

Please note that the sections about, and other references to, the school's sixth form in this report have been superseded by the report of the section 3 inspection by HMI in February 2005.

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INSPECTION REPORT

ANFIELD COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Priory Road, LIVERPOOL, L4 2SL.

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104689

Headteacher: Steve Rowland

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 15th to 19th September 2003

Inspection number: 259345

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13)
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1138
School address:	Priory Road, LIVERPOOL,
Postcode:	L4 2SL
Telephone number:	0151-260-4044
Fax number:	0151-263-5665
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Doreen Schlechte
Date of previous inspection:	10 th November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Anfield Comprehensive School is situated in North Liverpool. It is a community secondary school for pupils and students aged 11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13). It is larger than most other secondary schools. There are 1138 pupils on roll, including 89 sixth-form students. The number of pupils, who move into and then leave the school before the end of Year 11, is low for those joining the school and around the national average for those leaving. The sixth form is smaller than average. The school is now slightly larger than at the time of the previous inspection. It is currently over-subscribed. Most pupils live locally and travel to school by foot or public transport. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups, or whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is low. Employment rates in the area are below average and unemployment is relatively high. At some 40 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is well above average, and very high in the sixth form. Some 16 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average. At over 3 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full statements of special educational need is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector	
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector	Science
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology
27082	Geoff Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, and Citizenship
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
32970	Michelle Marr	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
33065	Andrew MacKereth	Team inspector	Music
32350	Anne-Marie Latham	Team inspector	Physical education
15277	Chris Vidler	Team inspector	Business education
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Art and design, special educational needs, and English as an additional language
33173	Malcolm Doolin	Team inspector	History
3704	Kirby Haye	Team inspector	Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Anfield Community Comprehensive School is an effective school with many strengths. This is because it understands well its role and responsibilities within its local community. It gives satisfactory value for money. Nevertheless, the school has an inadequate sixth form.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The standards and achievement of students in the sixth form are too low.
- Weaknesses in the leadership and line management of the sixth form because the monitoring of teaching and learning, and overall evaluation of performance, are not sharp enough.
- Standards in national tests and examinations are not yet high enough.
- The good working relationships, ethos, and the pastoral care provided for pupils and students.
- The high expectations the school has for its pupils' and students' conduct, which results in their good attitudes and behaviour.
- Teaching strategies, and the use of assessment, to support fully effective, independent learning by pupils and students have yet to be fully developed across all departments.
- Aspects of the leadership and management of science, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT), and design and technology are unsatisfactory.
- Business education courses are a developing strength of the school.
- The work of the school's advanced skills teachers in their support of other colleagues.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Governance is unsatisfactory because not all statutory requirements are fulfilled.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. Action has been taken on all the previous issues. In particular, the school continues to place importance on the continued development of teaching methods designed to improve the effectiveness of pupils' learning further, especially in Years 7 to 11. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the sixth form. The governing body has not yet ensured all statutory requirements are met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E*	E*	E	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	E	E	

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

NOTE: A* or E* denotes performance in the highest or lowest 5 per cent nationally.

Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory, although **standards are below the national average**. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys, although by Year 9, girls attain slightly higher standards than boys in English. By the end of Year 9, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science is about a year below that normally expected. **Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is unsatisfactory**, and **standards are below average**. Standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are below average throughout the school.

The pupils' and students' attitudes to school are good and they behave well. The provision for **pupils' and students' personal development is good**. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. However, although there have been improvements since the previous inspection, **attendance remains unsatisfactory**. Attendance by pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, continues to be a problem for the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. This is because, although standards are below average, the achievement of the majority of pupils is satisfactory. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory** overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Whilst teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form, learning is unsatisfactory. **Curriculum provision is satisfactory** overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but is unsatisfactory in Years 12 and 13.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Whilst the school's **management is satisfactory overall**, the **leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher, supported by the leadership group, is good. However, whilst the governing body fulfils the majority of its roles well and effectively, **governance is unsatisfactory** because the governing body does not meet fully all its statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Through the questionnaire, and at the meeting, parents indicated their children like the school and, consequently, make good progress. Parents feel teachers are approachable and staff expect the pupils to work hard. Parents appreciate the support provided by the school and the commitment of staff to providing activities outside of lessons. They approve of the school's approach to ensuring all pupils are encouraged to take a full part in the life of the school. However, some serious concerns were expressed at the meeting relating to the proposed closure of the school, and the effect the uncertainty about this is having on the quality of education for their sons and daughters.

