

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MONKSEATON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Whitley Bay

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number:108642

Headteacher: Dr P Kelley

Lead inspector: Mr I Thompson

Dates of inspection: 19 – 26 January 2004

Inspection number: 259258

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

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### *Terms used in this report*

*Students in 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their middle schools after Year 8. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the sixth form, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 9 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (A-level). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (AS), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (AEA).*

*Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those with similar standards at the start of the stage of learning in question.*

*Efforts have been made to minimise the use of abbreviations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, ICT refers to information and communication technology. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003.*

*Little reference is made to students for whom English is an additional language. Very few students are from backgrounds where English is not the first language of at least one parent. Only eight students (less than one per cent) are at the early stages of English language acquisition and all have good access to the curriculum.*

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	925
School address:	Seatonville Road Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE25 9EQ
Telephone number:	0191 297 9700
Fax number:	01912008771
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms J Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Monkseaton Community High School is a larger than average, 13 –19 age-range mixed comprehensive school. The school serves an urban area of Whitley Bay, North Shields and Wallsend, including some areas of considerable social and economic deprivation. There are 925 students on roll, 219 of whom are in the sixth form. An average proportion of students join the school at other than the usual times but, last year, a higher than average proportion left. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about average in the main school and well above in the sixth form. The majority of students are white. Some 44 students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds – the largest group being Chinese. Eight students are at an early stage of learning English. The school has 23 students who are in public care. The school's tests show that students' standards when they join the school are below average. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs is below average as is the proportion with Statements of Special Educational Need, most of which refer to specific or moderate learning difficulties.

The school is a specialist language college and has initiated or led a number of local and national initiatives aimed at raising standards.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12271	I Thompson	Lead inspector	
19369	C Wild	Lay inspector	
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
3937	J Seed	Team inspector	Science
32211	B Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31160	I Towler-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology
17207	S Rogers	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History Religious education
4697	R Black	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Post-16 physical education Leisure and recreation
32329	A Stafford	Team inspector	Post-16 art
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	Business education
2928	W Baxendale	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school with many strengths and it offers good value for money.** Very good leadership provides clear direction and has established an ethos in which all students are valued as individuals and achieve well. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in comparison with similar schools.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is very well led and well managed.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The school provides a good climate for learning. The innovative curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities for students of all abilities.
- Gifted and talented students achieve well, and very well in the sixth form, as a result of the additional experiences provided for them.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in response to the school's high expectations for their conduct.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good and contribute to the positive atmosphere in the school.
- The support and guidance provided for students are good.
- Students benefit from the school's very good links with the community and its specialist college status.
- Attendance is not good enough and affects the achievement of a minority of students.
- Middle managers are not rigorous enough in monitoring the application of whole-school policies.
- The school's accommodation is poor and a barrier to learning that affects standards.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school is doing well in difficult circumstances. Teaching is better and the curriculum offers a wider range of opportunities. Standards are much as they were in comparison with national averages. Response to the issues for action has been good, except that attendance has improved but not enough. Links with the community and other institutions have been considerably strengthened. Little has been done to improve the school's accommodation.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**The achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs, is good.**

Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 9 and this represents good achievement in relation to students' standards in the short time since they joined the school. By the end of Year 11, standards are average, representing good achievement in Years 10 and 11 in relation to students' standards at the end of Year 9. Students reach average standards in the sixth form and achieve well in relation to their earlier learning.

**Students' personal development is good** and their overall spiritual, moral and social development is good. Attitudes and behaviour are good. **Attendance is unsatisfactory**, despite the school's efforts to reduce the rate of authorised absence, and affects achievement.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement. Curricular opportunities are more than usually broad and the school provides very good opportunities for enrichment, for example, for gifted and talented students. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. The school makes good arrangements for students' care and guidance but assessment data are not used consistently well enough to promote students' progress by ensuring that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school makes very good use of opportunities in the community and links with business to support learning. Achievement is affected by the poor quality of accommodation in a number of areas of the school, particularly music.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership is very good and management is good.** The headteacher provides very clear, inspirational educational direction for the school's improvement, leads by example and takes people with him. The result is that the school is highly innovative, seeking constantly to improve performance. Governors provide good support for the work of the school and hold it appropriately to account. Financial management is good. Although the quality of middle management is generally good, the monitoring of teaching at departmental level is not rigorous enough in evaluating departments' contributions to whole-school elements of the curriculum, such as literacy and numeracy and opportunities to contribute to students' personal development.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students express a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents believe that it is a **good school** in which their children are doing at least as well as they might expect, that they are happy in school and that standards are improving. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Students believe the school to be good. They feel that they are looked after very well. They consider that members of staff know them well and use that knowledge to help and guide them. They believe that they are taught well and expected to work hard. Inspectors agree with these views.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve attendance and punctuality.
- Improve the consistency of middle managers' understanding and interpretation of their role in monitoring:
  - the application of policies for literacy and numeracy,
  - the use of assessment data to support achievement of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs.
- Improve the school's poor accommodation "

### For the sixth form

- Improve provision for development of students' key skills of communication and numeracy. \*

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for students and religious education\* in the sixth form. (*\* These items are already part of the school's planning.*)

## THE SIXTH FORM AT MONKSEATON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

There are 219 students following a wide variety of courses. The sixth form is larger than most sixth forms. A new partnership arrangement with neighbouring high schools commenced in September 2003.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is cost-effective because students are achieving well, standards are average overall and its costs are balanced by its income. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership provides clear direction and promotes ventures that add significantly to the opportunities available to students in an already varied curriculum.
- Teaching is good; students learn well as a result, and their achievement is good.
- Students appreciate the support they receive, the quality of teaching and the opportunities and facilities available.
- Provision for religious education and provision for the key skills of communication and numeracy are inadequate under present arrangements.\*
- Not all students are appropriately placed on courses in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) and, as a result, lack motivation.  
*(\*These matters are already part of the school's planning).*

### 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	<b>English literature - Good.</b> Standards are average, in line with previous results. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching overall. They appreciate the support and encouragement they receive. <b>French – Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average but students often achieve well. Teaching and learning are good.
Mathematics	<b>Mathematics - Good.</b> Students' very good attitudes help them achieve well. Standards are above average as a result of good teaching. Assessment of students' work is good.
Science	<b>Chemistry – Good.</b> Standards are well above average and students are achieving well as a result of good teaching.
Information and communication technology	<b>ICT – Satisfactory.</b> Some students are inappropriately placed on the the A-level course and lack the prior learning necessary to cope successfully. Standards in the AVCE course are much higher. Teaching is good and very good ICT resources support students' learning.
Humanities	<b>History - Very good.</b> Students' attitudes and the high expectations of their teachers are enabling them to achieve very well. Teaching is very good and teachers' subject expertise supports students' understanding. <b>Sociology – Good.</b> Teaching is good, and supports students' learning well. Students' attitudes are very good. Standards are rising.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Design and Technology - Very good.</b> Teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning, above average standards and improving results. Students have excellent attitudes to work and achieve well.

Visual and performing arts and media

**Art and Design – Good.** Students' learning is enhanced by good teaching that provides an exacting working method and emphasises observational drawing. Standards are rising as a result.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel

**Physical Education – Good.** Teaching is having a positive impact on learning and progress is generally good in lessons. Standards are below average but improving.

**Leisure & Recreation – Good.** Standards are below average but rising. Good teaching promotes good learning. The subject is led and managed well and supports students' personal development.

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

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Good. Careful monitoring, checking and tracking of progress take place. Students appreciate the additional mentoring and support provided by the sixth form's mentoring assistant, especially in relation to applications for higher education.

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

Good. Clear direction for the sixth form has brought about significant curriculum development including new partnership arrangements. Efficient management ensures that students are monitored closely and cared for as individuals. Some aspects of provision and guidance require further attention.

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

Good, especially in relation to teaching quality and support. The high proportion of negative comments from a small sample of students in the sixth form questionnaire clearly did not accurately reflect the views of most students, as expressed to inspectors during the inspection. Inspectors endorse the positive views expressed directly to them in classroom and other interviews.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

**Standards** are **average** at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form. **Achievement** is **good** as students move through the school. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or between different groups of students because the school adapts methods and provides support for all to achieve well. A key feature of the school is the way that older students are provided with opportunities to continue their education successfully.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students achieve well overall.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well.
- Gifted and talented students achieve well in the main school and very well in the sixth form.
- Support for developing literacy and numeracy in subjects across the school is unsatisfactorily inconsistent.

#### Commentary

1. In 2003, the work of the school was considerably disrupted by accommodation difficulties that resulted in teaching time being lost. Work in science was particularly affected by laboratories being out of use for extended periods.
2. Students enter the school with below average standards overall. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were average in the core subjects of English and mathematics. In science they were below average. Overall, standards were average compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. In relation to students' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6, standards were below average mathematics and well below average in English and science. It should be noted that, by the time students take the national tests, they have only been in this school for two terms. Nevertheless, results are improving at a similar rate to that found nationally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.7 (32.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.1 (34.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.9 (31.8)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 240 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. GCSE results have been improving at a slower rate than nationally over the last five years. Nevertheless, the school had the highest measure of students' progress between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 for all schools locally. In 2003, results were average overall but well above average for the award of five or more grades A\*-G. and well above average for the award of one or more grades A\*-G. Results were well above average when compared to similar schools. Very few students leave the school without any qualification, representing significant achievement for many. Overall, best results were in French, for both boys and girls, as befits a school with language college status and reflecting the good teaching in the department. Worst performances were in art and design, design and technology and ICT. This is an unusual outcome because boys, in particular, generally do better in subjects that have a high practical element. The results reflect the adverse effect on standards of the staffing and accommodation difficulties that have faced the school in these subjects.

### 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	50 (43.5)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95.2)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96.1)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34.6 (34.5)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 240 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. In work seen during the inspection in Year 9, standards are above average in modern foreign languages and average in all other subjects, except ICT where they are below. These standards represent good achievement overall in relation to students' standards when they entered the school. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average in most subjects. They are below average in design and technology, ICT and business studies. Standards in geography, history and modern foreign languages are above average. Lesson observations and analysis of work show students' achievements to be good.
5. Gifted and talented students achieve well. The targeting of more able students is good in most subjects. In these subjects, high expectations and good opportunities are helping to raise standards and achievement of high attaining students.
6. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as others. Students benefit from the variety of support they receive from teachers in lessons. Some are taught in small groups in some subjects, for example, English, mathematics and science. A few students have targeted support in lessons. Some students get extra support in non-lesson time. The school works hard to ensure that students in public care are supported so that they achieve well and there are examples of such students doing very well, continuing their education into the sixth form.
7. Despite limited funding and time, very good provision is made for those students with English as an additional language who have significant difficulties. An effective programme of work ensures that students develop necessary language skills. At the highest level, the programme has been designed to match GCSE grade C in English so that students have an important target to aim for. Regular reviews and assessments ensure that progress is checked and targets revised appropriately. In the classroom, the support teacher liaises very well with the class teacher, and students benefit from her sensitive and helpful support. As a result, students develop social confidence, understanding and use of language. They make equally as good progress as others.
8. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students, reflecting the school's focus on promoting the achievement of all. Boys do as well as girls and do much better in some subjects, notably French, than boys nationally. Unsatisfactory attendance is the major barrier to achievement for a substantial minority of students.

### Sixth Form

9. Students enter the sixth form with below average standards of attainment overall and achieve well. Standards in A-level and equivalent examinations in 2002 were average overall. Girls performed better than boys in 2002, a reversal of the situation in 2001. There was a lower than average proportion of the higher A-B grades, but a higher than average proportion of A-E

grades. Results for 2003 indicated average standards overall once again, though students' average points score was slightly lower than the previous year. In the great majority of subjects, all students entered obtained at least a pass grade. Particularly successful subjects with above average results were design and technology, geography, history and sociology. Subjects with well below average results were general studies, ICT and physics.

#### **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	81.0 (79.5)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	14.2 (20.1)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	234.8 (240.3)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 84 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- For present students, standards are average overall. Many students enter the sixth form with lower than usual prior attainment, and achieve well as a result of good teaching. Gifted and talented students achieve very well because of the very many opportunities that are provided for them. Most students receive good advice about their choice of courses so that few do not complete their studies. In subjects inspected in detail in this inspection, standards are well above average in chemistry and above average in mathematics, design and technology and ICT (AVCE course). They are below average in physical education and leisure and recreation.

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

Attendance is improving slightly each year, but is still below the national median and is **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality is unsatisfactory; a significant number of students arrive late to school. The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is high in comparison with other schools. Relationships are good which contributes to the **good** behaviour and students' achievement. Overall, students' attitudes are **good**, they show a good level of responsibility when given the opportunity. The school's provision for personal education is **good**, with particular strengths in the moral, social and cultural development of students.

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

- Unsatisfactory attendance affects the achievement of students.
- The number of exclusions is high.
- The majority of students have good attitudes and behave well.
- A lack of concentration and interest of students in lessons is counteracted by teachers' management of lessons.
- The school's provision for social, moral and cultural development has a positive influence on relationships. Relationships in the sixth form are very good.

#### **Commentary**

- Teachers work hard to ensure that all students arrive at their lessons with good attitudes and a desire to learn, most students respond well but a few show a lack of interest and concentration in lessons. Students often work together co-operatively, asking questions of their own, sharing ideas and have an interest in the subjects. The initiatives and innovations that the school provides encourage students to succeed, keep them busy and involve them in challenging activities.
- The good and often very good relationships between staff and students are a key factor in contributing to the good behaviour in lessons and around the school. The school's high expectations and the denunciation of unacceptable behaviour contribute to the high exclusion figure. Few students, including those who have been accepted from other schools, re-offend.

