills of drama to improvisations. Most students suggest worthwhile ideas, share suggestions and work well with one another to shape and present convincing dramatic performances of a simple scenario. They also show that they respond critically to the work of other students. An unusual, but very worthwhile aspect of their work, is their knowledge of Greek theatre.
116. Students can choose to study the subject to GCSE examination level. Recruitment is good and shows that the subject is popular with both boys and girls. Results in 2003 were close to the national average and confirm that the standards in Years 7 to 9 have been maintained. Given that the examination work is of a challenging nature and draws on a much wider range of skills than those expected earlier, this is good achievement. Students improvise scenes, combine language and movement effectively in more elaborate presentations than those seen in Years 7 to 9, and evaluate the work of other students in greater depth.
117. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are meticulous in expecting and achieving high standards of behaviour. They are good role models for students in the clear way in which they use language and the precision of their instructions. They show respect for all students. No student is ever isolated. Those with special educational needs are fully involved and students learning English as an additional language benefit from the clear way in which teachers use language. Lessons have clear objectives enabling students to work with a strong purpose. Work is assessed carefully but insufficient attention is paid to dramatic processes, as distinct from the teaching of skills, which means that work of the highest quality is not apparent.
118. The subject is well led because the department's work reflects the aims of the school. It is also well managed; there is good course progression which means that students can continue to study drama from the time they enter the school through to the sixth form. The department makes an important contribution to the extra-curricular programme. Useful work has been undertaken on the development of assessment to ensure that teachers and students understand what students have achieved and what they have still to master.
119. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in Years 7 to 11 because the department has maintained good levels of teaching and has developed students' capacity for evaluation. However, the same level of progress has not been made in the sixth form because students are not achieving as well as they were at the time of the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activity is a strength of the department.
- Resources are used effectively in the classroom to support students' learning.
- Students show good attitudes to learning through music.
- Marking of students' work is poor and fails to inform them of how well they are doing or what they need to do to get better.
- Schemes of work do not provide sufficient guidance and support for teachers in their planning.

Commentary

120. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessment places most students just below the national average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below average and have been so for the last four years except for those in 2002, which were slightly above. In 2003, girls did better than boys.
121. Current students in Years 7 to 9 are maintaining standards, which are just below average, and achievement is satisfactory. Musical composition is a strength in all years. The involvement of a high proportion of students in extra-curricular instrumental teaching is improving learning in performing and listening. In each of the first three years, most students respond well, volunteering points and showing a serious intent in activities they clearly enjoy. In a Year 9 class, students wrote a contrasting section in a blessing composition. They worked in 6/8 time and incorporated a number of devices including sequences. There is too little use of computer-aided learning in Years 7 to 9 and this has an adverse effect on standards. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are higher than those in previous years. Students attain in line with national averages of composition and performance. Attitudes remain very positive and they are very appreciative of the help that they get from the teacher. Achievement is satisfactory.
122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable, with regular use of good quality practical demonstrations. For students in Years 7 to 9, the pace of lessons is often too slow with too much of the time being spent listening to the teacher and completing notation tests. Marking of students' work is unsatisfactory; opportunities to make helpful comments and guide further progress are missed. Students' musical ability is not assessed on entry to the school, so teachers have no knowledge of what students can do to improve. A new system for assessing work has recently been introduced, which has good potential to track students' progress in the future. There is too much use of worksheets that do not always match the needs of all students. In Years 10 and 11, students get good opportunities to make music. Planning of these lessons is sound and, as a result, students' learning is satisfactory. A good feature of these lessons is the way teaching generates strong student enthusiasm to use the musical instruments to create their own work. Students work well together, concentrate effectively and demonstrate good independent learning skills.
123. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of department is committed to providing extra-curricular opportunities such as the jazz group, orchestra and choirs. There is a sense of purpose and high aspirations for music within the school. Management of the department is unsatisfactory. The department is yet to make effective use of self-evaluation and to provide helpful schemes of work to ensure further improvement. The visiting instrumental teachers provide well for students.
124. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Students now make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 and standards have risen although they are still below national expectations at GCSE. Planning has improved but still needs to be more detailed.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE results have been well above the national average and achievement is high.
- Both leadership and management of the subject are excellent and give a very clear direction for raising achievement and participation in the subject.
- Teaching in the subject is very good, with some very good features
- There are good curricular and very good extra-curricular activities, open to all.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- There is an excellent swimming pool which is used well to develop swimming and water safety skills.
- Girls do not achieve as well as boys in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE.
- There are too few opportunities for students to observe and evaluate their own and others' performance.
- The curriculum is constricted by the lack of a second multi-purpose indoor facility.