The pupils' questionnaire shows the majority of pupils feel trusted at the school. Most pupils indicated they are expected to work hard. In discussions with inspectors, pupils expressed appreciation of learning mentors and their good working relationships with teachers. They feel they are taught well and any bullying is effectively dealt with. However, pupils and students do not like the overall quality of the accommodation and the drab décor.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the standards attained and students' achievement in the sixth form.
- Improve the quality of leadership and line management in the sixth form to ensure the improved monitoring of teaching and learning and overall evaluation of performance.
- Raise standards in national tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11.
- Further develop teaching strategies to promote pupils' and students' independent learning skills, and raise the effectiveness of their learning.
- Make improved use of the assessment data available to provide for the individual needs of pupils and students in order that they may understand better how to improve.
- Ensure all subjects make effective use of the school's much improved ICT resources to support better pupils' and students' learning.
- Continue the work being undertaken to improve attendance, especially that in Years 10 and 11.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students, and religious education in the sixth form.
- Ensure the production and distribution of the required governors' annual report to parents.
- Ensure the required annual governors' meeting is held with parents.
- Report annually to parents on its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ANFIELD COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

The school's sixth form is smaller than average. The attainment of students on entry is below average. There are joint consortium arrangements with another local school.

OVERALL EVALUATION

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses in one or more areas of its activity for pupils over compulsory school age. The standards and achievement of students is not high enough. The sixth form is not cost effective and the curriculum is not well enough matched to the needs of all students. There are weaknesses in the leadership, management and monitoring of the sixth form.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- **The overall effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the sixth form are unsatisfactory.**
- Standards of attainment are too low in the majority of subjects, and students' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The development of sixth-form business education courses is a growing strength of the school.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning, through the leadership and line management of the sixth form, has not been sharp enough.
- The development and encouragement of students' skills as independent learners have not been good enough.

The school is currently facing a difficult time due to its pending closure in 2005, when it is proposed to amalgamate with another local school to form a new City Academy. The uncertainty the school, its parents and students face as a result of this proposed closure is a barrier to learning. This is because there are undetermined aspects in respect of its future development. For example, senior management and governors are uncertain as to their future planning for the sixth-form curriculum, and the potential range and nature of the courses it offers, in order to provide continuity for students.

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	Unsatisfactory in English literature. Students do not make enough progress in English because they are too reliant on teachers. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but students lack the research skills to develop their own ideas. Consequently, written work is often superficial and lacking depth. Overall, standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment at AS and A-level are well below national expectation, partly because students are allowed to start advanced level courses with inappropriate levels of prior attainment. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish very good working relationships with students. The marking of students' work and use of assessment data is inconsistent, however, and there are limited opportunities for independent learning.
Science	Satisfactory in biology. There was no chemistry or physics to inspect. The single student in Year 13 biology enjoys the subject. The new teacher is placing a good emphasis on developing research and independent study skills. Practical work in the past has been too

limited. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Business education

Very good. Students enjoy business education classes because the quality of the teaching is very good. Consequently, although standards are average, students learn and achieve very well. Business education courses are a developing strength of the school.

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

Satisfactory overall. As in the main school, the procedures for students' care, welfare and personal development are good, with some very good elements. Nevertheless, there are some health and safety aspects, which are unsatisfactory. Furthermore, there are some weaknesses in the academic monitoring of students through the use of assessment to help students improve their levels of attainment and achievement. The school's involvement of the students by seeking and acting on their views is unsatisfactory because there are no mechanisms through which students' views may be canvassed. There is no sixth-form committee and students are not part of the main school council. This limits students' opportunities for personal and citizenship development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The day-to-day management of the sixth form is satisfactory because there are sound organisational procedures. Consequently, teachers and students are well supported in their work by sixth-form management staff. However, the leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There have been recent changes in the leadership of the sixth form. Nevertheless, neither the head of sixth form nor the sixth-form line manager have been sharp enough in monitoring the performance of the sixth form. They have not properly held subject leaders to account for the performance of their subjects. The evaluation of sixth-form performance, and the taking of effective action, has not focused sharply enough on raising standards and achievement.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students show good levels of satisfaction overall with the sixth form. From the students' questionnaires, it is clear they feel supported by their teachers, who they see as accessible and helpful. They feel their teachers are expert in their subjects, and this supports them in their learning. They appreciate the friendly environment the school has to offer. However, there was some concern students are being accepted onto courses for which they are not entirely suited, or which do not fully suit their abilities and career plans. They would like better facilities for the sixth form. In addition, from discussion with students, there was some concern about their voice in the school because sixth-form students are not involved with the school council. Inspectors support the students' views. Overall, the majority of students are happy at the school, consider it well regarded in the community, and expressed disappointment at its pending closure.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Introduction and context of the school

1. Anfield Community Comprehensive School is an effective school with many strengths. This is because it well understands its role and responsibilities within its local community. Parents perceive and describe the school as being 'friendly', 'popular', 'supportive' and 'what it says on the badge', which is the Anfield Code "*Committed to achievement in the community*".