Generally, there is little bullying across the school. Although the students' replies to the questionnaire indicate that bullying takes place in school, they did not corroborate this view in discussions and felt that if bullying did occur they would be able to seek help from staff who would deal with it effectively. The anti-social behaviour, related to dropping litter around the school identified at the previous inspection, has been resolved. Students place their litter in bins, the school and grounds are relatively free from litter.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	881	106	7
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	24	1	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

## Attendance

13. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory, the attendance rate at the school in the 2002/2003 academic year was below the national average; the rate of unauthorised absence at the school, in the same year, was broadly average. The school actively monitors and encourages regular attendance and the first day contact with parents to ascertain a reason for absence communicates the importance the school places on good attendance. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Problems with the school bus service have contributed to students arriving late, but there are a significant number of students who arrive at school within 10 minutes after the start of the school day and without any sense of urgency to be in their lessons.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.2	School data	0.9
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

14. Overall, the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good, with particular strengths in the provision for moral and social development.
15. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school does not comply with the statutory requirements to provide collective worship each

day for all its students or for providing religious education fully in accordance with the agreed syllabus in the sixth form. The school does provide opportunities for reflection in personal, social, health and citizenship education, and in tutor periods by means of appropriate themes. Drama, art, music and sport give opportunities for expression of feelings and developing appreciation of creative and original works. In integrated humanities, good opportunities occur in the curriculum, with a strong focus on moral, environmental and social issues to reflect upon the natural world, the beliefs of other cultures and the impact on civilisation.

## Sixth Form

### Commentary

16. Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good and sometimes, as seen in a Year 13 ICT lesson, are very good. In almost all lessons, students are motivated and interested in the subjects they have chosen. In the week of the inspection, the common room was unavailable to the students, who had to make use of the study area for recreation and study. Students co-operated well; although crowded, the study area had a friendly and lively atmosphere. Very good relationships are evident in the way students assist each other, either on the computers or in conversations relating to their work. During the inspection, in the discussions with inspectors, students did not endorse the negative responses in the questionnaires on behaviour and the quality of teaching.
17. Attendance in the sixth form is usually good. Tutors have high expectations of attendance including attendance during study periods.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Students achieve well because of good teaching in a wide range of courses designed to meet their needs.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** in the great majority of subjects throughout the school. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and good in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and promotes good learning leading to good achievement.
- Teachers plan lessons well. They have clear objectives and meet students' needs well.
- Classroom management is good, based on good relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers make good use of available resources and provide effective support for learning.
- Occasionally, lessons are over-directed by teachers so that students are not challenged enough to think for themselves.
- Insufficient attention is given to supporting the development of literacy and numeracy across the school.
- Marking varies unacceptably between and within subjects and the use of assessment data to support achievement is inconsistent.

### Commentary

18. Teaching and learning are good overall in all years so that students achieve well. No lessons were seen that were unsatisfactory – an improvement since the last inspection that reflects the school's attention to professional development. A key feature of the current inspection was the positive way that teachers' responded to inspectors' observations on their work and sought to make improvements. Teaching is satisfactory in business studies, citizenship and religious education. It is good in all other subjects.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 144 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	24 (17%)	74 (51%)	45 (31%)	0	0	0

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

19. Teachers know their subjects well and this enables them to plan lessons that interest and engage students in learning. This is particularly evident in exciting, challenging and fast-paced lessons in modern foreign languages. Resources and methods are well chosen to support learning and develop understanding, for example, of processes in science and ICT. One aspect of planning is inconsistent and requires improvement; planning for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills is inconsistent across the school and opportunities are missed. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is often evident. They establish clear objectives for lessons and make it clear to students that they expect them to rise to the challenge. Good classroom management ensures that students generally work hard and time is used well. Relationships between staff and students are good, which helps classroom management and contributes to the good attitudes the majority of students bring to their work.
20. Teachers provide good support for students. Initially, this is done by planning to meet individual needs and followed by active individual support in lessons. Good demonstrations, for example in design and technology, help to give students confidence to work on unfamiliar tasks. In many lessons in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection, teachers' anxiety to support students' learning led to them doing too much for them. The result was that students did not need to think for themselves, challenge faded and pace slowed. Teachers work hard in this school to promote learning and to help students succeed, but in these lessons teachers were often working harder than their classes. It is this that largely accounts for the lower proportions of good and very good teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 than in other parts of the school. The best lessons give students the confidence to risk making mistakes and to learn from them. Support for students with English as an additional language is very good because of the effective liaison between support assistants and class teachers. Sensitive and helpful support enables good progress in lessons. Gifted and talented students are identified and, in most lessons, are presented with additional challenges that promote their good achievement.
21. Teaching of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good because of the teachers' knowledge of their students. Support assistants work effectively with individual students in classes. They are effective in promoting learning because they know students well. Subject teachers know which students have special educational needs but need more information and guidance on teaching methods to better assist students. In good lessons students do well because their needs are planned for, but planning is not always matched closely enough to students' targets. Subject reports, prepared for reviews, do not relate achievement and improvement well enough targets. Only students with Statements of Special Educational Need have individual learning plans. The targets in these plans are satisfactory, but they are not always specific enough. Targets are set for all other students with special educational needs in the same way as other students in the school. Support assistants note activities and behaviour they observe during lessons but these records do not fully document achievement nor do they always indicate areas for improvement.
22. Overall, assessment is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced a good programme of 'assessment for learning' across the school but it has not yet had time to have an impact on assessment across the school. Data is collected and recorded about students' attainment when they enter the school in Year 9 and again in Year 10, and is used effectively to set targets for GCSE examinations. The school does not set out common assessment procedures for subjects as to how they should assess students' work and, as a result, practice varies across the school. Although assessment procedures in subjects are generally thorough and constructive they are not used well enough to promote students' progress. They do not always

identify for students how well they are doing or what they must do to improve. In many subjects the relationship between levels and grades and the work students do is not made clear; students are not given enough information on how they compare to national standards or what they must do to reach higher levels. Marking varies between and within subjects. Some is very well done and provides constructive commentary to help students improve their work, but too much is basic at best.

## Sixth Form

23. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and a very high proportion was good or better. This is a very similar picture to that described in the last inspection report. Teaching is very good in history and design and technology.
24. A strong feature of the good teaching is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They use these effectively to guide students' learning. Teachers combine their good subject knowledge with well-planned lessons and a variety of activities that effectively meet the needs of their students and particularly encourage independent learning. These attributes of good teaching are reinforced by good relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. As a result, most students have good attitudes to their work and achieve well. Students are particularly keenly motivated in mathematics, chemistry, history, sociology and design and technology. At times, teachers do not ensure sufficient participation by questioning students directly to build up their confidence and allow them to learn from each other. Sometimes learning is over-directed by the teacher so that students are not actively involved. Teaching is not so effective on these occasions.
25. Assessment in the sixth form is good. The performance of students in GCSE examinations in Year 11 and other information is used well to set targets for GCE A-level examinations. Teachers use the information well to plan for the needs of individuals and groups of students. Progress of students is checked regularly and targets reviewed; students are well informed about what they need to do to improve. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly; examination criteria are used effectively to ensure that students know how well they are doing.

## The curriculum

The school provides **very good** curricular opportunities for its students. Innovative leadership by senior management has resulted in the provision of a very wide range of pathways that encourage older students to continue in education.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstandingly good curriculum development and innovation provide a very broad range of courses, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, to meet students' diverse needs.
- The school has developed an extensive and productive range of partnerships with other schools and institutions through the 'export' of curricular design and innovations.
- Enrichment opportunities and provision of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students of all levels of attainment very well.
- Good provision for personal and social education throughout the school.
- The sixth form curriculum provides a very good range of academic and vocational courses for students at different levels of attainment. Other provision broadens students' sixth form opportunities well.
- Current arrangements for key skills courses in communication and application of number in the sixth form are not adequate.
- Provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
- The school's poor accommodation does not match its curricular needs.

## Commentary

26. The major strength of the school's curriculum provision is that it is designed successfully to meet the needs of all students. Statutory requirements are met with the exception of provision of religious education in the sixth form. Regular reviews of the curriculum evaluate the effectiveness of provision and enable the school to make modifications or additions to meet identified needs. These reviews include consultations with students in Year 11 that have led to the introduction of additional courses in the sixth form to meet their needs. The result is a curriculum that works equally well for higher attainers and gifted and talented students through, for example, 'fast track' courses from Year 9 onwards linked with partner middle schools, and, for lower attainers through class organisation and additional targeted support. GCSE courses are started immediately after students have completed their national tests in Year 9 in order to make best use of time. In Years 10 and 11, all courses carry some form of accreditation, apart from physical education. The provision of effective alternative choices is an important part of the curricular strategy developed by the headteacher, for example, the provision of vocational course in science and ICT for students not following the dual award science course. The success of this approach to providing suitable pathways for students to follow is seen in examination results – very few students leave the school without any qualification – and in the number of students continuing their education into the sixth form. The curriculum prepares students' very well for the next stage of their education.
27. An extensive enrichment programme is provided for gifted and talented students. For example, students are offered an additional media studies course, in modern foreign languages they have the option of studying additional languages, the mathematics department offers a statistics course, examinations are taken early in art and design, and talented games players are put forward for county representation. Sixth form students take Open University Undergraduate courses, and Year 11 students have access to the local Lionheart Strategy in design and technology and business studies and can learn Italian in a year. There is a gifted and talented policy and, in most subjects, students have been formally identified and opportunities for these students are being developed well.
28. Students with special educational needs benefit greatly from the provision of well-trained support assistants. The withdrawal system has minimal impact in the disruption of lessons and good communication ensures that the taught curriculum is not affected. ICT facilities and special computer programs are used to support students' literacy and numeracy needs but inadequate accommodation limits their use.
29. Extra-curricular provision is very good and makes a significant contribution to students' personal development. In addition to extensive opportunities in sport, music and the arts, students have additional learning opportunities outside the normal school day.
30. Further contributions to personal development arise from the school's extensive links with others schools and educational establishments both in the UK and in Europe. These links result from the school's outward-looking approach to curricular innovation. Courses are developed with the intention that they should have wider applicability than the school. Good examples of 'exported' courses are the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) run for sixth formers in conjunction with the Open University and the 'pathfinder' courses in modern foreign languages produced for pupils in primary and middle schools. Students also benefit from the cultural opportunities of contacts with students in European schools that arise from the school's specialist status as a language college.
31. Over the last two years, senior managers and the school in general have had to work hard to prevent numerous staffing difficulties, caused by long-term absence, from affecting students' learning. Overall, there is a satisfactory match of staff to the school's curricular needs. Most teaching staff are well qualified with good knowledge of their subjects. In design and technology, staffing is unsatisfactory with fewer members of staff in the department than there were two years ago and this has had a negative effect on behaviour and standards. Not all teachers in the department are qualified in the subject and students' lessons are taught by a

range of different 'cover' teachers, resulting in inconsistency for students about teachers' expectations of learning and behaviour.

32. The accommodation is poor. Little has been done to tackle many of the deficiencies of the accommodation highlighted in the two previous inspection reports and a more recent area review. Over the years, there has been further deterioration. During the winter of 2002-2003 the school experienced roof collapses, flooding and serious breakdowns of heating and electrical supplies. As a consequence, there was considerable disruption to students' education. In one term, some 2000 room changes were made necessary, many of them at very short notice. Many lessons were taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities. These disruptions adversely affected the performance of students in public examinations and hindered the progress of others. The school has no main hall or social areas for main-school students. Many of the rooms are too small and affect standards, particularly in music. Some corridors are narrow, areas are badly ventilated and drainage from the toilets causes problems. Although accommodation for art and design, modern foreign languages, mathematics and textiles is good, that for other design and technology subjects is most unsatisfactory. Most of the science laboratories are in need of refurbishment or renewal. Not all science is taught in laboratories. Disruption occurs from adjacent classes in open-plan ICT rooms and computer screens cannot always be seen in sunlight. Toilets are totally unsatisfactory. There are many uneven surfaces on stairways, paths to the many mobile classrooms and the main driveway. Access for the disabled is poor.
33. Resources available to support students' learning are, overall, satisfactory. A key strength is the number of computers available for students, which is well above that normally seen nationally. In addition to computers in departments, a central pyramid houses a large open learning area with eighty computers available for students. A satisfactory range of texts is also stored in this area which students make good use of independently before and after school. Modern foreign language resources are very good, but resources available to support music are unsatisfactory and more instruments and better use of ICT are required.

### **Sixth Form**

34. The curriculum allows equality of access and opportunity for all students very well. The opportunities available persuade many students who would not otherwise consider a sixth form education to do so. Even if students leave before completion, they are able to move successfully into employment or further training because of the relevance of their course of study. All students also follow a course in general studies. However, provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements. The current arrangements for key skills courses in communication and application of number are awkward. Attendance fluctuates and continuity of learning for students is difficult to achieve. The school is aware of these problems and is actively seeking ways to correct them.
35. Provision of courses for students who otherwise would not have continued with their education makes a considerable contribution to personal development. It is now possible to attend 'workshop conferences' and have guaranteed work experience. The Football Academy is designed to attract talented students into the sixth form to further develop their advanced skills and obtain coaching qualifications. The group of male students has to study for an advanced level course as well as the practical football sessions. Many students would have left school but for this opportunity that is a valuable contributor to personal development and maturity. The Open University's Young Applicants in Schools Scheme continues to thrive at Monkseaton, attracting national publicity for its support package for schools and enabling high attaining students to gain Open University credits and experience of the demands of independent learning. They are well supported by a course tutor within the school. There are opportunities for students to visit theatres and galleries to support learning in English and art and design.
36. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Students have a small common room but a good study area. Space will be a problem as numbers grow. Students have ready

access to very good ICT facilities and library resources. Teaching staff are usually well matched to the needs of the subject curriculum, but staffing difficulties still persist in design and technology. In chemistry, students have unsatisfactory accommodation because of the lack of laboratory facilities for some lessons. Year 13 students particularly have been adversely affected by accommodation problems in the first year of their course.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides a **good** level of support for its students. Procedures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Guidance for students through the monitoring of their work and the setting of appropriate targets is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-established structure of year heads, tutors and learning mentors provides a good and effective level of support for students.
- Monitoring and supporting the personal development of students are good.
- There are good arrangements for the induction of new students and students settle in quickly and happily as a result.
- Health and safety is dealt with effectively; the co-ordinator ensures a system for managing health and safety is in place
- Parts of the accommodation, already identified by the school, present a risk to students.
- Aspects of marking to inform students of how to improve their work are weak.