Commentary

125. Teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2003 show that they were attaining in line with the national average, with boys' standards slightly higher than girls. Current students in Years 7 to 9 are attaining at above average standards, producing good performances in a range of activities. Students of all abilities achieve well and acquire a good knowledge, understanding and level of skill in the main areas of physical activity. Many know about the effect of exercise on their bodies and the importance of taking part in sport for their future health and enjoyment.
126. By the end of Year 11, students are achieving very well, attaining at a level that is well above the national average, with a number of gifted and talented students attaining even higher standards in specific activities. The recently introduced Junior Sports Leaders Award has been taken up well by students, with many of them successfully completing the course requirements. GCSE results over recent years show an upward trend and the results for 2003, at 83 per cent A*-C, were well above the national average of 55 per cent. Students generally achieve significantly better in physical education when compared to their other subjects at GCSE and all students entered over the last three years have gained a pass grade in the subject. This is consistently better than the national average. Students from a wide range of abilities, including some on the school's special educational needs register, take up the option to study the subject at GCSE and this reflects well the department's open access policy. The few girls who opt for the subject tend to achieve at a level slightly below that of the boys.
127. Teaching is very good, enabling students to learn very well. Teachers have high expectations of students, instil in them an enthusiasm for the subject and support them very well to achieve a very good standard of performance. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education are very good. Lessons are very well planned with good progression of activities which are effective in building up knowledge and developing students' skills. Teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour and students respond very well. Teachers provide a very good range of activities, including a strong extra-curricular provision. Good work has been undertaken to match the National Curriculum levels of attainment with specific activities and these are effectively shared with students enabling them to see very clearly how they can improve.
128. The head of department provides excellent leadership and a very clear purpose and direction for the subject's future development in the school. At the same time he has been supported very well by department colleagues in the drive to raise standards and participation in the subject. Subject management is also excellent with very full and clear subject documentation

covering all areas and an excellent analysis of the value the subject adds to students' achievement. There is an excellent swimming pool which is well used. The curriculum is constricted at times by the lack of a sports hall or full-sized gymnasium.

129. The subject has made very good progress on the areas for development identified in the last inspection. GCSE results were below the national average. They are now well above. In 1998, there was occasional unsatisfactory and poor teaching. Now teaching is very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's very positive ethos makes a significant contribution to students' development as citizens.
- Good units of work have been planned for human rights and local and central government in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The enrichment programme offers significant opportunities for students to take roles of responsibility within the school.
- Student's attitudes and commitment to the school community are very positive.
- Coverage of aspects of citizenship in other subjects has been identified, but there is no scheme of work to indicate how the National Curriculum is to be covered with sufficient time allocation and depth of coverage.
- The school has not yet identified suitable arrangements for assessing and reporting citizenship.
- There are no monitoring arrangements to ensure that all identified subject areas take effective responsibility for delivering aspects of citizenship
- The current programme does not illustrate how active citizenship is incremental and progresses from one year to the next or how it is accredited or celebrated.

Commentary

130. Overall, standards in citizenship are below the national average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in some aspects of citizenship, taught as part of PSHE, are similar to those in most schools, and the school's ethos helps students to develop as citizens, but in other aspects, taught in other subjects, standards are too low. In PSHE, students have developed skills so that when they are given the opportunity they can give and justify opinions on difficult issues, as in a Year 9 lesson, when they discussed the moral and social issues related to relationships. Students take part in group discussions in a satisfactory manner, as in a Year 7 citizenship lesson on 'community'. Students respond well and take opportunities to contribute to the school and community, as when they represent their form on the school council, but these skills are not sufficiently developed for all students. Knowledge and understanding of aspects of citizenship are developed through units of work in other subjects but the delivery is insubstantial and incidental. Students are not achieving the expectations required.
131. Teaching and learning of citizenship are unsatisfactory. Insufficient co-ordination of the subject across lessons is resulting in too few teaching and learning opportunities for students to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, some students' overall understanding of citizenship is too limited. Some Year 9 students, who were not aware of any citizenship lessons, suggested that citizenship is simply helping other people less fortunate than themselves. Some Year 11 students felt that the school council was not relevant to them and did not relate to the citizenship provision. Teaching observed, in the tutorial period and PSHE lessons, was satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, but shortage of time allocated to the

teaching of citizenship limits what is achieved. Teachers know their students well and ensure that all are included effectively in every lesson, giving additional support to those who need it. Individual lessons are well organised but teachers are insufficiently clear about the expected outcomes for students. Students' attitudes are satisfactory and in all classes observed, behaviour was satisfactory or good. Teaching and learning are supported well by good relationships between students and teachers. Students, in discussion, showed that they felt PSHE topics covered were generally important but they felt unclear about the structure of the current provision or how elements fit together.