Examples of outstanding practice

The school's commitment to the local community and the pupils' personal development

The school's commitment to its community was exemplified in an excellent Year 11 assembly. Here, the teacher shared with and included the pupils in his fierce pride in Anfield as his local area. This was not only a spiritual message of the highest order, but also conveyed a firm moral viewpoint. The teacher was absolutely direct with the pupils in the way the school community had a responsibility to face squarely the social problems of the area. Not pulling any punches, such powerful messages are very well directed at raising the pupils' self-value and self-esteem. Anfield is a school facing challenging circumstances and is part of the national initiative to help and support such schools.

2. However, the school is currently facing a difficult and uncertain time due to its pending closure in 2005. It is proposed to amalgamate with another local school to form a new City Academy, which will be a new building on a new site. At the time of the inspection, the level of information available to the school concerning the closure proposals was sparse. This is a matter of serious concern for governors, senior management, staff and parents alike. The school has been over-subscribed, but for the first time in September 2003, numbers in Year 7, and in the sixth form, fell. Parents have stated this is because they are concerned about the continuity of their children's education. The uncertainty the school faces is a barrier to learning because there are undetermined aspects in respect of its future development. This uncertainty relates particularly to the future planning for the sixth-form curriculum.
3. Nevertheless, the school has an inadequate sixth form. This is principally because overall standards are not high enough and, although the attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is below average, their achievement is not good enough. Whilst the school has been looking to consolidate improvements in Years 7 to 11, it has allowed itself to take its eye off the sixth form. Consequently, the monitoring of teaching and learning, through the line management of the sixth form, has not been sharp enough.

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement¹ in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory, although standards of attainment² are below the national average. Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is unsatisfactory, and standards are below average.

4. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys, although by Year 9, girls attain slightly higher standards than boys in English. By the end of Year 9, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science is about a year below that normally expected. Standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are below average throughout the school.

¹ Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

² Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement by students in the sixth form are not good enough.
- Standards and achievement by pupils and students in business education courses are a developing strength of the school.
- Although pupils by Year 9 achieve very well compared with pupils in similar schools, standards in National Curriculum tests require improvement.
- The school helps pupils in Years 7 to 9 to make sound progress in the development of their literacy skills.
- Whilst the school does well by its lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, too few pupils gain higher A* or A passes in GCSE examinations.
- Insufficient, and inconsistent, use within departments is made of performance data to help the school set realistic targets for improvement.

Commentary

5. At the time of the inspection, no national data was available to compare the school's performance with other schools for the teacher assessments, tests and public examinations held in 2003. Comparisons are, therefore, made with 2002, the latest year for which such information is available.

Key Stage 3 (Pupils in Years 7 to 9)

6. Standards of attainment are below average for pupils by Year 9. Nevertheless, the school's trend for improvement since the previous inspection has risen steadily in line with the national trend. Although standards are well below average overall in English, mathematics and science in the National Curriculum tests, they have risen to be below average compared with the pupils' prior attainment³ at the end of Year 6. When compared with similar schools⁴, these results are well above average. Pupils achieved best in English, where secure progress had been made between Years 7 and 9 in the development of their literacy skills. This is because of the work undertaken with pupils, who arrive at the start of Year 7 with reading ages of two years or more below their chronological age.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.4 (29.9)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	31.3 (31.4)	34.7 (24.4)
science	29.9 (30.3)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 208 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was satisfactory in science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and in citizenship. Achievement was good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and in art. Attainment meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education, and is average in design and technology, history, geography, art and in music. Standards are below average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, modern foreign languages and in physical education.

³ Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

⁴ Results are also compared not only nationally, but with those obtained by students in similar schools; this includes those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

Key Stage 4 (Pupils in Years 10 and 11)

8. Although GCSE results overall in 2002 were well below average, these were the best the school had achieved since the previous inspection. Compared with similar schools, and on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment in Year 9, results were below average. However, in previous years, the school's results had been in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. Few pupils gain a higher A* or A grade, but the school does well in encouraging its lower-attaining pupils to gain a pass grade. Consequently, the proportion of pupils gaining an A* to G grade shows overall satisfactory progress from Years 9 to 11, and when their achievement is compared with pupils in similar schools.
9. The school's trend for improvement has been in line with the national trend, but took a sharp upturn between 2001 and 2002. Nevertheless, the school has not met the targets for improvement set for it by the local educational authority because, although these are challenging, they tend to be over-optimistic. Although the school has improved the quality of its performance data, its use of this information to set its own targets for improvement, and to raise pupils' achievement, is inconsistent between departments.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	19 (22)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	75 (74)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (88)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	25.5 (22.2)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 165 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

10. The work and lessons seen during the inspection show that pupils' achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. It is satisfactory in English, science, ICT, religious education, design and technology, history, music and in citizenship. Achievement is good in mathematics, geography, art and in physical education. It is very good in business education. Standards of attainment are average in history, art, music, physical education, citizenship, and in business education. They are below average in English, mathematics, ICT, design and technology, geography and in modern foreign languages. Attainment is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. However, standards are well below average in science.