## Commentary

37. The school provides good support for its students' personal development. As a result, students feel the staff are approachable and they are confident in their care. Teachers and tutors get to know students well and have a genuine concern for their progress and personal development. A well-developed database that is accessible to students and staff alike keeps all informed on matters such as attendance, effort in lessons and possible grades. Responsibility for their own personal development is encouraged through the points system and the individual tutorials. The school's approach to assessment is generally good. Students know and understand their targets and are generally clear on how to improve their performance, although there are inconsistencies between subjects. Marking on a day-to-day basis often gives insufficient attention to informing students how to improve. The learning mentors give good support to students who need help in overcoming barriers to learning or who are in danger of exclusion. The school provides good individual guidance for students who have special educational needs. Statements of Special Educational Need are reviewed regularly and are completed on time. The school makes every effort to involve parents in the process. Targets are regularly reviewed, as they are for all students. Individual learning plans for all special educational needs students do not provide sufficient guidance for teachers so they know how they can help all students reach their targets and there is no process for notification of targets reached by departments.
38. Appropriate procedures are in place for child protection. The school has a very experienced co-ordinator for health and safety who ensures all requirements are in place. Nevertheless, the buildings are a cause for concern and students are vocal about the unsatisfactory condition of the toilets. In some subjects, such as design technology, there is inadequate protection of students from dust. The school is aware of a number of health and safety concerns that are directly related to the condition of the buildings.
39. Whilst there is no formal school method of obtaining students' views, the school listens to students through their individual tutorials and through debates in the citizenship programme. In discussions with the inspection team, students stated that they feel that there are opportunities to put forward their views to form tutors or heads of year. Students' views in the

inspection questionnaires are mainly positive with a few students who do not agree that there is an adult they can talk to, but in discussions, students' views did not support the questionnaires.

40. A planned programme of careers education takes place systematically through the teaching of citizenship in integrated humanities. The school has a careers co-ordinator who is relatively new to the post. The quality of advice to students on post-14 courses is good. Until recently, guidance for students has been variable. Negotiations with the Connexions service on improving their involvement in lessons are taking place. Students in Year 11 receive good guidance on post-16 choices in the sixth form. Good links with the middle schools through joint projects, and support from learning mentors for those with special educational needs, help students feel they are already part of the school and contribute to a smooth transition between schools.

### **Sixth Form**

41. Standards of care are high. The support, advice and guidance provided for students are good overall. Arrangements to involve students in the work of the school are good.
42. Students feel that they are looked after well. They consider that members of staff know them well and use that knowledge to help and guide them. The student common room and study areas help to give a sense of belonging to a smaller community while allowing the year staff to keep a close watch on students' personal development. Progress is carefully monitored and checked through individual learning programmes that enable targets to be discussed and set in 'one-to-one' sessions.
43. Students are usually well briefed before entering the sixth form. There is an 'Aim Higher' campaign to raise aspirations of younger students, an induction day and a comprehensive courses booklet. Later, a very thorough programme of preparation for the later stages of education or employment is available including assemblies and visiting speakers, and a 'Partners' scheme with Newcastle University. Particularly appreciated by students is the presence of a mentor who offers support to students on various issues and provides advice sessions daily for those making higher education applications.
44. Course information and guidance are not always so effective, however. Some students in design and technology have been allowed to use the course as a 'timetable filler', and lack motivation as a result. In ICT, because course entry requirements are not strictly adhered to, some students lack the prior learning necessary to cope successfully with their A2 course. This is unsatisfactory.
45. Formal opportunities for students to become involved in the work and development of the school are good, though not extensive. Students are expected to look after their social areas, contribute to Student Councils, and help younger students with reading difficulties. Students' flexible attendance arrangements tend to limit the amount of active participation they can undertake.

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

Partnership with parents is **good**. The school has developed **very good** links with its partner middle schools and colleges that ensure the smooth transfer of students. Links with other schools and educational institutions nationwide and in Europe are **outstandingly good**. The school has **very good** links with the community

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Links with the community are very good with access to learning provided to the locality and other areas.
- Innovative methods to inform parents are well developed.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good and support learning well.
- Curriculum links with other schools and educational institutions are outstandingly good.
- Attendance of parents at progress evenings is an area for development.
- Not all parents value the education provided for their children.

## **Commentary**

46. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a few parents' responses show that they do not feel well informed on how their children are getting on. The interim and full reports give good information on the successes of the students and clearly indicate if students are working at the levels expected of them and of their personal development, but are less successful at identifying specific areas for improvement. Parents have an opportunity to voice their views in the reports and in the daily planners provided for the students. Not all parents attend the evenings to discuss the progress of their children. A survey of students revealed that 93 per cent have access to computers at home and the school's response has been to develop ways of parents accessing information on-line. Voice-mail is available to parents to request contact from departments or to express concerns. There is a weakness in the support of some parents in contributing to learning by ensuring their children attend school
47. Links with the community are very well developed. The school responds well to the educational needs of the community. Effective partnerships have been established with local schools and colleges. and with schools nationally in providing programmes such as the modern foreign languages Pathfinder programme, in use extensively throughout the country. Opportunities to broaden students' understanding of the wider world through e-mail and the use of the Internet are successfully employed. Students work with local families in the Family Learning programme to provide skills to local families. Collaboration on all levels creates a successful partnership with the middle schools, a shared learning mentor, international links, and joint teaching within departments contribute positively to learning.

## **Sixth Form**

48. Teachers make good use of links with the community through visiting speakers, artists in residence and visits to theatres and galleries. A long-standing link with Microsoft continues to provide students with access to sophisticated computer software. A 'class server' is under test at present that will allow quick access to electronic resources and allow teachers and students to link easily over the local network and the wider community.
49. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. One such link is provided by the joint partnership arrangement with local high schools. This has already produced several successful co-operative ventures, formally established in 2003, co-operative courses at A Level in 2004. There is a strong link with Newcastle University through its 'Partners' scheme. The Football Academy attracts talented students into the sixth form to further develop their advanced footballing skills and obtain coaching qualifications. Many students would have left school but for this opportunity and it is a valuable contributor to personal development and maturity. Students from other schools are beginning to join the course, which is growing in numbers. The Football Academy provides a valuable service to the school and community.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides **very good** leadership. Management is **good**. The governance of the school is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide good support for its work.
- The headteacher's very good leadership has established a shared sense of purpose and strong commitment to improvement in the school among all staff.
- Management is good overall. Financial management is very good.
- Professional development of staff is very good.
- Monitoring of some cross-curricular aspects of the school's provision is not rigorous enough.
- Governors do not meet their statutory obligations in respect of providing a daily act of collective worship for all students and for religious education in the sixth form.

### Commentary

50. The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has established a clear strategic vision for improvement that has been successfully communicated to staff. His great strength is the ability to take people with him so that there is a shared sense of purpose and commitment to improvement through innovation throughout the school. All learning innovations developed in the school are intended to be 'exportable'. They are rigorously reviewed and tested and usually have some form of external validation – such as through partnership with the University of Durham - with the intention of making them available to a wider audience. A good example is the way in which the school carries out its responsibilities as a specialist language college very well, locally and further afield. The contribution teaching and learning makes to languages development in the area through the unique, broadly spread Pathfinder scheme is very good. Numerous teachers from the primary and middle sectors use the school's facilities well to improve their command of languages, mostly French, and to refine their teaching skills. Teachers from the school also work in local schools and there is a good partnership developed between the school and a sister denominational and other high schools.
51. The senior management team brings a range of complementary skills to putting the vision into practice and makes a significant contribution to the sense of purpose evident in the school. It has a shared commitment to improving the achievement of students across the whole range of attainment that can be seen in the continuous review and development of the curriculum. As a group, the team discharges its leadership and management role well. An indication of the team members' combined strength is the way in which they have ensured the smooth running of the school and taken on additional responsibilities so that standards have been maintained in the difficult circumstances the school has faced over recent years. In the same period, improvements have been managed, particularly in the quality of teaching, through monitoring, support and professional development. A self-critical culture has been established that identifies improvements needed through a continuous review and evaluation process. The development plan, to which staff and governors contribute, shows clear analysis of the challenges that face the school and carefully designed strategies to meet them. The leadership of staff with management responsibilities is good throughout the school. Several staff members, who are relatively new to the school, have already had a positive impact on the work of the school. In this positive picture, two related matters require improvement. There are inconsistencies in monitoring and providing for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills across the school, resulting in opportunities not being identified well enough in departments' planning. The use of assessment data to support the achievement of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs, is also inconsistent and misses an opportunity to use an available resource for improvement.

52. The co-ordination of special educational needs is not rigorous enough and management systems are not fully in place to ensure effective monitoring and recording. Information from subject departments, for the review of statements and individual education plans, does not always relate to individuals' targets. Most subjects are implementing the new Code of Practice in setting targets, but the co-ordination of this process is unsatisfactory. Involvement of the special educational needs department with subject teachers has yet to ensure consistent and effective practice in addressing individuals' specific needs and monitoring their achievement.
53. The governing body plays a full part in shaping the direction of the school. Governors bring a variety of experience to their work that benefits the school. They have a very good understanding of the school's strength, its weaknesses and the challenges it faces. The school is very well supported while being held rigorously to account. Governors are used to asking hard questions about the school's performance and following up issues for improvement – particularly in respect of the buildings. The governors have clear aims and policies to guide the work of the school, and they discharge their obligations full with the exception of providing religious education in the sixth form (plans have been made to remedy this deficiency) and the provision of daily worship for all students, which is made difficult by the school's lack of suitable accommodation.
54. Financial management is good. All spending decisions are scrutinised to ensure best value. Good management has enabled a considerable budget deficit to be reduced to the point that a balanced budget is expected this year.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,921,448	Balance from previous year	-6,269
Total expenditure	2,836,448	Balance carried forward to the next	78,721
Expenditure per student (NOR 950)	2,986		

**Sixth Form**

55. Overall, although there are a few weaknesses in provision referred to in this report, leadership and management are good. The strong pre-inspection impression of forward-thinking sixth form leadership and well-organised, efficient management was largely confirmed at the inspection. This is particularly the case in respect of the successful conclusion of negotiations leading to the establishment of a joint partnership arrangement for sixth form provision with St Thomas More and Whitley Bay High Schools in September 2003. It demonstrates very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations by key staff.

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

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

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Good leadership in difficult circumstances has brought about good improvement since the last inspection so that students' experience of English is enhanced.
- Teaching is good overall and students learn and achieve well as a result.
- Aspects of teaching, such as the unproductive use of group discussion or over-reliance on contributions from a few students, prevent learning being good in some lessons.

#### **Commentary**

56. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were average and an improvement on the previous year, but well below average in comparison with similar schools. The trend of results over five years is upward, but only in one year (2000) has performance matched the standards of the previous report. Over the last three years, students' average performance has been below the national average because of the poorer performance of girls. GCSE English results were significantly below average, but the proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C increased by over 10 per cent compared with the previous year. English literature results were below average, but students did better in this examination than in other subjects. Almost all students were entered for both examinations and an above average proportion obtained at least a pass grade, representing good achievement given their performance two years before. The head of department has already taken action to reinforce the strengths and correct weaknesses revealed by her careful analysis of performance, particularly in relation to focused work in Year 9 and adjustments to the time spent on English literature at the expense of English.
57. As a result, standards of work are average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and students are achieving well overall in relation to their prior attainment. They do so because work is now more carefully structured to meet the needs of mixed-ability groups with appropriate support for those with special educational needs and suitably challenging tasks for higher attainers. Marking of written work explains what students need to do to improve and sets suitable targets for improvement. Students are also beginning to understand how to achieve well, as they are more involved in evaluating their own work. Curriculum opportunities, in drama for example, are now more varied. There is a strong focus on examination preparation, particularly important in Year 9 because of the short time available, and, as a result, students are on course to achieve average standards overall in forthcoming examinations.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In addition to the contributions to achievement mentioned above, teachers manage students well by creating a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons and praising students' efforts. As a result, attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good. The best teaching is enthusiastic and energetic; lessons are conducted at a good pace and teachers make demands on students by direct questioning of individuals and by providing short, but varied and challenging activities. Consequently, these lessons are productive. Students develop all the key subject skills and their ICT capabilities well. They also respond well and enjoy their learning. Teaching is not always so effective and at times learning slows because teachers do not ensure that paired or group discussion puts equal responsibility for learning on all the participants. Sometimes, teachers are over-

reliant on the contributions of volunteers, so that not all students are obliged to participate fully in a lesson. This was apparent in a Year 11 lesson, for example, where some girls lacked motivation or confidence and their unwillingness to contribute or be involved in the work was not challenged. Nevertheless, taking account of scrutiny of students' work and the improvements in examination performance, teaching and learning are good overall.

59. As indicated earlier, the relatively new head of department has acted effectively to raise standards, showing good leadership during a difficult time for the school and the department. Though standards at the end of Year 9 have not yet returned to the level reported at the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching, students' good achievement and curriculum developments already in place are sufficiently strong features to show that improvement since that time has been good.

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

60. Standards of language and literacy are average overall, though weaknesses in spelling, note taking and presentation persist. Some subjects contribute effectively to the development of students' skills. In French, a 'video-conferencing' session linked students at Monkseaton with students in Lyon. Through question and answer, students practised their speaking and listening skills in a 'real' situation. Students in art and design have to analyse spatial arrangements, colour and composition, and make suitable notes on these for their critical study of abstract painting. There are some good features in design and technology, where students studying food have key words displayed to aid spelling and extend vocabulary. Writing guides are in use to help structure students' work, and work is marked consistently with specific targets for improvement. Not all subjects place sufficient emphasis on key vocabulary or encourage its use. Students in physical education, for example, did not understand 'enhancement' in the context of performance-enhancing drugs in sport. Variable and inconsistent practice is evident in the development of reading, writing and speaking skills, reflecting the fact that the school has no literacy co-ordinator and does not sufficiently monitor departments' work in this area. As a result, the contribution of other subjects is not better than satisfactory at present.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in French, German, Spanish and Italian is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- This is a very good department in which the students achieve well and most enjoy the experience.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Very good leadership and management are innovative; there is clear vision and ambition to improve supported by very carefully thought out planning.
- The school carries out its specialist Language College responsibilities very well within and across the region.
- There is scope for further improvements in the ways students are involved in what and how they learn.