132. Both leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory. There is a school structure which has the potential to deliver citizenship effectively, but planning to ensure coverage of the programme of study is not yet in place. There is a lack of clarity about the relationship between citizenship and PSHE and the current scheme does not show how skills, such as enquiry, participation and responsible action, will be developed. There is some good recording of personal development through the school 'record of achievement' system but no decision has been made on the way in which the school will meet the need for assessment, recording and reporting of citizenship. There is no clear policy for citizenship or how the programme relates to the school aims and values. Those teaching citizenship have not received training and lack confidence in both content and methodology. There is no monitoring and evaluation of the citizenship programme to ensure quality and effective planning. Very little use is made of ICT, visitors or visits for citizenship.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	7	85.7	65.2	14.3	11.1	25.7	20.6
Business studies	2	100.0	76.4	50.0	16.3	45.0	26.2
Chemistry	6	50.0	72.7	0	13.9	13.3	24.1
Drama	3	66.7	86.5	0	19.6	16.7	30.6
English literature	5	80.0	85.9	0	19.1	28.0	30.2
French	3	33.3	78.2	0	18.9	6.7	27.6
Design and technology	2	100.0	74.9	0	15.1	25.0	25.3
Geography	4	75.0	74.3	0	19.8	17.5	26.5
German	5	40.0	81.5	0	19.3	8.0	28.9
History	4	75.0	80.7	0	19.5	27.5	28.6
Mathematics	12	33.3	61.9	0	17.1	7.5	22.1
Physics	12	50.0	68.6	8.3	14.4	15.8	22.7
Religious studies	4	100.0	80.2	25.0	22.6	35.0	29.8

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	5	100.0	98.6	20.0	50.2	68.0	87.5
Biology	5	100.0	96.4	40.0	39.2	84.0	78.6
Business studies	17	100.0	98.7	5.9	36.8	63.5	80.1
Chemistry	5	100.0	97.6	40.0	49.0	84.0	84.9
Drama	6	100.0	99.5	0	40.1	50.0	83.6
English literature	18	100.0	99.5	22.2	46.5	72.2	86.5
French	1	100.0	98.8	100.0	51.5	100.0	87.6
Design and technology	4	100.0	97.8	0	35.0	65.0	77.9
Geography	1	100.0	98.7	0	44.5	40.0	84.0
German	2	100.0	98.4	0	47.9	50.0	84.8
History	8	100.0	99.0	12.5	44.6	77.5	84.6
Mathematics	7	100.0	96.7	57.1	55.6	85.7	88.8

Physics	5	100.0	96.7	0	44.6	52.0	81.7
Religious studies	15	100.0	98.8	40.0	46.7	80.0	85.6

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Level 2 health and social care	10	100.0	N/a	60.0	N/a	0	N/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for students to study independently and to present their work to others.
- Teachers have good knowledge of course and examination requirements.
- Teachers do not always do enough to help the weaker and more reticent students to learn.

Commentary

133. In 2003, results at AS level were broadly in line with the school's predictions. Results at A2 were well below average. This represents good achievement when compared with predictions based on students' prior attainment at GCSE. Higher attaining students mostly achieve well, especially at A2, but some weaker students, often boys, do not achieve well enough.
134. The standard of current work in Year 12 is above average and the standard of work in Year 13 is average. As students enter the courses with below average standards, this represents good achievement. The majority of students learn how to analyse texts, to develop and express their own opinions with supporting evidence, and to present and explain their findings to an audience of other students. Some work in Year 12 is of high calibre; students understand the themes of challenging texts, have the capacity to relate one text to another, and present the findings of well-researched activities with confidence and maturity. This augurs very well for those students who intend to pursue a specialist course at university. Other work, although not of the same order, shows that students are developing their critical faculties and enhancing their learning. In Year 13, students enjoy what they do and are confident when presenting their work to others, but a significant number find the more challenging aspects of textual study, such as the identification of tone, very difficult. The written work of some students also reveals basic errors in spelling, sentence construction and expression.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good understanding of what students have to do to meet the requirements of the course. Another strong feature is the skill with which teachers provide good opportunities and support for students to undertake research and to learn from presenting their work to an audience. The weakest feature is the missed opportunity to involve the more reticent students in discussion to increase their self-esteem and develop confidence.
136. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Teachers work as a team and effectively share ideas for improvement. Courses have clear objectives but are limited in range. Many students are recruited onto courses but a few students, with low prior attainment, feel unable to progress from AS to A2.

137. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory because standards have been largely maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

138. Standards of literacy are above average. Students in Year 12 benefit from practising how to use language in different situations and for different purposes in the communication modules on the key skills programme. Work at Level 1 is especially helpful to students who are learning English as an additional language, and Level 3 is effective in extending able students studying a wide range of subjects. By helping students learn to read in Years 7 and 8, some sixth-form students learn more about the nature of literacy development. Students on the drama and theatre studies course are helped to express themselves clearly when writing essays by the teacher's close focus on the importance of expression. The library provides good support for literacy through its supply of reference books, a number of which focus on the most effective ways of using language.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The knowledge and understanding of the teachers are good.
- Teachers give clear explanations of new concepts.
- There is too little monitoring of teaching to ensure a greater consistency of approach and to enable the effective sharing of good practice.
- Schemes of work do not provide sufficient guidance and support for teachers in their planning.
- Assessment provides insufficient help for students to improve.

Commentary

139. In 2003, the results for A2 were in line with the national average but well below average at AS level. Girls did better than boys at AS level but standards at A2 were similar. A2 results represent good achievement when compared with predictions based on previous GCSE results.
140. The quality of students' written and oral work is in line with expectations at this stage in the course and achievement is good. They have a sound understanding of mathematics and make good use of past work when introduced to a new topic, for example, when finding the pulling force involving the coefficient of friction. Students use their understanding of forces well and extend it. They also extend their understanding of two-tailed hypothesis testing in statistics. In Year 12, students are introduced to series and apply their understanding to solving problems involving arithmetic and geometric progressions. In Year 13, students used their knowledge of collisions to build up an understanding of Newton's Experimental Law and the coefficient of restitution in mechanics.
141. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Most teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. They give clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows them to improve their understanding. In good lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering information. However, in a small number of lessons, opportunities are missed to involve students more actively and interest is lost. Good lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers judge carefully when to introduce new material to extend students' learning. For example, in a lesson introducing two-tailed hypothesis testing, the teacher allowed students to apply their new learning at each stage before going on to more complex examples. This consolidated learning well. Homework is set

regularly; it is used effectively to consolidate and extend new work that is introduced in the lesson. However, marking of work is insufficiently detailed to guide further improvements.

142. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. There is an insufficient focus on students' achievement. The department has strategies for improvement but these are insufficiently detailed, and implemented at too slow a pace, to have an effective impact on learning. Although teachers prepare students for examinations, schemes of work are insufficiently detailed to provide clear guidance for them. Assessment procedures for recording progress are insufficiently developed to help students improve. There is scope for better monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure the effective sharing of good practice. The lack of co-ordination is preventing achievement from being higher.
143. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. A2 results have improved. Schemes of work were in place at the time of the last inspection but these lacked detail. This still remains an issue. Appropriate textbooks have been purchased but these are under review at the present time. There is still insufficient use made of ICT in lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

144. Other subjects contribute well to the development of students' mathematical skills. Students demonstrate that they can carry out numerical calculations in a variety of ways. For example, in chemistry, students apply good numeracy skills to finding concentration formulae and working out electron affinity.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are developing good independent learning skills.
- Teaching is occasionally inventive and imaginative.
- There is scope for greater pace and challenge in lessons.
- Teachers' subject knowledge lacks sufficient depth and knowledge to fully challenge all students.

Commentary

145. In 2003, biology A2 results were well above national averages, but a number of AS students failed to gain a grade. Based on the work seen during the inspection both boys and girls in Years 12 and 13 are continuing to make steady progress and achieving in line with expectations. They demonstrate, for example, satisfactory understanding of lattice enthalpy in Year 13, and pond eco-systems in Year 12.
146. Teaching is satisfactory. It is enthusiastic and imaginative on occasion, and well judged to ensure that students of all abilities develop an understanding of their work. Theory and practical work are integrated well and support each other. Teachers are relatively inexperienced; they are working very hard but have not yet developed their subject knowledge sufficiently to fully challenge all students, with too little use of well-crafted questioning and associated activities. This results in too little pace and challenge in some work and overlong teacher-directed exposition, with insufficient involvement of students. Learning is satisfactory overall. Students research, explain and present ideas to others clearly.