Sixth form (Students in Years 12 and 13)

11. Standards in the sixth form are low and are well below average for both male and female students. Achievement is unsatisfactory, based on the students' prior attainment at GCSE in Year 11. For example, of the 13 courses offered to Year 13 students in 2002, students achieved better than expected in only three, and in a further three they equalled expectations. In the other seven, students underachieved. School data shows a continuation of this trend in 2003, where seven of the nine Year 13 students failed to reach their expected targets. This is the result of a failure in the leadership and line management of the sixth form. Insufficient attention has been paid to the monitoring of standards, teaching and learning in the sixth form.
12. In the four subjects inspected in depth during the inspection, achievement is good and standards are above average for the single biology class in Year 13. However, achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are well below average in the English and mathematics courses. In business education, achievement is good and standards are average. Business education is a developing strength of the school, and is the only course in which performance data shows students attaining consistently better than expected. This is important for the school, as

it would like to develop its expertise in such business and enterprise courses as part of its potential contribution to the new City Academy.

Pupils with special educational needs

13. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school make good progress overall. Pupils receive good levels of assistance in their classes from teaching and support staff, and by occasional withdrawal from lessons. There is an appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Suitable targets are defined in their individual education plans. They receive good, well-managed levels of support to meet their social, emotional and behavioural needs arising from their learning difficulties.

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

The **pupils' and students' attitudes to school are good and they behave well**. The provision for **pupils' and students' personal development is good**. The provision for **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good** overall. Although there have been improvements since the previous inspection, **attendance remains unsatisfactory**, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good efforts of the majority of parents and carers to ensure the attendance of their children.
- Pupils' and students' interest in school life and the range of activities provided are very good.
- The pupils' and students' freedom from bullying and other forms of harassment are good because the school deals effectively with all incidents.
- The pupils' and students' relationships with each other are very good.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' and students' conduct and works hard to achieve this; consequently, pupils' and students' conduct is good overall.
- The very good responsibility shown by pupils and students towards the school as a community.
- The school has a comprehensive system for monitoring and following-up pupil absence.
- Attendance overall is below average, but that of students in the sixth form is very good.
- The late arrival of pupils at school continues to be a problem, although pupils are generally punctual to lessons.

Commentary: Main School

14. The attitudes of pupils in Years 7 to 11 are good, as reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils take a great interest in school life and, through the school council, air their views well. Overall, responsibilities taken by the pupils, such as the school council, are satisfactory. The pupils are free from harassment and have the confidence to report any incidents. Although the pupils appear confident, they are passive rather than proactive learners in most lessons, and they are not yet confident, independent learners. However, personal relationships are very good within classes, and in and around the school. The pupils are always willing to help each other out and some of the teamwork, particularly in sport, is commendable. This is well displayed in the school's good promotion of good relationships, including racial harmony. The latter is currently being enhanced by the latest project, 'Kick Racism out of Football', in liaison with a local football club.
15. Behaviour is good. In some lessons where the content is stimulating, discipline is very good and behaviour is often very good. Although they are boisterous, the pupils show good discipline and humour under trying conditions in and around the school, at lesson changeover or break times. During the inspection, minimal graffiti and vandalism were seen and, generally, the school is a tidy place. Most pupils are very polite, opening doors ahead of you and asking if you are lost!
16. The overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities provided by the school, and embraced by the pupils, are good. Opportunities for the pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory, whilst the other three elements of moral, social and cultural (including multi-cultural) are good. Such values underpin the overall good attitudes, personal development and

good behaviour of the pupils, and the school's approach to these aspects clearly enhances the quality of education provided. Pupils' views of the school are well canvassed through Year 7 to 11 representatives on the school council. In discussions with inspectors, pupils expressed appreciation of learning mentors and their good working relationships with teachers. They feel they are taught well and any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils and students do not like the overall quality of the accommodation and the drab décor.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	10.2	School data :	0.9
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

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

17. The school has taken substantial action in responding to the findings of the previous inspection report. However, attendance by pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, continues to be a problem for the school. The reason for any pupil's absence is checked immediately at the beginning of each school session with telephone calls made to parents or carers. The school makes its expectations of regular attendance, and its concern about absence, clear to pupils and parents. It applies a comprehensive system of increasingly serious actions leading eventually to the involvement of the education welfare officer and the possibility of prosecution. The work of the home/school liaison officer, and the governors' attendance committee, are notable and effective features of this system.
18. The school has an effective system for recording and responding to the late arrival of pupils to school. Members of the teaching staff are very visible at the pupils' entrance to the school each morning. One of the administration staff records each pupil's late arrival in his/her school diary, and the names in the school's records. The home/school liaison officer works very hard in challenging the behaviour of these pupils, with the intention of changing their attitudes to lateness. Once in school, pupils' punctuality to lessons is satisfactory. Teaching staff are, however, inconsistent in the ways in which they respond to pupils arriving late for their lessons. Some require explanations from the pupils, reinforcing their expectations for punctuality, whilst others let lateness to lessons pass without comment.