### **Commentary**

61. The school enters all students for a GCSE in at least one language; this is well above what happens nationally. Also, above average proportions take two languages at GCSE. Students appreciate being in a language college and enjoy their work, many gaining a real sense of pride and achievement in what they do.

62. From below average starts in Year 9, students achieve well and, by the time they take GCSEs, standards are average because of the good teaching most students enjoy. GCSE results are higher in French than they are in any other subject taken in the school. Results in German and Spanish are a bit lower, reflecting closely the attainment ranges of the students who choose them. There is no difference between boys' and girls' performances in languages. Innovative work caters admirably for the students allowing those who are ready, to take GCSE a year early and then to continue studying two languages in Year 11; this works, it is good practice that is expanding. For example, standards in Italian, introduced as a one-year course for Year 11 able linguists, are above average.
63. By the end of Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11, able linguists have a good grasp of simple French; they are expected to learn vocabulary thoroughly and they do so. They can draw readily on what they have studied beforehand. By Year 11, they say interesting things about topics prepared for examination, extending their answers widely to gain higher grades. The teachers analyse carefully how students progress in their understanding, speaking, reading and writing, and aim the work directly to compensate any weaker area. As a result, students are able to say, read and write things that will help them in contacting native speakers, which many do through enterprising video-conferencing with schools in France. Students with English as an additional language achieve equally as well as others and some do better than that. Those with special educational needs also do well; the results over the recent past show that all candidates obtained a pass grade in GCSE.
64. Achievement in German is also good. The students write well, although they are too often asked to write in short snippets rather than longer pieces. In class, oral work is good. Students make sensible guesses for meaning, use dictionaries well and ask when they need to. They are not, however, so dedicated to learning that they continue to work spontaneously when set work has been finished. In Spanish, taken by very low attainers, the standards of Year 11 students are poor, but these students are motivated by work that allows them to find out about Spanish celebrities. In contrast in other years, and reflecting very good teaching, low attainers are able to say interesting things, for instance about a Spanish town. Standards are rising.
65. The good quality of teaching brings with it good learning. There is a very strong teaching force. Newly made appointments of very high quality teachers have minimised the disadvantages of recent staffing upheaval that includes long-term absences. Teachers are all very good linguists and practitioners. Lessons bubble with enthusiasm in each language. A very good Friday afternoon Year 9 Spanish class typified situations where teachers handle potentially very difficult classes magnificently. Tantalising use of overhead transparencies, reduction of what was to be learned to small parts that low attaining students could cope with, strong humour and genuine praise as some students really excelled themselves, led to very good learning and achievement. Generally, very good assessment sets targets and shares with students how they have done and what they need to do to improve. Teaching is innovative in its use of state of the art resources. The technician makes a very good contribution, not only by making sure the technology works but also by working alongside the students, helping them with difficulties. Music, drama and verse are commonplace, helping students to learn. Teaching has very high expectations and teachers are keen to improve; they criticise each other very effectively. There is, however, ample scope for further refinements to teaching to make the pattern of learning even more exciting with greater standardisation between teachers so that students become used to being more involved in their work. Students do not, for example, take registers themselves, and are not expected to speak only in the language studied.
66. The school undertakes its responsibilities as a language college very well across the region. Teachers from middle and primary schools use the facilities regularly and well for language and teaching method training. Three secondary schools collaborate closely in the immediate area and the school's work, directed at creating opportunities for pupils in primary schools, is spreading much more widely than the immediate local authority. Involving younger pupils and their parents, is another example of the unique, innovative work the department does.

67. Improvements since the last inspection are good, standards have been maintained and there is now greater flexibility and response to students' needs. The department is very well led and managed, with more teachers involved in how it runs. Ambition to do well is backed by a wealth of ideas and highly suitable practices devised by individuals; they are ready for more common interpretation.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Good leadership and management give the subject a clear vision and direction for improvement.
- Good use is made of computers to develop students' ICT skills.
- Assessment does not support students' progress well enough.
- Learning is too often over-directed by the teacher.
- Not enough information is provided to support the work of the subject to ensure a consistent approach by teachers.

### **Commentary**

68. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were average. They were below average in relation to students' attainment at the age of 11. Improvements made in previous years were maintained. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results were average in comparison with all schools and well above average in relation to students' attainment at the end of Year 9. The proportion gaining grades A\*/A was below average. GCSE statistics results were above average
69. By the end of Year 9, students' mathematical skills are average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school at the beginning of Year 9 with skills in mathematics that are below average. Students handle numbers confidently when doing calculations in their books but many do not recall their times tables confidently when doing mental calculations. The highest attaining students find the area and perimeter of compound shapes confidently but lower attaining students still have difficulty in finding perimeters and areas of rectangles and triangles. By the end of Year 11, students' mathematical skills are average. Students' achievement and progress are good. They develop sound problem-solving skills; they can identify patterns, find rules and formulae in investigational activities. Algebraic skills are not well developed; many students, including higher attainers, have difficulty with solving equations.
70. The quality of teaching is good which results in good learning and achievement. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to question students well about what they already know and understand. They usually require them to explain their ideas to the whole class. Teachers' planning is good; tasks are usually matched well enough to the needs of students and good use is made of computers to support students' learning. This ensures that students are able to develop their understanding well. Learning is, however, very much directed by the teacher; few opportunities are provided for students to learn independently or use practical activities to develop their understanding. Teachers set clear expectations for students' work and behaviour and they manage and organise students well. This ensures that students usually have good attitudes in lessons and behave well. Homework is used regularly to support students' learning but it does not always challenge students well enough and the marking of it does not inform students well enough of the progress they are making. Few comments are used to suggest to students what they need to do to improve. Day-to-day assessment and marking do not regularly inform students of their attainment in relation to national standards or about what they should do to improve. Lesson objectives provide a clear focus for lessons and the time at

the end of lessons is used mainly to inform students of test and examination requirements. Good attention is given to developing students' literacy skills; technical language is displayed in all classrooms and is usually reinforced well when used in lessons.

71. Leadership and management are good. A clear vision and direction are provided for improvement. Consequently, teachers are working well together as a team. The lack of appropriate subject documentation, however, means that whole-school policies are not being applied consistently across the subject. Monitoring of teaching is good and is clearly targeted at improving and sharing approaches to teaching. Although students' standards are assessed regularly, the data are not used well enough to monitor their progress as they move through the school. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching, students' progress, and performance in GCSE examinations have improved significantly. Comments on students' work to support improvement are still not used effectively.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

72. Although the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been implemented well in terms of the mathematics lessons themselves, few other subjects have planned well enough for supporting numeracy in their subjects. Teachers have been made aware of the strategy and approaches that are being used, but the lack of a written policy for mathematics across the curriculum is resulting in not enough attention being given in teachers' planning to support students' numeracy skills. Little evidence was seen of students being given opportunities to use numeracy in their work. Where numeracy was addressed effectively, for example in design and technology and science, students coped well with the skills required.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in public examinations are rising.
- Good teaching and positive attitudes enable students to achieve well and make good progress.
- Assessment is very good and students know how well they are doing but do not always know how to improve.
- A small number of older students, mainly girls, are passive in lessons and need to be questioned and challenged more to ensure maximum achievement.
- The subject is well led and managed and teachers are deployed effectively.
- Progress of a few students is hindered by undeveloped literacy skills and irregular attendance.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and not conducive to learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for teachers to share good practice by observing each other.

### **Commentary**

73. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average. Over the past five years, the results have been below, but following the rising national trend. Boys have performed better than girls. Results have been well below those of similar schools. The GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national averages and well above those of similar schools. Girls performed better than boys overall, mainly because they gained a much higher proportion of C grades. However, the boys gained a higher proportion of A\* and A grades. GCSE results have improved in each of the past four years. Students' performance in public examinations in 2003 is most likely to have been adversely affected by the disruption associated with the premises during the previous winter. Many science lessons were taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities. The progress of other students is also likely to have been hindered.

74. By the end of each of Years 9 and 11, standards are average. Students achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. Students in Year 9 quickly learn how to work safely and productively in the laboratory. Planning, observational, measuring predicting and recording skills are at expected levels by the end of Year 9. Analysis and evaluation skills are as expected by the end of Year 11. Students have the numeracy skills that enable them to process their experimental results. A small number of lower attaining students have undeveloped literacy skills. They score well on questions requiring one word answers but experience difficulties with those needing sentences. Consequently, their performance in examinations is adversely affected. Irregular attendance of a small number of lower and middle attaining students hinders their progress. ICT skills are developed to above expected levels. Students achieve well throughout, mainly because of their positive attitudes, good behaviour and the good teaching they receive. Students with special educational needs also achieve well. They are taught in smaller classes and given appropriate tasks. Teachers give them individual attention when able to and, in a few lessons, there is effective extra support. Gifted and talented students are identified and given extension work. They also achieve well.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The teaching is better in Year 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The high quality of the relationships between teachers and students, together with the positive attitudes of the students, are major factors in helping students learn well in lessons and make good progress. Students respond well to the high expectations and challenges set by teachers. Teachers know their subject well and deliver it in a lively and informative manner. They quote examples familiar to students and, occasionally, relate relevant personal experiences to capture interest. Lessons are well planned and cater for the differing needs of individual students. Students are managed very well and kept busy throughout. Almost all of the lessons have three parts to them. A starter activity is effectively used to focus students. Objectives are made clear for the main part of the lesson. This often involves demonstrations, group activities, lively exposition and, occasionally, role-play exercises. By skilful targeted questioning, most teachers check understanding in the final part. However, in a few of the lessons, mainly with students in Years 10 and 11, teachers do not fully exploit their good knowledge of individuals. The questioning is not sufficiently targeted to individual students, mainly girls, to challenge them, draw out information or to check understanding. Teachers mark work regularly and often write encouraging comments, but do not always suggest how students can improve. A few teachers make very effective use of computer programs projected onto a whiteboard.
76. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department has established an effective team that has a common commitment to raising standards. His classroom practice is a role model for others. Teachers are deployed well making good use of specialisms and expertise with particular groups. Teachers' performance is carefully monitored and classroom observations are taking place. A newly qualified teacher is receiving much appreciated good support. The technicians are well organised and support well. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to share good practice by observing each other.
77. The curriculum has added breadth for Year 9 students with the successful implementation of the National Strategy. In Years 10 and 11, there are courses in GCSE dual award science and applied science, and a GNVQ intermediate course. Assessment procedures are thorough and comprehensive. Much use is made of the information obtained in setting subject targets for individual students. There is a good range of resources. Most of the accommodation is in need of refurbishment or renewal. Despite the commendable efforts to improve the working environment with attractive displays, the old furniture, small laboratories, some with leaking roofs, are not conducive to learning. A few lessons are taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities.
78. Since the last inspection, standards have risen. Improvement has been good. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Much use is made of the assessment data. The curriculum is serving the needs of students much better. ICT is now used much more.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising because of the improved provision.
- ICT is planned and used well in English, mathematics, design and technology, science and modern foreign languages departments.
- The provision of ICT resources is well above that usually found in a school of this size.
- Students do not understand and follow the correct steps to solve problems independently using ICT, which leads to incomplete projects and lower grades.
- Students do not understand how their achievement relates to GCSE grades or to National Curriculum expectation levels.
- ICT is not integrated into the learning of music, art and design and geography.

### Commentary

79. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below the national average. Standards seen are rising but are still below average. Students do not understand audience, specification and other steps necessary to solve problems using ICT independently. The result is that they are unable to complete projects to a high standard. Literacy skills are also holding back attainment in this area. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were well below average. Standards seen are rising, but they remain below average. Students use e-mail and have well-developed communication and data-handling capabilities. Although students work with spreadsheets, they have underdeveloped capability in modelling and do not experience control. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to students' ICT standards on entry to the school, but has been affected by the problems caused by staffing and accommodation difficulties over recent years. The staffing difficulties have been resolved with a positive effect on the quality of teaching, standards and achievement. Girls achieve as well as boys in lessons, but not as well as girls nationally because they do not complete project work to a high enough standard. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but teachers do not set individual targets in ICT for these students. Students generally work on activities as a class, and this occasionally restricts the progress of a small number of higher attaining students.
80. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and make good use of the digital projectors and interactive whiteboards that are in some rooms. Students' attitudes to the subject are generally good; however, a small number of boys show a negative attitude in some lessons. Teaching and management of these students is made difficult by the design of some teaching areas, which are adjacent. Noise from adjacent classes can also disrupt introductory and plenary aspects of teaching in these lessons. Although teachers move around the classrooms constantly during lessons to support progress and ensure that students know what to do to improve, students cannot presently relate this information to national levels in Year 9 and to GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. Good use is made of homework to reinforce and extend learning in some lessons but this is not consistent across the department. Reports to parents do not include targets for improvement.
81. The leadership of the department is good. There is a high level of innovation and good clarity of vision. Management is also good; the new head of department is doing the right things to raise standards. This includes monitoring of teaching, which has successfully identified areas for professional development. The ICT resources from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are starting to be used well with Year 9. Planning does not sufficiently include support for whole-school initiatives including literacy and numeracy. The school has developed its computer

resources significantly since the last inspection and now has well above those usually seen in a school of a similar size.

82. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection, most in the last year, and there is good capacity for further improvement. A better range of courses is offered. Staffing has improved and, consequently, the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' competence in the use of ICT has improved across the curriculum. The provision of resources is much better. Statutory requirements are now met.