147. The leadership and management of the subject are both satisfactory. The teaching is well co-ordinated between the two teachers involved. There has been an analysis of students' marks, but assessment data are not analysed sufficiently to diagnose students' weaknesses and

develop targets for improvement. The department's scheme of work lacks sufficient strategies for improving students' knowledge of the subject, and how resources such as the Internet can be used to further this.

148. It is not possible to make comparisons with the previous inspection because sixth-form biology was not inspected in 1998.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining students have a sound grasp of concepts and apply them well. One hundred per cent of A2 students gained an A-E grade in 2003.
- Students work well together, with their teachers, and continue to develop as independent learners.
- Teaching is enhanced through some good teacher subject knowledge and clear, detailed explanations.
- There is too little use of assessment to help students improve.
- Planning lacks a diversity of activity to fully exploit new technologies and a range of different teaching approaches.

Commentary

149. A2 chemistry results in 2003 were in line with the national average and as expected when compared with students' previous GCSE results. The overall performances of students at AS level in 2003 was slightly above that expected considering their GCSE grades.

150. The standards of current students in Years 12 and 13 are in line with those normally seen, representing satisfactory achievement. Higher attaining students are achieving at least as much as expected and show some good understanding; for example, in their knowledge of energetics and aspects of organic chemistry. Students in Years 12 and 13 make steady progress and their achievements demonstrate good understanding of key concepts. Progress is slowed through over-reliance on teacher guidance and direction.

151. Teaching is satisfactory and students' learning is adequate, with some examples of good practice. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is used well in their questioning, explanations and the tasks they set. For example, students in a Year 13 class prepared their own examination questions for each other to answer and critically evaluated each other's material. This approach to learning developed their skills to learn independently and consolidated their knowledge and understanding. However, occasionally lessons are too teacher dominated and unimaginative. For example, teachers gave information to students and questioned only a selected few rather than providing the opportunity for all to discuss ideas, rehearse responses, learn from each other and other sources, before testing students' knowledge and understanding. These lessons were less stimulating and did not result in secure learning, particularly for less confident students. Overall, students' learning is sound. They respond well to challenge, work hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. Less confident students do not always enter into classroom question-and-answer sessions. When given the opportunity to do so, students undertake independent work maturely. Most extract information from a variety of sources well and make their own notes.

152. Leadership and management are both satisfactory, with courses established, resourced and organised well. Teaching and learning in the department are, on occasions, hindered by a lack of fully developed schemes of work that plan for a wider range of learning strategies such as for gifted students. Assessment data are not used enough to inform students of their progress and highlight strengths and areas to improve. A good range of learning support materials provided by the examination board is adapted well and used effectively, but there is too little use of ICT both as a teaching and learning tool.
153. It is not possible to make comparisons with the previous inspection because sixth-form chemistry was not inspected in 1998.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and students are very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, clarity of explanation and questioning of students have a positive effect on understanding.
- Subject specifications content is rigorously followed.
- There is scope to improve planning and the range of strategies to raise achievement.
- Marking is unsatisfactory and the use of assessment data to inform students' progress is not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

154. A2 results in 2003 were well below average. However, these results were based on very small numbers of students: a change in one student's result can have a significant change on the overall statistics. AS level results in physics indicate students achieving at least the grades predicted, based on their previous GCSE performance.
155. The achievement of current students in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. Students are making steady progress; they show good recall and understanding of electromagnetism, wavelength and frequency. Students carry out most investigations capably, but on occasions lack confidence due to unclear targets and detailed plans to ensure success.
156. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. In good lessons, explanations and board work are clear and precise, lessons develop well, using the early part as a foundation for later work, sustaining the pace and ensuring students make good progress. In a few lessons pace is slower and students' learning is too dependent on directions and questioning from the teacher. There are too few opportunities for students to discuss ideas and learn from different, more diverse and interesting sources. Students' learning is satisfactory. They are attentive and show a willingness to learn, seeking clarification of their understanding by asking thoughtful questions. Relationships in the classroom are very good; the atmosphere being relaxed, friendly and supportive but industrious. There is not enough done to encourage students to become more responsible for their own learning, to make greater contributions to discussions and the learning of the group. Too narrow a range of sources of information is used, including ICT.
157. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The course is soundly organised and resourced but lacks a comprehensive scheme of work to provide a sufficiently wide range of teaching and learning strategies for staff and students. For example, there are too few strategies to challenge the most able and gifted. Marking comments, test and other data are

not fully exploited to help student's self-assess, set targets for improvement and plan their own learning.