Exclusions

19. Although the number of fixed-period exclusions is fairly high, at nearly 7 per cent, some pupils were repeatedly excluded for short terms. The school's reasons for exclusions are justified.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1165	80	7
4		
4		
1		
5		
8	3	
1	1	

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

Commentary: Sixth Form

20. Overall, students in the sixth form share the same good level of support for their personal development as pupils in the main school. However, they are not given a voice in, or representation on, the school council, and there is no other mechanism through which their views can be voiced adequately. Nevertheless, the attitudes and behaviour of students in Years 12 and 13 are good overall. The students show very good interest in school life and the range of activities provided. Some act as paired readers with pupils in the main school and help to check pupils' diaries. Many students take advantage of the course guidance given to them, including visits to universities and to potential employers. However, during discussions with inspectors, students mentioned there were few opportunities for them to take part in sporting activities. However, at present, the overall opportunities provided for them to be enterprising and take responsibility are barely satisfactory.
21. Attendance by students in the sixth form is very good. No sixth-form students have been excluded in the 12 months before the inspection. Students in the sixth form are eligible to receive an educational maintenance allowance. The school has a simple and effective system for recording students' attendance at lessons, which enables the authorisation of these payments to be made with confidence. The payment of this allowance makes a substantial contribution to ensuring the average attendance of the sixth-form students remains at over 97 per cent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Nevertheless, provision in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

22. This is because, although standards are below the national average, the achievement of the majority of pupils is satisfactory. The ethos of the school is good and it works hard to ensure its pupils are given the opportunity to take a full part in its life and work. Overall, pupils and parents express good levels of satisfaction with what the school has to offer. Nonetheless, there are serious weaknesses in the sixth form, principally because standards and achievement are too low. There are weaknesses in the leadership and line management of the sixth form, and concerns that it is not cost effective.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Whilst **teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form, learning is unsatisfactory**. Overall, **assessment is unsatisfactory** because too many pupils and students do not understand how they can improve in national test and examination courses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The gradual development of a common understanding within the school as to what constitutes effective learning by the pupils.
- The work of, and excellent example provided by, the school's advanced skills teachers.
- The on-going improvements in teaching approaches, as developed through the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- Teachers' expectations and challenge of pupils in Years 10 and 11, and especially in the sixth form, are not high enough.
- Pupils and students are not yet being given sufficient opportunity to develop their skills as independent learners.
- Pupils' and students' performance is recorded and reported termly to support target setting.
- Pupils and students are not clear about the quality of their work and what they have to do to improve.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent across the subjects, and marking does not always help pupils and students to improve.

- Assessment is not used consistently in planning to provide for the individual needs of pupils and students, particularly the most able in a class.

Commentary: Main School

23. Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited the school in November 2002, as part of the ‘Schools facing challenging circumstances’ initiative. They found some serious weaknesses because the quality of learning too often did not match the quality of teaching. Since then, the school has worked hard to develop a common understanding as to what constitutes effective learning by pupils. In this, it has succeeded best in Years 7 to 9. Here, the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has helped teachers to define better lesson objectives and undertake reviews of learning at the end of lessons. Consequently, teaching and learning are now good overall in these earlier years.
24. The improvements in teaching strategies are beginning to feed through into Years 10 and 11. However, teaching and learning in these year groups are only satisfactory overall because the use of assessment by teachers is still inconsistent across subjects and departments. Because of this, pupils do not always fully understand what they need to do to improve. Consequently, whilst teachers’ expectations and challenge of pupils are satisfactory, they are not so well developed as in Years 7 to 9. Furthermore, whilst pupils learn satisfactorily in lessons, their retention of that learning weakens as time goes by, and this affects their ability to retain knowledge for examination purposes. Teaching strategies to provide a greater focus on revision and the development of pupils’ understanding of their learning are insufficiently developed.
25. Teachers have successfully worked hard over recent years in their insistence on good standards of behaviour in lessons. Where the very good and excellent teaching is taking place, teachers build on pupils’ good attitudes to learning by taking more risks in their approach and strategies. The trust teachers place in pupils, to be responsible for their own learning, helps to make the quality of the pupils’ education more effective. There are examples of good practice within the school, particularly in the mathematics department. However, the sharing and implementation of such approaches, in order to raise standards and achievement, is an area for further development.