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

83. Staff confidence has improved since the last inspection and the school has good links with business to support the development and use of ICT in teaching, learning and the management of learning. Some initiatives, such as allowing teaching resources to be presented on students' personal ICT desktops and enable the easy transfer of work from teachers to students, are in the early stages of development. Others are well established and enable students to complete courses using computers and Internet links. Other initiatives have seen families learning about new technology together through the 'Family Learning' initiative. A central 'pyramid' houses a large open learning area with eighty computers available for students. Students make good use of this resource independently before and after school. All computers were seen in use before school for various tasks, including e-mail, homework, web design and personal use. Students use ICT well in modern foreign languages through video-conferencing with middle schools and with schools in Europe, they also present work well through presentation and word processing software. In design and technology, students do not yet use control, but they are using computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment well. Students also use interactive software for learning about nutrition and use the Internet and databases to find information. Suitable information is well selected and presented using word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheet graphs. There is satisfactory use in other subjects of the curriculum; however, the use of computers to support students with special educational needs and in the music, geography and art and design departments is, overall, unsatisfactory. Some teachers link laptop computers to digital projectors and interactive whiteboards well to capture students' attention and to support their teaching.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Good teaching, which is based on very good subject knowledge and relationships.
- The curriculum is well planned and leads to good standards and GCSE results above the national average.
- Students are very well prepared for their examinations.
- Students' very good attitudes to their studies contribute to achievement.
- The needs of higher attaining students are not always met.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped and does not fully support learning.
- Library provision for the subject is poor.
- Fieldwork skills and techniques are not developed well enough in Year 9.

#### **Commentary**

84. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to students' earlier standards. In the work seen during the inspection, students are secure in their understanding of geographical concepts, terms and vocabulary. By the end of Year 9,

students have developed a range of map-work skills and all have a secure understanding of tectonic processes and earthquake hazards. Fieldwork is limited and needs to be further developed in Year 9. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress. Higher attaining students benefit occasionally from additional work identified in the department's curriculum plans, but not consistently, so that their needs in lessons are not always met. Consequently, although they make satisfactory progress, few higher attaining students achieve the standards of which they are capable.

85. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection and are now above national averages. This represents good achievement in relation to students' attainment levels on entry to their GCSE course. As students move through Years 10 and 11, they show considerable confidence in finding information from text, maps and diagrams, but their skills in using computers are not so well developed. Students make good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. The standard of course work is good and students apply concepts and skills well. Students with special educational needs continue to be well supported, as are students with English as an additional language.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Quality improves in Years 10 and 11 because a better range of activities and resources are used. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. They use assessment information well to guide their teaching and to set appropriate progress targets for students. Marking is regular and contains constructive comments indicating how students can improve their work. ICT is used for whole-class demonstrations but students have little opportunity to use computers to support their independent work in lessons.
87. Leadership is good. The head of department has a strong commitment to improving standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with particularly strong improvement in Years 10 and 11. The provision of resources is satisfactory but the library resources for the subject and access to ICT to support learning in lessons needs improving.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations and this encourages students to do their best.
- Teachers encourage students to develop their responses by using supplementary questions.
- Students are actively involved in their lessons and this supports the achievement of boys.
- Coursework at GCSE is enabling students to appreciate their locality.
- There is insufficient information for students about how they can improve.
- Day-to-day marking does not support the raising of standards of literacy.
- Students have very little opportunity to assess work in order to develop understanding of the marking criteria.

### Commentary

88. Results in the GCSE examination in 2003 were above average. Boys did particularly well. A greater than usual proportion of students choose to study history for GCSE.
89. Standards in Year 9 are average. Achievement is good in relation to students' earlier learning. Students use sources confidently to gain information and higher attaining students recognise that some sources are more reliable. They identify a variety of causes for an event, such as World War II or the Russian Revolution, and higher attaining students suggest which may be more significant. They consider the views and feelings of the people of the time and present

them in diaries and newspaper articles as if from that time. There is little use of extended writing, other than in the diaries, and although this supports the achievement of boys and students of lower attainment, it does restrict the opportunities for more able students to demonstrate their understanding.

90. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Their coursework on the local history of Newcastle Quay enables them to demonstrate observational skills, and they can compare and contrast different buildings, identifying their function and likely inhabitants. This first hand investigation encourages their appreciation of their locality. Students demonstrate understanding of changes over time through their analysis of crime and punishment through the ages. Higher attaining students make reasoned judgements when comparing information and responding to questions. Lower attaining students make judgements, but do not give their reasons or support them with evidence. Students use sources to obtain information and most recognise that evidence is not necessarily reliable. Highest attaining students recognise the need to cross-reference evidence to support its accuracy. Their coursework on the 'Irish question' demonstrates a grasp of the historical events that led to the conflict between Catholics and Protestants, although there is little evidence of them evaluating the contributing factors.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this is conveyed to the students. Teachers have high expectations of students' effort and behaviour, and this enables them to involve students actively in their lessons. The pace of lessons ensures that time is well spent in productive activity. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to support students' understanding with clear explanations and by supplementary questioning that encourages them to develop their responses further. Lessons are well planned and students are encouraged to reflect and to analyse what they learn. Key assessments enable teachers to identify students' progress at the end of a module. However, day-to-day marking is insufficient and does not advise students about their progress, or provide information about how they may improve. Teachers give good support for the development of students' literacy skills through writing guides, and the extension of students' vocabulary is good, but there is little support for their written English through marking. Evaluation sheets provide a good opportunity for students to comment on their progress but they do not generally have the opportunity to assess work in order to appreciate the marking criteria.
92. Leadership is very good and management is good. The head of department has clear vision and high expectations for the subject. Teachers work as a good team and there is much sharing of good practice. A handbook has not been developed and much information is kept informally. Standards have risen steadily since the previous report and improvement has been very good.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers treat students' responses with respect and this encourages their participation.
- Good links with the local church provide first hand experience of Christian teachings and artefacts.
- GCSE coursework provides very good opportunities for students to develop their research skills.
- Opportunities to interview people from other faiths enable students to recognise other views.
- There is insufficient opportunity for students to develop their own beliefs and values.
- Appreciation of the effect of belief in a secular society is weak.
- There is insufficient opportunity to reflect on ultimate questions of life or the abstract concepts associated with religion.

- Marking does not provide information about standards achieved or how they may be improved.

## Commentary

93. All students receive their religious education as part of the humanities course. Students in Year 11 follow the GCSE integrated humanities course, part of which is focused on religious education.
94. Standards in Year 9 are average. Students study aspects of the main world religions. They identify key rites of passage and can compare and contrast how Christians and Muslims mark them. They recognise the main features of these religions and the artefacts associated with them. Their understanding of the reasons for belief but the abstract concepts associated with faith and religion is undeveloped, and they have insufficient opportunity to develop their own beliefs and spirituality. Achievement is satisfactory.
95. Standards in Year 11 are average. Achievement is satisfactory. Students recognise that different religions have developed teachings that affect the way people live their lives. They consider contemporary moral issues, such as abortion and euthanasia, reviewing the reasons for people's decisions. They contrast and compare the views of those with and without religious belief and make simple judgements about their own views. Their coursework enables them to interview a large number of individuals about their beliefs and display their findings in a variety of ways. They demonstrate pride in their work and take pains to present it well. Their evaluations and summary judgements demonstrate recognition of the variety of views, but little evidence of understanding why these views are held. There is little opportunity for students to develop understanding of the theology behind the teaching that supports these views.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers encourage students' participation, and their responses are treated with respect. As a result, students contribute willingly. Lessons are well planned to enable students to work independently, and to provide opportunities for them to give their opinion of the beliefs of others. The use of the local church and the contribution of the minister support the work of non-specialist teachers, however, there are missed opportunities to develop students' understanding through the use of wider explanation and supplementary questioning. There is insufficient evidence of students developing their own beliefs and values through reasoning, or of reflecting on why people hold the beliefs they do. There is insufficient assessment of students' progress in religious education, and day-to-day marking does not provide students with information about the standard of their work or how they can improve.
97. Leadership and management are good. After a period of staff turbulence, a team has been established and the new course is being reviewed. New teachers are being well supported; however, there is not yet a system to ensure consistent teaching and understanding of religious education by non-specialist teachers.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good and ensures the smooth running of the department.
- Teaching, overall, is good and secures good learning.
- Students have good attitudes towards the subject, so they try hard in lessons.
- Long-term staff absence and difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers are having an adverse effect on standards, especially in Year 11 GCSE engineering and electronics courses.

- Overall GCSE results are well below the national average.
- Owing to lack of full-time teachers the department cannot extend the curriculum to include control technology.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Potentially dangerous equipment is placed within the workshops and the food technology rooms constitute a serious health hazard.

## Commentary

98. Overall results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below national averages, although there are variations between the material areas. Students do better in graphic products, textiles and food. Girls' results are well above those of the boys', which reflects the national trend and boys do worst in electronic products, engineering and resistant materials. Results have fluctuated over the last three years. They were low in 2001, showed an improvement in 2002, but were low again in 2003.
99. By the end of Year 9, standards are average but reflect good achievement as most students enter school with little experience other than making models in recycled media. Students become familiar with solving problems, designing things to fit the situation and working with a wide range of tools and materials. For example, they recognise users' needs, understand about dietary requirements, and know what things attract children and how products are marketed. Practical work is generally better than theory, as is evident when students concentrate hard when working on the computer-controlled milling machine and when handling unfamiliar media, such as acrylic sheet and electronic components. Lower attaining students find drawing and designing difficult as they cannot put on to paper what they visualise. Higher attaining students produce well drawn and explained designs, especially in textiles, and the new 'materials exploration' workbooks in resistant materials are giving students knowledge as well as lifting their literacy levels and drawing skills. Worksheets are useful to help students to sort out ideas and attempt work in logical sequences, but the wording on them needs to be better-suited to students' reading ages so they all can understand them.
100. By the end of Year 11, standards are generally lower than average. Most students tackle the problems sensibly and set themselves enough work to do to show some inventiveness and understanding of working to a brief and a time schedule. They handle tools competently and are aware of, for example, hygiene in food studies and safety rules when in the workshops. Presentation of portfolios varies greatly. The best portfolios are in textiles, food and graphic products, but many boys, working in engineering and electronics, are falling behind with coursework and are not producing enough theory or practical work. The higher attaining students show good skills in using ICT for word processing, drawing graphs, charts and electric circuiting, but most of the others confine their ICT work to printing pages from the Internet. Despite lower than average standards, achievement is satisfactory, as the short modules in Year 9 do not fully prepare students for the rigour of a GCSE course. Students have to work hard to get themselves accustomed to thinking for themselves and working to a tight time scale.
101. The quality of teaching is good and secures good learning. Subject specialists are good demonstrators and know the requirements of the National Curriculum and the examining boards, so students are taught correctly. The unusually large team of non-specialists who work in the department, covering timetables for absent colleagues, do sterling work to keep students gainfully occupied, but lack the necessary subject skills in order to move students on at the required pace and depth. Appropriate teaching methods, good planning and preparation ensure smooth running of lessons and secure good learning. There is very good encouragement of students, especially in Year 9, which raises their self-esteem. Teachers select and use good quality resources to stimulate and motivate the students. Good behaviour management secures good discipline overall. Because of these aspects, students appear to enjoy technology. They are good listeners and are keen to answer questions and make comments. They enjoy watching demonstrations as these give them confidence, and

they settle quickly to practical work. Most of them try hard in lessons, but there are too many immature boys, particularly in Year 11, who need firm control to keep them on task. During lessons, teachers closely guide students, and the technicians give good practical support. Homework, when set, usually extends the lesson tasks. Most teachers mark work thoroughly and overall assessment principles and practices are clear, but assessment is inconsistent across the department. Some teachers do not follow the guidelines, so not all students know how well they are doing or where they should improve.

102. Leadership is very good, but management is only satisfactory. Two very experienced teachers work well together to lead the department effectively, although the department remains in two distinct halves. The development plans address the problems of staffing, funding, accommodation, extending the curriculum to include control technology and maintaining students' interests in design and technology when examination results are low overall. The heads of the department have insurmountable problems in troubleshooting when the difficulties, especially concerned with staffing, the main cause of low GCSE standards, are not of their making. Despite the drawbacks, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. One of the new leaders, a teacher with tremendous vision, energy and drive has, with the assistance of the technician, made vast improvements to the accommodation and display, so students have better ideas of what design and technology should be promoting. There are better schemes of work, secure assessment objectives, purposeful liaison between the two leaders, and students are often successful in national and local competitions. Although accommodation has improved in textiles and in the workshops, overall it is unsatisfactory. The food technology rooms mentioned in two previous reports as 'being in need of refurbishment' have deteriorated and are now hazardous to health. Inaccessible areas for cleaning, lifting work surfaces, broken tiles and inappropriate planning and placement of equipment are patently obvious. In addition, the circular saw, although guarded, is still sited within one of the workshops, which contravenes safety regulations, as does the placement of oxyacetylene cylinders. The workshop technician does not have a material preparation area and the storage of consumables is inadequate.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Good teaching, characterised by good planning, good relationships, effective use of resources and clear expectations, promotes good learning.
- Teachers' knowledge of students' artistic strengths and interests makes assessment a strong feature in contributing to achievement.
- Links with outside agencies and local designers help motivate students and raise the status of their work.
- Analysis of GCSE examination results to identify the achievement of different groups of students is not rigorous enough in order to set targets
- Infrequent formal monitoring of teaching and learning restricts opportunities for the sharing of good practice.

#### **Commentary**

103. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE examination results were below average in 2003 and showed a downward trend compared to previous years. The department has suffered staffing difficulties, now resolved, and standards seen are better overall than those indicated by examination results. There is no significant difference in the standards seen between different groups of students.