158. It is not possible to make comparisons with the previous inspection because physics was not inspected in 1998.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and the demands of the AS and A2 examinations.
- Students produce detailed written work which is of a high standard.
- Students have very good attitudes towards work in history.
- Students have too little opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learnt through individual investigation.

Commentary

159. The standard of attainment at AS level, in 2003, was close to the national average. At A2, results were just below average, representing very good progress in relation to prior attainment. The value added in history is equivalent to each student gaining a grade higher than expected.
160. Current sixth-form students are achieving well to attain above average standards. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the topics studied and can apply their knowledge to the specific questions asked. They are confident at supporting their arguments with evidence, as in their work on Henry VII's choice of councillors. They identify and explain the different, but interrelated, causes of an event, such as the rise of Chartism. They are less confident in explaining issues concerning the reliability and origin of evidence. The development of literacy is good, with an appropriate emphasis being placed on the understanding and use of subject specific vocabulary. Students write clearly and their essay writing is well above average. There is too little development of skills in numeracy or ICT.
161. Teaching is good. Teachers create a good climate for learning through their expertise and enthusiasm. Students are given detailed explanations, supported with a wide range of written resources. The lessons are planned well, with effective use of time. Teachers challenge students appropriately and have high expectations. In a Year 13 lesson on Chartism, the teacher clarified the attributes of a high-grade answer and involved the students in applying these criteria to the analysis of sources. The rigorous emphasis on quality enabled the students to make good progress. Students work hard and show a good understanding of the topics studied. In a Year 12 lesson on the causes of the Irish problems at the start of the twentieth century, students were able to explain the issues facing the liberal government in the context of 'laissez-faire' and 'imperialism'.
162. There is too great a tendency for teachers to over explain a topic, restricting the opportunities for independent learning. The work in folders shows that the syllabus is covered very thoroughly. Work is assessed in line with examination criteria, and an appropriate range of work is set. Students are given guidance about the requirements for each grade but are not always given enough specific advice about how they can improve their work. The essay review sheet is a good development to support assessment.
163. Leadership and management are both good. The work of the department is well organised. A good range of written resources supports the work in history. The teacher in charge has liaised with the school librarian to establish a good range of resources to support the work at AS and A2. The relentless emphasis on high standards is raising the aspirations of students and is instrumental in enabling them to make good progress.

164. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. History remains a popular subject in the sixth form and performance has continued to be close to national averages.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Designing and making skills are well below average.
- Students' knowledge and application of ICT skills in design and manufacturing contexts are below average.
- Achievement is poor.
- Teaching has failed to ensure students meet coursework deadlines.
- Coverage of materials, components and systems theory is unsatisfactory.
- Some students are demoralised.

Commentary

165. Students' post-16 design and technology course consists entirely of the study of resistant materials.

166. In 2003, results for nine students taking AS design and technology were well below average, with all results at grades D or E. However, some students had a GCSE design and technology experience that was not well matched to the course and for some this grade represents reasonable achievement. Only a small number of students took the A2 course in 2003, and results were well below average. Overall, results illustrate unsatisfactory achievement.

167. The standards of current students in designing are well below average and achievement is poor. Coursework folders for the AS and A2 examinations lack depth in researching a chosen product theme and in developing specifications for design ideas. For example, several Year 13 students are designing products for use by young children but they have failed to visit nurseries or primary schools to investigate products that are available commercially or to gain the views of young children or those who look after them. They have not investigated the appropriateness of different materials or constructions for their designs in sufficient depth and have not followed up health and safety issues. Skills in recording ideas using annotated sketches and in developing working drawings for the final product are weak. Students use ICT soundly for word processing and basic folder presentation, but have not developed capability in using graphics programs for modelling ideas, designing component parts or creating images of their final products. Cost analysis is superficial. Students have not considered in any depth how their products could be adapted for commercial manufacture. The standard of design work for an adjustable desk lamp by Year 12 students taking the AS course is poor. They have made little progress since GCSE. Their capability in making, demonstrated in their two minor projects in metal and wood, is well below the minimum standard expected.