Examples of outstanding practice

The school’s use of advanced skills teachers to raise standards

The two advanced skills teachers within the mathematics department are having a major influence on the quality of teaching and learning. They provide excellent support for colleagues across all departments. They observe lessons, invite colleagues to observe them teach and inspire teachers to explore new teaching methods. Their own lessons are exciting and challenging for pupils of all abilities. They employ a wide and innovative range of strategies, which engage pupils in the learning process. As a result of their efforts, mathematics classroom and corridor displays are inspirational.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 141 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (3%)	26 (18%)	63 (45%)	39 (28%)	6 (4%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)

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

26. Whilst there was no significant difference between the proportions of satisfactory or better teaching between year groups, a higher percentage of good or better teaching was seen in Years 7, 9 and 10. Most of the excellent teaching was seen in mathematics, and reflected the work of the school’s advanced skills teachers. These teachers are very effective role-models in helping to develop the school’s understanding as to what constitutes effective learning. Other excellent teaching was seen in a Year 10 business education lesson, where challenge

through excellent questioning led to very high achievement and understanding on the part of the pupils. Excellence was also seen in the teaching of literacy skills to special educational needs pupils at the school's breakfast club.

Examples of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching and learning in GCSE business studies.

This outstanding lesson was given to 17 students in the second week of their Business Studies GCSE course. The young female teacher set very high demands upon her students and had planned a series of varied and interesting activities designed to extend and challenge newly emerging notions of what running a business is like. The response of the class was immediate and the rest of the lesson consisted of lively interactions between students as they collectively extended their understanding of the relative merits of different forms of business ownership. Throughout this process, the teacher remained in complete control, providing constant challenge to ill-supported analysis, yet at no time did she intimidate or check the enthusiasm of her students. She constantly encouraged them to use appropriate business terms and to support answers with reasoned analysis. The teacher made sure that gifted and talented students worked in different groups and had set extension work for them. By the end of the lesson, over half the group had started to tackle this higher-level work and all were able to tackle parts of GCSE questions. The 60-minute lesson appeared to be over in no time at all.

Breakfast club before school for pupils, in Years 7 to 10 that have a reading age of less than 8 years.

Led by a well-qualified teacher for the education of pupils with reading and literacy difficulties, and aided by many support staff, pupils volunteer to attend for up to three-quarters of an hour before school. After breakfast they work very hard on tasks that match, in an excellent way, their individual needs. This provision very well aids their achievements and progress in reading and literacy. After a meal at the start of the day, they are able to concentrate at a higher level than they are able to do so later in the day when many are getting tired. Many of the pupils do not have an adequate breakfast at home and have problems concentrating on their work in school. All the staff give freely of their own time and the pupils and parents are very appreciative of this excellent provision.

27. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory in science, religious education, music and physical education. They are good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art and in citizenship.
28. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory in English, science, ICT, religious education and in modern foreign languages. They are good in mathematics, geography, art, music, physical education and in citizenship. Teaching is good in design and technology and learning is satisfactory. There is very good teaching and learning overall in history and in business education.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs

29. Teachers and support staff analyse well the achievement of pupils, who have special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language. As a result of this effective support, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language learn and achieve well alongside their fellow pupils. Pupils, who are gifted or talented, achieve satisfactorily. However, their range of talents are not yet fully identified and their competencies are not being fully stretched.

The quality of assessment of pupils' work

30. The pupils' and students' performance is recorded centrally on a computer system, which is accessible to all teachers. Most teachers record the prior attainment of pupils and students in their class lists, but make only limited changes to teaching approaches as a result of assessment. Nevertheless, the impact of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 is gradually improving the quality of assessment and its use by teachers in these year groups. This has proved a successful part of the school's own improvement planning. Good records of pupils' performance are kept in English and mathematics to enable pupils' strengths and weaknesses to be analysed. Assessment is satisfactory in most other

subjects within this phase. Discussions with subject leaders, and pupils in Years 10 and 11, show insufficiently clear guidance is given to pupils so they know how to improve. Overall, pupils and students are not sufficiently clear about exam criteria or how well they are doing. Termly subject reports to parents provide information concerning pupils' and students' current grades and target grades, but subject-specific guidance is not always present. However, annual reports do provide parents with the required information.

The assessment of pupils with special educational needs

31. The school offers good levels of assessment and support from its teaching and support staff for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. This supports their good learning in class and by occasional withdrawal from lessons. However, assessment is not yet used sufficiently effectively to aid the learning of pupils identified as gifted or talented. For all pupils requiring special educational support, there is a good, well-applied policy for inclusion and equality of opportunity.