104. Achievement is good. Students enter the school with varied experience. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average, representing good achievement in relation to students' earlier standards. Students make particularly rapid progress in Year 9 because teachers focus on careful observational skills from visually stimulating installations. Good progress is also reflected in lessons seen in Year 10, where students respond well to challenging tasks. They work confidently on three-dimensional wire/clay figures, extending their ability to handle different media. Students make clear and appropriate connections between their own work and that of artists. For example, Year 10 students put to good use their understanding of the work of Sandra Blow in their work on mixed media. This skill is less apparent among Year 11 students, as is their ability to record visually and coherently their development of ideas through a range of media. Nevertheless, students achieve well in relation to their standards at the beginning of the course.
105. Teaching and learning are good overall with elements of very good teaching. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and skills provide students with encouraging models of high quality work and techniques. Teaching is particularly good when lessons are well structured with a visual focus for that engages students and helps focus their ideas. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on still life, where a composition of a garden shed was set up and carefully lit to give significance to the piece and to the work in progress. Features of this work were compared to 'The Blacksmith's Yard' by John Piper, and the teacher's questioning encouraged a good response from students. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour by concentrating on their work. Teachers plan well to meet individual needs so that all students, regardless of ability, are encouraged to develop their own interests. A Year 11 student working on graffiti art was particularly motivated by having a designated area in the art area to execute his final piece. There is a tendency amongst students who are less confident to depend too much on teachers, making their own sustained efforts on work less evident, particularly in Year 11. Students with special educational needs are well supported and they confidently produce careful observational work of a similar standard to that of their peers. Teachers use assessment well to support and encourage progress.
106. Leadership and management are good. An effective team is being established, well qualified and experienced with good opportunities for development and liaison. Schemes of work are monitored and developed. The introduction of the Theatre Royal Pantomime Scheme in Year 9 is effective in motivating students and creating productive links with local designers. An extra-curricular enrichment opportunity provided for Year 8 pupils from partner schools, who have been identified as able in art, is well attended. Early entry for GCSE is planned for these students when they attend the school. Extra-curricular opportunities are also offered to Years 10 and 11 students. Good networking opportunities exist between schools where ideas for innovation are explored, as in the Heritage Working Party. Management is less effective in the monitoring of teaching and learning as there is no regular and formal procedure to enable the sharing of good practice. Analysis of examination results is not rigorous enough to set targets for improvement.
107. Improvement overall, since the last report, is satisfactory. The department suffered from staffing difficulties in the last couple of years which adversely affected standards, but these have now been resolved and the department is working hard to raise standards. The use of ICT in the subject is still limited, although a small refurbishment has made room for computers within the department, yet to be properly installed.

## Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' subject knowledge and competence are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- The students have a good attitude to their learning and to the subject generally.
- Too many students are underachieving.
- The poor accommodation and resources are a barrier to good achievement.

### Commentary

108. Over the period of the last three years, GCSE results have compared favourably with national averages overall. The number of students taking music, although healthy, is not large and the fluctuation in higher grade passes does not have any real significance. In 2002, the entries contained a considerable proportion of competent instrumentalists, which was reflected in the above average results. In contrast, the 2003 entries had no comparable instrumentalists amongst their number and the results were correspondingly below national average.
109. During the inspection, the work seen and heard in Year 9 reflected a wide range of standards. Amongst the students, there are some very high attainers, many of whom have instrumental lessons. Some are extraordinarily competent. There are quite a number who are not instrumentalists and who are not natural composers, but many of these are achieving well. There is, however, a very sizeable middle group, which is underachieving. These students show very good enthusiasm and interest but are not producing the results of which they are capable. The principal barriers to improving performance are the resources and accommodation, both of which are poor. In Year 11 work seen during the inspection, students' standards are average overall but above for many in their very good knowledge of, and response to, the listening activities. Overall, there is evidence of good achievement in relation to students' earlier standards.
110. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are well planned and delivered. Starting activities are effective in the use of questions and answers that involve students and help recall previous work. The teacher's subject knowledge is very good and is a key strength of the department. Students clearly respect the lead given by the teacher who has high expectations and who gives the students challenges, which are attainable but, nevertheless, stretching. The students generally work well, developing skills for composition and performance and knowledge. Overall, they show good attitudes in their learning and are very productive with a good capacity to work effectively, both independently and collaboratively. Despite the students' good attitudes to learning and the apparent high ability of many of them, the overall attainment does not reach the standards expected because of the working conditions. Most of the keyboards are old, some have keys missing, and the facilities they offer are substandard. The working space is extremely small and the noise of many different groups working together in the same room inhibits concentration and a sensitivity to sound. The procedures for assessment are well thought out and help students to be aware of where they are in their work and how they can progress and improve their grade.
111. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The management of the instrumental teaching is good. As many boys as girls learn instruments and the take-up is particularly strong in guitar, keyboard and drums, which reflects something of the strong rock band culture prevalent in the school. A rock music festival is just one of several performing events which make up a good annual concert calendar and which includes regular platforms for student instrumentalists and composers. The department arranges an enterprising series of recitals by young musicians just starting out on their professional career.

112. Accommodation is poor. There is not enough space for students to work efficiently at composition or performance. The physical problem of accommodating an average size class is difficult enough but noise problems are equally inhibiting. Resources are equally poor with many of the keyboards being quite inadequate for the needs of the students. Although these inadequacies are clear in Year 9 lessons, it is in Years 10 and 11 that achievement is being most affected. The use of ICT in music is also undeveloped because of the lack of any suitable sequencing or music print software for the two computers.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping all students to learn and achieve well.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Students' good attitudes assist learning and achievement.
- Extra-curricular activities give good opportunities for students to extend their learning.
- Limited accommodation constrains the GCSE programme and affects organisation and the level of achievement in some theory lessons.

### Commentary

113. GCSE examination results in 2002 were broadly average. Results in 2003 were similar. The entry is predominantly boys, although more girls will be entered in the present cohort. Students do better in physical education than in most of their other subjects.
114. Students have below average skills when they enter the school as many have not had previous experience in all sporting activities. Students achieve well in Year 9, especially in outdoor activities, because teachers are knowledgeable and students' respect their expertise and have good attitudes. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. Standards in the core curriculum, in Year 11, are average and students respond well to activities newly introduced, such as fitness and aerobics. The achievement of students of all abilities is good. Standards, in Year 11, in the examination course, are average and students learn and achieve well in relation to their earlier learning.
115. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. Teachers' planning is effective in targeting students' needs and raising standards. Teachers demonstrate skills well and questioning is effective in checking all students' understanding. Students learn well because of the well-structured lessons, high expectations of teachers and tasks well matched to students' needs, which offer them opportunities to extend work and push their achievement levels. For example, in a good Year 9 gymnastics lesson, students were challenged to link balances and partner work. Students worked together well, discussed improvement and analysed performance with frequent assistance from the teacher so that all students improved their movement vocabulary. They saw the importance of team effort in timing and worked towards one another's strengths. Students learn well in groups and teachers encourage students to view one another's work and to help one another so talented students have good opportunities in leading groups in warm-up sessions and participating and assisting in the good extra-curricular programme. This includes benefiting from the expertise of a football coach and involvement in local, district and county level teams. Good use of a video allows students to observe and analyse one another's performance to improve practical assessment. Assessment in the GCSE course is used well to help students to check their progress and measure performance against targets, but marking does not always highlight areas for improvement or clearly relate to grades. Some work is unfinished, limiting revision possibilities. Students outside the examination course are aware of their progress because of

the good departmental monitoring system which informs students well, but better use of previous performance to guide development could improve measurement of achievement.

116. Good leadership has focused attention strongly on improvements to the curriculum. Good teamwork has decisively re-structured, and improved, the programme to include fitness and aerobics and these changes have improved participation rates because they appeal to students' interests. Teachers are aware of safety issues and these are clearly outlined in the department's handbook, but some students are prepared to risk their own safety and that of others by flouting these clear regulations. GCSE theory lessons are affected by the lack of a specific room so teachers have to move between different areas carrying equipment. Students are confused about room changes and lose time so what can be achieved is affected. Good guidance for teachers is provided in detailed schemes of work and policies.
117. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All teachers who teach physical education are monitored; this leads to consistency and identifies areas for development. Students have good opportunities for self-assessment and independent learning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Overall provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

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

- Students' learning of key concepts and theories is good because of the good specialist teaching.
- Students display positive attitudes because lessons provide a variety of learning opportunities, including a good range of stimulating resources.
- Students are able to learn independently because they have good access to ICT.
- Students do not always achieve their potential because there are weaknesses in the skills that earn the highest marks.
- Strategies for raising achievement have not been fully developed and implemented because previous examination performance has not been routinely analysed.
- Assessment procedures are not fully effective in the feedback they provide to students because they do not always clarify areas of misunderstanding or provide an accurate picture of potential GCSE grades.
- Learning is sometimes affected by the accommodation provided.

#### **Commentary**

118. GCSE results in 2003 were below average and just below average in 2002. Boys' results were higher than girls' in 2003, with the reverse being the case in the previous year. Results over a number of years before 2002 had been higher.
119. Standards in work seen are below average by the end of Year 11, but achievement is satisfactory with no significant differences between boys and girls. Students display good investigation skills in conducting primary research and good ICT skills in presenting their research data, but only higher attainers go on to evaluate their findings thoroughly. Students' understanding of key ideas in the subject is better than their ability to apply their knowledge to case studies and the real world. Lower attainers' organisation skills, when producing longer pieces of work, are weak.
120. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this results in students' good understanding of key definitions. The wide range of resources available, including good opportunities to use ICT, motivates students well and enables them to develop skills in independent learning. There is a lack of focus on developing students' literacy skills

and this means that students do not always learn examination techniques that will gain them higher marks. Assessment in class does not always pinpoint areas of misunderstanding and, as a result, students miss opportunities in discussion to test their knowledge more fully against real world examples. Marking of assignments and other work does not provide students with a consistently clear idea of how they are performing in relation to GCSE grades or of how they can improve.

121. Leadership and management are satisfactory. At the time of the inspection there had been very recent changes in the department, with both a new staff appointment and a new head of department. The department is now well placed for further improvement with some strategies already identified for raising achievement. Accommodation is a barrier to learning in some instances because of the unsuitability of some specialist ICT accommodation for class teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has appointed a committed and enthusiastic co-ordinator.
- The subject is part of an integrated humanities course which all students in Years 9, 10 and 11 follow.
- The school makes good use of community support and outside agencies to strengthen the subject.
- Not all departments take the opportunity to promote citizenship.
- Annual reports to parents do not consistently indicate the progress students make in their citizenship education.

#### **Commentary**

122. Achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory. Students are on target to reach at least average standards by the end of the school year. They have secure understanding of human rights and responsibilities underpinning society. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE integrated humanities course in which the citizenship programme of study is taught. Most students know what citizenship is about and can see the relevance and importance of the topics to their future lives. Their standards are average and this represents satisfactory achievement. Year 11 students achieve well and have a good grasp of democracy, politics and global interdependence. Students' skills of enquiry and communication are well developed. All students participate in charity work and in community-based activities. Plans are in place for all Year 9 students to participate in a local beach clean-up campaign.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, a variety of good quality resources are used and these give students the opportunity to learn from up-to-date relevant material, including videos, websites and outside professionals. Students have positive attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers. This allows students to discuss sensitive issues which deepen their knowledge and understanding. Assessment, recording and reporting are being developed but need refinement. These will eventually have to include an assessment of students' knowledge and understanding as well as their skills. Marking of work is a weakness and, as a result, students are unclear about the standard of their class work. Elements of the citizenship curriculum are part of the GCSE science course, but teachers are not sufficiently confident and aware of highlighting aspects of citizenship in other areas of the curriculum.

124. The leadership of the subject is good. The head of subject provides a very enthusiastic role model for the department and has clear vision for future developments. Teachers work well as a team, are well supported by the subject leader. The citizenship provision and the extension activities very effectively promote students' understanding of moral, social and cultural issues.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eleven 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 tables below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	10	100	90	20	42.7	35	39
Biology	15	46.7	81.6	6.7	33.2	11.3	33.2
Business Studies	5	80	89.1	0	31.7	22	35.4
Chemistry	5	80	89.1	20	36.9	22	35.2
Communication Studies	7	85.7	94.2	28.6	36.1	30	38.5
English Literature	14	85.7	94.4	14.3	37.9	27.9	38.9
General Studies	29	3.4	78.6	0	25.7	1	30
History	5	100	91.8	20	37.2	40	37.8
Mathematics	12	25	74.2	8.3	34.3	9.2	31.3
Other Social Studies	13	69.2	83.2	0	32.5	22.3	33.6
Physics	6	50	82	0	36.2	10	34.3
Sociology	8	87.5	83.7	37.5	33.6	37.5	33.8

**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	7	71.4	96.1	14.3	48.7	57.1	85.1
Biology	11	100	91.6	54.5	36.3	87.3	74.1
Business Studies	6	83.3	96.4	16.7	32.8	53.3	76.5
Communication Studies	13	100	98.3	23.1	36.8	76.9	81.1
English Literature	29	100	98.5	48.3	43.7	82.1	84.3
Design and Technology	12	91.7	95.3	16.7	35.5	65	76.5
General Studies	38	100	90.1	7.9	29.1	61.6	69.3
Geography	6	100	97.1	66.7	40.5	96.7	80.9
History	8	100	97.1	37.5	41	90	81.2
Information Technology	7	100	89.1	0	22.4	45.7	64.1
Mathematics	6	100	93.3	50	52.2	83.3	84.7
Music	5	100	97.7	20	41.8	60	82.2
Other Social Studies	6	100	94.3	66.7	38.9	100	77.7
Physics	8	100	92.8	12.5	42.8	65	78.6
Sociology	11	100	95.4	45.5	39.6	87.3	79.1
Sports/PE Studies	6	100	95.4	16.7	29.5	56.7	73.2
Leisure and Recreation	11	100	85.6	27.3	9.8	70.9	55.1
Travel and Tourism	8	87.5	84.6	25	7.9	65	52.8

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this inspection was on **English literature** and **French**. **German** was also sampled. In a Year 12 German class, the standards were well up to expectation in the AS course. The students could contrast in German the different styles found in differing German newspapers, noting things that are typical of, for instance, a tabloid presentation. Teaching and learning were both good.