168. Teaching is poor in both years. Students have not been set sufficiently tight deadlines for completing different aspects of their coursework and are well behind with design folders and product manufacture. Although the scope of products being undertaken is well within the students' capability, they have not been directed to research or investigate their designs in the necessary depth. Students have not been sufficiently stretched to improve their graphic skills when producing developmental sketches or working drawings. Teaching of the Year 13 materials, components and systems optional unit is not sufficiently well related to real life exemplars that would assist students understanding of mechanical concepts. Teaching lacks rigor and is too descriptive; for example, when learning about different pulley systems students

do not cover velocity ratio calculations. Students are provided with insufficient feedback on their performance and work lacks written comments that will assist them to raise their standards. Students complained that an assignment completed a month earlier had yet to be returned.

169. The leadership and management of the post-16 design and technology course are poor. There is poor co-ordination of contributions by different members of staff who teach the subject. The monitoring of students' progress has been weak and parents have been involved too late when students have fallen behind in their work. Courses in both years lack a week-by-week course planner to inform staff and students what has to be covered so that slippage can be avoided. There has been extensive action to deal with a lack of staff experience but this has been ineffective.
170. The previous report recorded the high quality of design projects by post-16 students, but made no further comment on provision. Standards have declined considerably so progress since the previous report is poor.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The most able students attain high standards when first-hand experience of artists is pursued.
- A good proportion of students continues with art-related courses and careers after leaving school.
- The narrow range of materials and methods limits achievements, particularly of lower abilities.
- The pace of learning slows when lessons are insufficiently structured and students' independence is underdeveloped.

Commentary

171. Small student numbers in the past make analysis of examination results an unreliable source of evidence.
172. There are currently good-sized groups following the AS and A2 courses. Students are achieving standards in line with their unusually wide range of ability. This represents satisfactory achievement. All abilities build on the two-dimensional skills developed through the GCSE course. The most able make good progress, driven by their experience of exhibitions and gallery visits. For example, the competent painting skills of one student developed into a mature exploration of surface, form and colour when her own self-portrait became influenced by experience of Lucien Freud's work. A good standard is also achieved when students analyse the influences of different artists. For example, one student effectively explored the way in which Picasso and Matisse influenced each other and then used the impact of African and Islamic art on their work to develop his own ideas. The role of direct observation is also clearly understood by the highest achieving students. For example, one student applied Andy Warhol's use of colour, and Constable's use of composition, to observation of a local landscape. However, creative ideas are sometimes constrained by dependence upon familiar making skills developed at GCSE. This restricts achievement for those students accepted with low grades.
173. Teaching is satisfactory and learning is adequate. Good relationships are characterised by individual discussions and records which promote personal progress. Teachers contribute to a good standard of questioning. Display is effectively used to illustrate the value of analytical drawing. Lesson planning often provides too little variety and rigour to sustain interest in a

three-hour session and students' pace slows, although teachers sometimes overcome this through improvisation. Whole-group dynamic is generally underused to share and encourage creative differences. Studio space is also insufficiently used to promote students' independent work.

174. Leadership is satisfactory and management is adequate. There is scope for better monitoring and support of teaching to raise achievement.
175. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The subject has improved in popularity and links with local colleges enable a good proportion of students to progress further. Students' work has also been exhibited in the community, although the process and outcomes of sixth-form work deserve more exposure.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was not a focus subject for post-16 provision in this inspection because, although a few students study the subject at AS and A2, these lessons are taught in another school, by other teachers, as part of the school's sixth-form consortium arrangements.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured with a range of activities which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students are achieving well. They have a sound grasp of concepts which they apply well in classwork and in answering routine questions.
- Students share ideas freely and work well together.
- There is capacity for further improvement, especially for the more able students.
- Targets for students are not focused sharply enough on learning goals.

Commentary

176. The GCE A2 examination results in 2003 were well below average; however, all students who took the examination gained a pass grade. In relation to their GCSE results they did better than expected. A few students with modest GCSE results did very well. This represents good achievement.
177. The standard of work of current students is in line with the average for this stage in their course. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Most students recall knowledge well and apply it effectively to solve problems. They are demonstrating the higher-level analysis skills required by the course. In one lesson, on decision trees as part of business strategy theory, students drew well on their knowledge and mathematical skills to predict the likely risks of an advertising campaign.
178. Students in Year 12 are achieving as expected. They show good knowledge and understanding of human resource management and the business cycle. Students are successfully moving into these new areas of study, have a reasonable grasp of theory and concepts and apply these in a variety of situations. Knowledge of specialist vocabulary and basic concepts, such as recession, slump, recovery and boom, are sound.

179. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. The teacher shows good subject knowledge in her questioning and explanations and in the tasks she sets. A well-planned Year 13 lesson started with a rapid consolidation of previous learning using A-Z of business terminology. The teacher then clarified the objectives for the rest of the lesson. A homework task was introduced and tight deadlines set for its completion. The teacher constantly asked questions and urged on individual students. There were opportunities for students to work individually and together to check their learning and formulate their ideas. Students responded confidently to the changes of activity and this resulted in secure learning. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching. The independent work students undertake is very well prepared and tasks complement the content of lessons well. Students are confident in using ICT. They approach this work maturely and most extract information and make their own notes.
180. The good teaching and learning result from the subject being led and managed well. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Target setting based on careful analysis of student's performance in tests, is becoming established. There is a satisfactory system of monitoring progress on a regular basis, through individual tutorials to students and feedback after units of work. The development plan is thorough and fits well with school aims and priorities. The subject has a strong leadership on equal opportunities and is generating and sustaining an ethos that is promoting open access. The subject is well placed to make further progress.
181. It is not possible to make comparisons with the previous inspection because sixth-form business studies was not inspected in 1998.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average and achievement is good.
- There is a high level of retention of students on courses, and completion rates are also good.
- Teaching is consistently good: lessons are effective and the course is well planned.
- The teacher is well qualified and very experienced in the health and social care field.
- There is confident and committed leadership of the subject.
- Monitoring of work placements is not sufficient to ensure that students have adequate opportunities to develop their practical skills.
- The high level of support provided is restricting students' independent learning.

Commentary

182. Overall, standards are above average. In the most recent set of results, a good proportion of students gained a merit award, and all who started the course completed it. Achievement is good and has improved significantly over the last two years. The course is attractive to boys and girls and they achieve equally well.
183. In the current group, students have a wide range of prior GCSE attainment, from which they progress well. Achievement is good, particularly for students with low previous standards. Work in class demonstrates genuine enthusiasm and portfolio evidence is well presented, with confident use of information and communications technology skills. Attainment levels are above average and the number of students expected to achieve distinction and merit grades this year is high. Students show strength in understanding and have been able to apply this well in assessed coursework. For example, whilst working at their placements students have produced appropriate and detailed plans for minimising risks, having evaluated carefully how

well health hazards are handled in contrasting care settings. Students have engaged intellectually and emotionally with the principles underlying health provision and care services. There is a particular strength in the perceptiveness and sense of humanity that is shared amongst the group and this clearly adds worth and meaning to students' studies.

184. Teaching is consistently good, confident and caring; it produces good learning. Knowledge of the subject is very strong, giving students realistic insight into the demands of the sector and the professionalism that is required. Planning and preparation are thorough, lessons are well structured and assessment requirements are set up carefully and reinforced systematically. Unfailing enthusiasm, clear thinking and open communication create a positive environment for learning. Students bring ideas, memories and feelings into the classroom and can do this because their teacher manages discussion well, questions them sensitively and builds their self-esteem skilfully. The teacher's background, as a highly experienced practitioner, brings the course to life. The core values of the subject are exemplified in the very good relationships that have been developed. Students enjoy health and social care, speak highly of the support and individual attention that they receive and put effort into their work. The course is challenging how they think about themselves and about other people. Positive attitudes and a belief that they can make a difference are set against a maturing awareness of key issues, including the deep impact that these may have on people's lives. An example was seen in introductory work on defining factors that affect health and wellbeing; students concentrated well, showed respect for each other's views and those of the teacher, and produced well-chosen profiles of a fictional person.
185. Leadership and management are very good and a distinct improvement in standards has been achieved recently. Co-ordination is effective and efficient, and a commitment to high standards is visible. Resources are well organised and include conscious development of key skills. Assessment is accurate and secure and good record keeping helps students to be clear about their progress. Work placements provide an invaluable learning opportunity and a good choice of relevant contexts is available. Some students have felt uncertain about how to manage an issue when it has arisen and a review of monitoring arrangements is needed. The health and social care programme meets the needs of students well; outcomes and progression are good. A decision about how to replace the GNVQ needs to take into account the dynamics and features that have been successfully established in the last two years.
186. It is not possible to make comparisons with the previous inspection because sixth-form health and social care was not inspected in 1998.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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