Commentary: Sixth Form

32. In the four sixth-form subjects inspected in depth, teaching and learning were satisfactory in mathematics and in biology. In English, teaching was satisfactory, but learning unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning were good in business education.
33. Teaching is satisfactory overall in the sixth form because teachers' command of their subject is sound, as is their planning, use of resources and encouragement of students. However, the development of a teaching and learning partnership, where teachers and students work together to gain knowledge and understanding, is a weakness. In Years 12 and 13, many teachers tend to instruct rather than teach. Consequently, students are insufficiently involved in the learning process, become more passive recipients of information and do not readily involve themselves in discussion or debate. Learning in the sixth form is, therefore, unsatisfactory. Overall, there was a lower percentage of good or better teaching in the sixth form than in most other year groups. Lessons seen in Year 13 reflected the lowest proportion of good or better teaching with fewer than a quarter being so judged.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but is unsatisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Provision for curriculum enrichment, particularly through extra-curricular activities, is good across the school. Overall, the quality of accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

34. In neither providing a religious education programme in the sixth form, nor offering a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students, does the school comply with statutory requirements. However, since the previous inspection, the non-compliance with National Curriculum requirements in design and technology, ICT and main school religious education has been rectified.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixth-form provision does not meet the needs of all post-16 students.
- The National Key Stage 3 strategy⁵ is firmly in place in the core subjects⁶, and is widening its application.

⁵ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

⁶ The National Curriculum core subjects are: English, mathematics and science. The National Curriculum foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern foreign languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of a locally agreed syllabus.

- The school's focus on improving standards and achievement has enhanced the teaching of the curriculum in most subjects.
- The 14 - 16 curriculum is meeting better the needs of pupils, particularly those of lower ability, who require alternative provision.
- ICT resources are good, having improved since the previous inspection, and most subjects now incorporate ICT into their teaching.
- There is inadequate accommodation in a significant minority of subjects.
- Several parts of the school are inaccessible to pupils with disabilities.

Commentary: Main School

35. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are offered a suitable range of subjects. However, the absence of drama does mean they miss the opportunity, which that subject provides to enhance literacy and communication skills. The school's professional development programme has taken as its priority the need to focus on the nature of teaching and learning. This has encouraged teachers to use successfully more pupil-centred learning in Years 7 to 9, and staff are starting to apply those skills to the teaching of GCSE courses. The implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has satisfactorily supported this training, and it is now being gradually extended as its strands in other subjects are developed and introduced. Literacy is well established as the predominant strand, whereas numeracy, though strong, is at present without a co-ordinator. More vocational courses are being introduced for pupils in Years 10 and 11, for whom alternatives to the academic curriculum would meet better their needs. Management has identified two groups of pupils for whom appropriate vocational courses, including some off-site instruction, have been provided.
36. The school's programme to develop the use of ICT within all subjects of the curriculum is not yet complete, but most subjects have managed to incorporate it formally into their area. The enhancement of learning through the use of ICT is particularly effective in English, mathematics and business education, but not sufficiently supported in science and modern foreign languages.

The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs

37. The curriculum for pupils and students with special educational needs is well organised and managed and the school caters well for these pupils. The pupils and students have clear targets in their individual education plans, which are known to all staff and shared with pupils. These targets are reviewed effectively each term with the appropriate involvement of parents, staff concerned with setting targets and outside agencies. The support these pupils and students receive from teachers, and support staff, is good. Consequently, assessments are used well to make relevant curriculum adaptations and modifications to promote access to learning and aid the pupils' good achievements. Resources are effectively used to support all pupils and students with special educational needs. Specialist teachers are well qualified and there are sufficiently well-qualified, and experienced, teaching and support staff to meet pupils' needs. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which takes account of pupils' and students' cultural backgrounds, diverse ethnic backgrounds, and special educational needs. It is starting to provide a satisfactory curriculum for pupils, who have particular gifts or talents. However, it has no means of access for pupils and students, who are disabled and, for example, need to use a wheelchair.

Curriculum enrichment

38. Enrichment activities are extensive and cover a very wide range of curriculum-related and broader interests. Good numbers of pupils participate, but these cannot be quantified, as registers are not kept. The school organises two residential visits for all pupils, in Year 8 and in Year 10, and gives them significant financial support. Individual members of staff organise additional visits and residential stays relating to sports, the arts, and outdoor activities of

interest, such as fishing. There is a good range of activities available at lunchtime and after school, although the extent to which these enhance the curriculum is not monitored. Visits are competently managed, but record keeping is not sufficiently rigorous. The additional benefits, which come from being a community college, are not yet fully developed. However, a community tutor is now in post to develop these aspects of the school's work.

The quality of the school's accommodation and resources for learning

39. Accommodation in music, history, physical education and art restrict effective teaching of these subjects. School buildings are maintained to a minimum level and the uncertainty of the future of the school has restricted development. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. ICT resources are good. The learning resource centre, containing a suite of computers and laptops, is used frequently by pupils and students to access the Internet for personal study during lunchtimes and after school. However, many books within the learning resource centre are out of date and there are too few to support the courses taught in school. Sufficient and qualified staff are present to teach all the subjects on offer. However, as a result of a reduction in school funds, and in accordance with recent government advice, some of those allocated for accommodation and resources have been re-allocated to maintain current staffing levels.