### English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and is effective in helping students to achieve well.
- The subject is led and managed well so that improvement has been good.
- Students appreciate the support they receive and benefit from it.
- Some lessons are over-directed; more reticent or less confident students would benefit from being given more responsibility for their own learning.
- Consideration should be given to ways in which debate and interchange of ideas can be encouraged (for example, by a seminar-style of seating arrangement).

### Commentary

125. Results in English literature were average in 2002 and provisional results for 2003 were similar. In relation to students' prior attainment, achievement was good. All students have obtained at least a pass grade in the subject in the last two years.
126. Standards in work seen are average overall by the end of Year 13. More than half the students had GCSE grades in English that were lower than usual for this level of study and to have reached average standards now represents good achievement. In the best lessons, they achieve very well because they are made responsible for their own learning and given opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding and to participate in analytical discussion of their set texts. In one lesson, for example, through working in groups of three and reporting back to the class, all developed a significantly greater understanding of the variety of styles used in Louis de Bernière's novel *'Captain Corelli's Mandolin'*. Their achievement is supported over time by helpful background and reference material and frequent writing practice. Teachers make clear the necessary criteria for success and how students can improve. Year 12 students have completed a term of their AS course. Though most have higher-grade English literature results at GCSE, their standards in English are much more mixed. In that context, achievement is at least satisfactory and, for lower attainers, good. Despite difficulties with language, all are making gains in knowledge and understanding of demanding texts such as *'Volpone'* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore'*.
127. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to help students learn. They provide much interesting and supportive material to help students understand context or extend their knowledge of literary terms and styles. They use questioning, group work and discussion to prompt an oral response and test out students' understanding. Teachers provide suitable models or examples so that students know how to tackle their assignments. Occasionally, in both Year 12 and Year 13 lessons, the less confident or more reticent students are not actively involved. This occurs when the teacher over-directs the lesson so that students are able to avoid taking responsibility for their own learning; it also occurs when separate seating arrangements allow some students to avoid participation and the debate or discussion essential for this level of study cannot take place effectively. Nevertheless, students themselves endorse the overall picture of good teaching: they appreciate the quality of teaching, the preparation and support they receive, and the confidence they gain in tackling exam requirements.

128. The course is led well, with a clear focus on the development of students as individuals. Management is also good, with teachers matched well to the different aspects of the course. Improvement has been good because the quality of teaching has been maintained, achievement is good and the course continues to attract students who benefit from the range of reading and reference they acquire.

## French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The course makes a very good contribution to the students' personal development.
- Standards are average but some students do not achieve as well as they should, partly because they do not attend regularly enough.
- Year 13 students lack some confidence in speaking. Those in Year 12 are much more confident and are doing well.

### Commentary

129. A-level examination results are below average, but the achievement of most students, considering their starting points, is satisfactory.
130. Students following a course in French learn to communicate at a quite sophisticated level and also study, in depth, important cultural and social issues that reflect their own concerns and give them points of view from another country, so helping their personal development very well indeed. Recruitment to courses is good and retention rates are satisfactory. Attendance rates are a cause for some concern as absences, in what are comparatively small classes, not only limit the achievement of those who are missing but also affect those present adversely, as the chances for students to spark off each other also diminish.
131. Students learn well because the teaching is so good. Each teacher is a fluent French speaker who is very good at getting the students to learn by making heavy, mainly realistic, demands upon them. All lessons go along at a rattling pace and nearly all of them give the students real confidence in written and oral work. Students also have an above average level of understanding because they hear French spoken consistently and very well. Lessons are very well prepared and aim directly at improving the students' capacities to express themselves well in examinations. In a very good Year 12 lesson, designed to get the students used to producing lengthy responses on health-related issues, the teacher stretched the higher attainers and got them to help the others very effectively. The lesson was beautifully constructed to meet the different students' needs and well geared to developing fluency in argument. By the end, the students were able to talk convincingly with, however, a bit too much reliance on what they had written. The students felt they had succeeded and had really enjoyed the challenge. In conversation, Year 13 and Year 12 students both agree that they learn a lot.
132. Year 13 students have greater difficulty in re-using what they have learned. They can appear passive in lessons that, occasionally, make excessive demands on them, so they clam up. In one lesson, the teaching plunged the students too deeply into work intended to get a spontaneous conversation going about aspects of the social landscape. The lesson was very thoroughly planned, but expectations were too high in a class that was affected by the absence of some reportedly higher attainers. Other high attainers write very well, but are far too diffident in oral work. Lessons are, on the other hand, enterprisingly organised to give the students the chance to mix together, to spark off each other and to investigate. Assessment is

very good. It makes a very big contribution to raising standards. The students know how they are doing, are set targets to achieve and their work is very thoroughly corrected.

133. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Languages continue to be popular in the sixth form. Results fell a little in 2003 and are unlikely to rise in 2004, but there are strong currents of improvement with imaginative plans for further development masterminded by an enterprising new head of subject.

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

134. Use of language and the level of literacy skills are satisfactory across most subjects, so that students are able to tackle the language demands of their different subjects and courses successfully. In art and design, for example, students are accustomed to answering probing questions and discussing visual ideas in a sophisticated way. The course in leisure and recreation develops students' literacy skills well. In ICT, however, students' weak literacy skills affect their attainment on the A2 course. A key skills course in communication is available to some students, but the arrangements for delivering this course mean that attendance is variable with consequent lack of continuity for both students and teachers. The school is aware of this problem and is actively seeking ways to remedy it.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, which help them to achieve well.
- Good leadership and management ensure that teachers' expertise is used well.
- Assessment of students' work is good; students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- The quality of teaching is good and, as a result, students make good progress with learning.
- Computers are not used sufficiently to support students' learning.
- Teaching methods do not include sufficient opportunities for students to use practical activities to develop understanding.

### **Commentary**

135. In 2002, GCE A-level examination results were average in the A2 examinations and below average in the AS examinations. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course. Provisional results in 2003 showed a slight fall in the results at A2 level.
136. Overall, standards of work seen are above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. In Year 13, students are making very good progress in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. All six students have successfully completed the AS modules, five of them at the higher grades A-B. In pure mathematics, students are able to manipulate algebraic expressions effectively to express functions as partial fractions, and in mechanics they have developed well their understanding of momentum and its use when dealing with impact and collision of objects. Year 12 students are attaining standards that are average at this stage of the course, which represents good achievement in relation to their standards at the beginning of the course. Overall, students' achievement is good.
137. Teaching is good and results in good learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; new and difficult concepts are clearly explained. Discussions in lessons are good and usually involve students well in building upon previous knowledge and understanding. Relationships are very good with mutual respect shown between teachers and students. Students show

very positive attitudes to their work; they make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing with the result that they achieve well. The day-to-day assessment of students' work is good; it supports their learning well so that they know how well they are doing. Lessons are carefully planned but learning is too often directed by the teacher. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to use practical activities to develop understanding, and computers are not used sufficiently to support students' learning.

138. The subject is led and managed well. Teachers are deployed effectively to ensure that their specialist knowledge is utilised well. The department works well as a team to ensure that students' work and progress are regularly checked. Assessment of students' work is good; students are informed regularly of how well they are doing in relation to examination criteria. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

139. Use of mathematics and the level of skills shown by students are generally satisfactory across almost all subjects. For example, in science, students use formulae confidently when dealing with rates of nuclear decay. A key skills course in 'Application of Number' is provided for some students not following an AS level course in mathematics. Standards for these students are well below average. The arrangements for delivering this course mean that attendance rates of students are extremely variable which results in a lack of continuity of learning and provision for students and teachers. No other contribution is planned by subjects in the sixth form, but the school is aware of the problem and is actively seeking ways to remedy it.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus in this inspection was on **chemistry**. Lessons in **biology** and **physics** were also sampled.

140. Results in **biology** in 2002 were well above average. Provisional results in 2003 were not as high. However, almost all gained at least the grade expected or better, showing good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. In the one lesson seen, Year 12 students had a secure knowledge of the basic DNA structure and the higher attaining students described the base pairing in the molecule. As a result of good teaching they acquired new practical skills, working safely in groups when extracting DNA from plant material.
141. A and AS level results in **physics** in 2002 were well below average and those in 2003 were similar. The majority achieved as expected in relation to their performance at GCSE level. In a good lesson with Year 13 students the teacher competently used a computer program projected onto a whiteboard to aid lively exposition. The students successfully consolidated their understanding of radioactive decay and by the end of the lesson calculated quantities related to the phenomenon. In another good lesson Year 12 students quickly learned how to transpose equations of motion and calculate quantities using them.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Year 13 students are achieving well and gaining high grades.
- Good teaching and very positive attitudes of students enable them to achieve well and make good progress.
- The progress of students is very carefully monitored and they are kept well informed.
- The subject is well led and managed and teachers are deployed effectively.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and not all lessons are taught in a laboratory.

## Commentary

142. In 2002, there were no candidates taking A level examinations. The results of the five students who took the AS level examinations were well above average. In the provisional results for 2003 A level examinations, both candidates gained pass grades and the AS level results were in line with recent national averages. The performance of the examination candidates in 2003 and the progress of the present Year 13 students have been adversely affected by the many problems associated with the premises during the winter of 2002-2003. Many lessons during this period were taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities.
143. Standards by the end of Year 13 are well above average. Students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving well in relation to their performances at GCSE level. Year 13 students have a very secure understanding of equilibrium constants and competently manipulate the associated equations. They apply this well when calculating the pH values of strong and weak acid and choosing indicators. Their analysis and evaluation skills are a particular strength. In one lesson, students quickly deduced the rate expression for a reaction and calculated the order and rate constant. Their knowledge and understanding of organic chemistry is very secure. In a Year 12 lesson, students were able to identify different types of isomers and most of them were able to write structural formulae for hydrocarbons. In the following lesson they developed practical skills well when carrying out an experiment involving cracking. They worked safely and productively, co-operating well in groups.
144. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and make it comprehensible in a lively, enthusiastic and informative manner. They often capture interest by relating relevant personal experiences and occasionally use humour most effectively. Students learn well mainly as a result of their very positive attitudes, the quality of the relationships and the good teaching. Teachers have a very good knowledge of examination board requirements and students rapidly acquire the techniques needed for success in examinations. Effective use is made of previous examination questions throughout the course. Teachers know the students extremely well and establish relationships based on genuine mutual respect. This promotes confidence and eagerness to fulfil teachers' expectations. Lessons are well planned and are conducted at an appropriate pace. Questioning is usually skilful and teachers draw out information and check understanding very well. Occasionally, questioning needs to be more targeted to fully involve the more passive students. Students appreciate the frequent marking and informative comments on their work, which help them to move forward. They also value the time readily given by teachers out of lessons to help them. Assessment procedures are accurate and comprehensive. Much use is made of the information obtained, including the setting of targets for each student. Technical support is of high quality. Students have good access to ICT facilities and use the Internet frequently for research. This is promoting development of independent learning skills.
145. Leadership and management are good. The classroom practice of the subject head is a model for others. There is a clear focus on seeking strategies to raise both standards and achievement further. The teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively. A newly qualified teacher is receiving much valued good support. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There has been an increase in numbers taking the subject in the past two years. Much more use is made of information technology. Assessment procedures are now much more thorough and the data obtained is used more effectively. However, there has been little improvement in the accommodation and a few lessons are taught in rooms lacking specialist facilities.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Because course entry requirements are not strictly adhered to, some students lack the prior learning necessary to cope successfully with their A2 course. This is unsatisfactory.
- Very good ICT resources support students' learning both in lessons and independently.
- Good links have been made with local businesses and they support project work well.
- Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result.

### **Commentary**

146. Provisional results in examinations in 2003 were well below the national average. These results should be treated with caution, however, because of the few students following the course.
147. The number of students following AVCE and A2 courses remains low. Standards seen on the A2 course are well below national expectation but students' achievement is satisfactory when their attainment on entry to the course is considered. However, entry requirements to this course are not strictly applied which means some students struggle to work independently and grasp key concepts in the management and implementation of projects. Students' weak literacy skills are also hampering attainment in this area. This is an unsatisfactory situation. On the other hand, standards on the AVCE course are well above average and achievement is very good when prior learning is considered. Good links have been made with local companies to provide a real audience for website design and graphic-based ICT work. Students benefit from the constructive criticism these companies provide.
148. Teaching and learning are good overall. Three teachers teach one course, and they plan together very well to ensure good continuity of teaching and learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons very well, making very good use of time. Teachers monitor students' progress very well and indicate clearly what they need to do to improve further. Students' attitudes to the subject are always at least good. Good use is made of homework for extended activities and teachers use e-mail to support students well outside of lesson time.
149. Because course entry requirements are not strictly adhered to, some students are following a course that is not appropriate for them. This unsatisfactory situation necessarily affects the judgement about leadership and management and about provision overall, which, in the circumstances, cannot be better than satisfactory. In other respects, the situation is much more positive. The school has developed its computer resources significantly since the last inspection and the school has created a very good separate ICT resource area dedicated to sixth form students. This does not exclude students from using the very good resource pyramid or other ICT resources throughout the school in departments. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection and there is very good capacity for further improvement.

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

150. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. Students benefit from the very good ICT facilities available and make full use of them in their subjects and courses.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus in this inspection was on **history** and **sociology**.

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- Teachers have a very good understanding of their subject and this enables them to provide clear direction for students.
- Students are encouraged to do their best by the high expectations of their teachers.
- Teachers develop students' understanding through good use of supplementary questioning.
- The positive attitudes and interest of the sixth form are enabling students to achieve well.

### **Commentary**

151. In 2002, results at A level were well above average. Achievement was very good. Results have improved steadily since the last inspection and results in 2003 appear to be higher still. All students following the course in the last two years achieved at least a pass grade.
152. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Students display interest and enthusiasm for the subject and, as a result, they have made the transition from GCSE to A level successfully. Achievement is very good because students are well motivated and willing to discuss the issues they study, challenging each other to defend their judgements. A good example was seen in a Year 12 class, where students had to defend their choices during an exercise to categorise reasons for Calvin's success. In Year 13, students held very clear personal views about who carried the blame for the death of Lady Jane Grey, and were willing to defend them. They use sources confidently and recognise that there may be different interpretations of historical events by historians that may be equally valid. Their extended writing shows clarity and organisation, identifying the key questions of the title. Writing is fluent and contains reasoned judgements supported by evidence.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of their subject and this enables them to provide clear direction for their students. Teachers have high expectations and their thorough planning and preparation before students attempt significant pieces of work, is enabling students to meet these expectations. Teachers encourage students to develop their responses through the good use of supplementary questioning and this leads students on to analyse material further. Students are achieving well because they are interested and well motivated. Very good relationships between staff and students support enquiry and debate, and students' confidence is growing.
154. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the subject, and results are reviewed to identify areas for development. Teachers work well as a team and are developing a clear and coherent course. Students find the choice of topics stimulating and feel well supported in their learning.

### **Sociology**

Provision in sociology is **good**.

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

- Good leadership of the department is raising standards.
- Teaching is good, resulting in good learning.

- Students' attitudes are very good and they are very positive about the course.
- Students receive good support and guidance.
- Consistent reference to and inclusion of the work of theorists would extend students' work.

## Commentary

155. A-Level results were above average in 2002 and students performed better in sociology in comparison with their other subjects. Retention from Year 12 to the A-level course was low in 2003 and results were also lower because staffing issues affected achievement and stability.
156. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average and students achieve well when previous performance is taken into consideration. Specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons so that, early in Year 12, students can identify technical terms and apply these in discussions. For example, students understand 'alternative family units' as compared with 'the nuclear family'. Students' good achievement results from the challenging teaching and the careful planning in the course. Year 13 students apply their good understanding of different perspectives to a variety of topics. This leads to well-informed discussions. They understand the value of planning, drafting and research, but work could be better organised for examinations. Students answer questions well and choose appropriate examples to support their answers but do not make consistent comparison with the work of prominent sociologists which would enhance their work. Students understand how to interpret statistics and graphs, collect data and investigate hypotheses. Good feedback from marking keeps all students aware of possible grades and helps them to raise their achievement by targeting their efforts.
157. In lessons, much is achieved because of the teachers' very good personal understanding of the subject and the use of a variety of teaching methods that challenge students. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students' understanding of religious principles in relation to gender was well applied to culture. Students were tested well when the teacher brought alive the spiritual, social, moral and cultural implications of lack of power within ethnic groups. Teaching extends thinking well through good challenging questioning and discussion. This results in good interchange of ideas and confident dialogue. Students' attitudes are good; they appreciate the co-operative learning environment of joint enterprise. They support their good learning through research on the Internet and in the library. Students enjoy understanding how society functions and how this impacts on their lives, and see this as a useful contribution to future careers.
158. New leadership has planned well to meet the needs of students. Stability in staffing is already having a positive effect in terms of achievement and improved numbers on the Year 12 course. Teachers and students are fully acquainted with examination requirements. Students have opportunities to participate in conferences. Good systems of monitoring students' progress enable teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses and special needs of students are met through intervention so advice to students is good. Although much has been done since the recent appointment, management of the department is only satisfactory because the handbook lacks detail to guide the department and some policies, for example the gifted and talented policy, need development to direct and enhance the present provision.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus in this inspection was on **design and technology**.

### Design and technology

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has extended the range of courses offered to sixth form students to suit their needs and aspirations.
- Standards of work are above average and examination results show a rising trend.
- Most students have excellent attitudes to their work, and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is very good and brings about very good learning.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and ensures students are moved on at an appropriate rate and depth.
- In resistant materials, owing to staffing problems, two different courses are taught together, which is a poor experience for both staff and students.
- A few students, whose attendance is poor, are falling behind with coursework.
- Some students are allowed to choose design and technology courses to fill their timetable, which does not secure good motivation.

## Commentary

159. In 2001 and 2002, A2 results were below average. More girls than boys attempted the subject and their results exceeded those of the boys. Provisional results in 2003 rose, as all students passed the examinations in food, product design and systems and control. Results were highest in the latter area. In the AS level examinations in 2003, provisional results were above average, showing a 75 per cent pass rate. Over the past three years, the number of students opting to take A-levels has risen steadily. A few students fail to complete their course, but the ones who do not complete leave the school for valid reasons.
160. The range of courses is wide, as students may now take food, textiles, and product design in graphics or resistant materials. By the end of Year 13, standards are above average and reflect good achievement, as many students did not attempt GCSE prior to starting A-levels. When beginning their courses, most students, therefore, have to quickly amass information about materials and their properties, and acquire knowledge of and skills in using the tools and equipment before they can embark upon designing. Most make a good transition between doing work at the suggestion of the teacher to planning their own work and setting targets and time-scales. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls except that the girls on the course are more methodical and tend to be more diligent about completing theory work. Some portfolios are well presented, showing good understanding of the need for thorough analysis of a problem in order to arrive at sensible decisions, individuality in response and good use of ICT. Practical skills are good and are especially so in textiles, where students are producing high quality items, often using individually created materials. Analytical skills are good in resistant materials as students sensibly assess and compare the aesthetic and ergonomic qualities of similar products. A few boys, mostly those who opted to take the subject as a 'timetable filler', are currently not producing the amount or quality of portfolio or practical work needed for good grades.
161. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. Teachers are very well skilled and know the subject and the requirements of the examining boards thoroughly. They ensure students have opportunities to gain information and understanding of what is required on an advanced course of study. Lesson planning is very good; students' capabilities are well understood by the teachers who give them motivational and challenging projects with scope for personal choice and development. Most students' attitudes are excellent, as many of them work hard out of lesson hours in the specially designed sixth form study area. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and target setting is realistic. Teachers expect students to do their best and give them appropriate support and guidance so they can fulfil their potential. Students appreciate help and act upon advice, thus raising the standards of their work. At the end of lessons, the time for evaluation is used well as it ensures students develop questioning ability and confidence in judgement.
162. Leadership is very good. The teachers in the department work as an effective team, and meet regularly to plan together, pool ideas, discuss work and agree assessment. It is clear that the

teachers have a strong commitment to ensure students' success. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Accommodation for the sixth form has improved; results in AS and A-level are rising and are now above the national average; there are more courses offered; the number of students wishing to take the subject has increased and most students complete their course. The department suffers from staffing difficulties and some groups have to double up in order to receive specialist teaching, which is a poor experience for both staff and students and affects achievement.

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

The focus in this inspection was on **art and design**. **Media studies** was sampled.

163. In **media studies**, good teaching was clearly encouraging independent learning in the Year 13 lesson seen as students explored contemporary magazines for a current project. The course is very well led and managed. An exemplary handbook provides very good information and guidance about media studies and its place in the school.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Teaching is good. Students acquire an exacting working method that significantly improves their learning.
- Teachers place strong emphasis on observational drawing and standards are rising as a result.
- The analysis of examination results lacks rigour.

#### **Commentary**

164. The number of students taking A-level art and design in 2003 was very small and national comparisons are not, therefore, statistically valid.

165. Standards are average by the end of Year 13. Students' achievement is good given their previous performance at AS level and GCSE. Students are producing carefully planned work by using an exacting working method, which is taught in a well-rehearsed way. Students can brainstorm topics, research their ideas, and then construct still-life groups based on the objects identified in their research. The successful individual final outcomes are large canvas paintings based on the preparatory still-life drawings. Some effective results are produced based on the work of practising artists. One student, for example, produced a still-life and a bold, imaginative observational drawing from her study of the work of Georgia O'Keefe.

166. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Well-prepared lessons, incorporating the skilful use of resources, enable students to learn effectively. Probing questioning ensures that students are able to discuss visual ideas in a sophisticated way. This approach also ensures that students' literacy skills are developed well. Teachers assess students' work well, making clear on assessment sheets what students have achieved and how they should improve. Homework contributes well to students' independent learning because it concentrates on topic research and gaining material that will move development forward rapidly. Teachers make good use of links with the community through life-drawing sessions, artists in residence and visits to galleries.

167. Good leadership creates a strong team spirit through joint curriculum development and a determination to raise standards. Management, though satisfactory, gives insufficient attention to analysis of examination results and formal monitoring of teaching. Improvement

since the last inspection has been good, because students benefit from being able to work without interruption in a specialist teaching space, their critical abilities are now well developed, and they also now have the opportunity to study life drawing.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus in this inspection was on **physical education** and **leisure and recreation** courses. The course in **travel and tourism** was sampled.

168. For those students who completed the course in **travel and tourism** last year the results were about average, but the current standard of work in travel and tourism is below average. Many students, because they prefer to earn rather than study further, leave the course to take up jobs in a related field, and have clearly benefited from it in that respect. In Year 12 numbers have fallen to 8 from 12, and in Year 13 there are three remaining students who will complete the course. The course is well organised and planned. The students have the opportunity to travel abroad to experience different cultures and ways of life.

### **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in keeping students on task.
- ICT is available for all theory sessions and helps students to make progress.
- Assessment is good and informative for students.
- There is no Year 13 this year and a low intake of students in Year 12.
- Standards are below average but improving.

#### **Commentary**

169. Provisional 2003 results showed that A to C grades were below the national average for A-level physical education. The results are similar to the previous year. About half of the intake in Year 12 completes only the one-year AS course. This year, the Year 12 students are expected to reach an average grade overall but, at the moment, they are below the standard required.

170. By the halfway point in Year 12, students have realised that they need to be more adept at theory than previously experienced. All of the students are competent in their practical work but need to focus more on the importance of understanding the techniques and skills of being a coach. They are aware of the value of positive feedback in performance. Their discussions highlighted some well argued opinions when studying the laws of inertia. They are familiar with video techniques and analyse their movements in sporting events. They can now analyse, research and comment on most practical work. If they concentrate more, they could reach an average standard. Because of the slight improvement in recent aspects of work, achievement is satisfactory.

171. Teaching is good overall and at times very good. A variety of practical approaches and resources are used which make learning more interesting. The relationships between the teacher and the students are good. All students use ICT to present and research their work. One of the strengths in the teaching is in the preparation of units of work. Accurate worksheets and the use of PowerPoint presentations assist progress. Practical sessions are used to refine practices and help students to analyse skilled movement in sport. Video examples are researched and discussed, making the analysis more relevant to each student. Work is assessed and targets set so that all students are aware of their progress through the

course. Teachers have to work hard to ensure that the students are on task because many students are only too willing to digress from the main objective of the session. However, teaching is having a positive impact on learning and progress is generally good in lessons. The handing in of homework/project work is not so reliable and has a negative effect on standards and achievement.

172. Leading and managing the sixth form physical education course has its difficulties but these are generally satisfactorily handled. The examination courses are well documented and assessed but fail to attract a viable number of students. With larger numbers of students opting for GCSE physical education, the projected numbers for next year show an increase. Marketing procedures are planned and possible links with other sixth forms may provide the solution to increasing the course numbers. Staff work together to produce the units of work and they provide relevant handouts and worksheets to the students. Since the last inspection the A-level course has changed and many students drop the subject after the AS year. The standards are below average, but improving. Assessment arrangements are good and ICT is used effectively. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **Leisure and Recreation**

Provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good overall and promotes learning.
- Leadership and management are good and assist students' personal development.
- ICT is very well used to promote project work.
- Standards are below average but on an upward trend.

### **Commentary**

173. Results in 2001, before the old course in leisure and tourism was modified, were above average. Since the subject was divided into leisure and recreation and travel and tourism the overall results have shown a decline. In 2002, the overall standard was below average but leisure and recreation results were above average. In the 2003 provisional results, results were lower.
174. Standards in Year 13 are currently below average but the small group is expected to reach average standards if they are diligent about completing their course work. Students are competent in ICT skills and how to handle and analyse data. They use spreadsheets and graphs to interpret their findings. The difficulties are in focusing their knowledge and organising their time in the production of projects and coursework. They have achieved satisfactorily in the last year and some, whose powers of concentration are greater, achieve well. Students in Year 13 are practically very competent and can analyse skills in coaching football. Theory work has not progressed as quickly, although the scrutiny of students' work showed the potential to achieve more. Year 12 is a larger group and most of these students only attend because they attend the Football Academy. (The Football Academy students are expected to study an advanced level subject and most choose leisure and recreation). Attendance is generally satisfactory but time keeping for a few is a problem. Coursework, as with Year 13, is insufficient to be average but most students are achieving satisfactorily compared with prior attainment.
175. The teaching of leisure and recreation is well organised and planned. The teaching is, overall, good and very good at times. Units of work have been prepared in a short period of time to enable the course to continue and develop. Relationships are positive and various strategies are used to keep the students on task. The staff emphasises the practical approach to stimulate the students' above average ability in soccer. They cajole, enthuse and repeat

instructions in order to assist the students in the theoretical aspects of the course. They carry out their tasks with humour and show sensitivity to individual differences. Personal development is thought to be an important part of the course and is a thread that runs through the teaching and learning. Independent learning is encouraged and the very good resource of computers is promoted in most lessons. Constructive worksheets and handouts are produced for the students, who are beginning to organise their files more methodically.

176. Overall, leadership and management are good. In spite of the absence of a nominated leader of the course, teachers have worked well together to lead the course through difficult times. The documentation has been produced from scratch and is clear and concise. Teachers encourage the use of ICT to assist in students' learning. The assessment procedures are good and each student is aware of their progress and of how to improve their standard. Personal development features strongly in the management of groups of students and much individual discussion and counselling takes place. The course has managed to attract students into the sixth form who may otherwise have left school without adequate qualifications. Teachers have effectively managed a very inclusive programme. Since the last inspection, the course has changed and comparisons are inappropriate. Presently, the subject encourages personal development and helps many students to focus on literacy skills, which, in turn, helps towards further qualifications.

## **BUSINESS**

Subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for this inspection.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for this inspection.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

Subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for this inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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