Commentary: Sixth Form

40. Owing to the small number of students entering post-16 education, the school has been unable to offer a complete range of subjects designed to meet the individual needs of all students. In science, for example, only biology is offered. The school management has negotiated satisfactory consortium arrangements with neighbouring schools, so that other courses, such as physics and chemistry, are available elsewhere. However, currently no sixth-form students are taking advantage of courses offered elsewhere in the consortium. The uncertainty surrounding the impending closure and replacement of the school is presently hindering recruitment and threatening to make the sixth form even less effective and viable. Areas such as business education, GNVQ and the teaching of key skills are nevertheless strong features.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for pupils' and students' care, welfare and personal development are good, with some very good elements. Nevertheless, overall arrangements for the pupils' and students' care, welfare and health and safety are unsatisfactory. This is because there are some health and safety aspects, which are unsatisfactory. These health and safety matters were drawn to the school's attention.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The extent to which each pupil or student has a good working relationship with one or more adults in the school is very good.
- The induction arrangements for pupils in Year 7 are very good.
- The child-protection support is very good.
- The procedures to ensure that the pupils and students work in a healthy and safe environment are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

41. Child-protection procedures are very good. The school's named and trained person has ensured that her deputy and all staff are well trained. Good liaison is maintained with the local social services and police. The several children, who are in care, are looked after well by the school.
42. The school has up-to-date risk assessments for most eventualities, a clearly written policy and a named health and safety person. However, there are currently some issues for the school within the design and technology department. In addition, there are some problems for the

physical education department due to a leaking roof in the gymnasium. Fire drills are held every term and all equipment is within test date. Escape routes are well marked and accessible. Portable electrical and gymnasium equipment are also regularly checked. The school utilises the local authority policy on computer and Internet safety.

43. All pupils and students are known well by form teachers and heads of departments, particularly those students with specific medical problems. Good use is made of outside professional help, such as the police, the school nurse, an educational psychologist and various therapists. The students and pupils appreciate the school's invaluable learning mentor facility and the breakfast club. Accident and medicine procedures are caring and efficient. Catering arrangements are satisfactory, but the school's cafeteria can get crowded at times.
44. Impartial guidance on further study or career opportunities is satisfactory. However, the quality of guidance relating to sixth-form courses is unsatisfactory. All students have access to personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons. From Year 9, these are increasingly aimed at raising pupils' awareness of future career opportunities. Careers interviews and work experience take place from Year 10 onwards. These are very popular and several pupils have been offered jobs based on the success of their work experience.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory whilst those with other schools and the community are good.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure parental satisfaction and deal with any concerns are good.
- The school's mechanisms for the transfer of pupils to and from the school are good.
- The management arrangements for shared or linked provision are good.
- Educational links with other schools and contribution to wider partnerships is good for the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.
- The communication to parents of information about the school is unsatisfactory, and governors have not fulfilled their statutory requirements in this respect.

Commentary: Main school

45. Overall, links with parents are satisfactory. Views expressed at the pre-inspection meeting, and on returned parental questionnaires, were very positive. However, a significant minority were not satisfied by the way the school seeks parents' views, and this was particularly related to the pending closure of the school in 2005. Whilst the inspection can agree with the parents' very positive comments, it cannot entirely corroborate the negative ones. Due to circumstances completely beyond the school's control, it has not always been possible to seek parents' views as comprehensively as governors and senior management would have desired. Nevertheless, inspectors find that the school's present procedures to ensure parental satisfaction, and to deal with any individual parental concerns and complaints, are good.
46. Information to parents is unsatisfactory because the school did not hold a governors' meeting for parents in 2002/3. This is in breach of statutory requirements. Otherwise, parents do receive informative reports on their children's academic progress and these comply with all statutory requirements. However, the school's newsletters are sent out only at the end of each term and parents state that they would like them more often. Consultation evenings, in which parents can talk with teachers, and Year 7 induction meetings, and for those entering the sixth form, are held regularly and are well attended. The parents contribute satisfactorily to their children's learning. Within school, many parents help by painting scenery and making costumes for shows, including the Christmas pantomime. At home, many parents help their children with reading, topics and projects. Most parents are appreciative of the two-way communication the home/school diaries offer.

47. The school has good, caring and efficient mechanisms for the transfer of students. These are enhanced by the overall good links with other schools and colleges. The school has good arrangements to work with, and support, trainee teachers from the local universities. Teachers take advantage of working with advanced skills teachers and beacon schools. Links within the local Anfield community are used well to support learning and the pupils' personal development. For example, local clergy take assemblies and local firms willingly supply work experience placements, arrange mock interviews, and contribute to enterprise presentations. The school makes good use of links with the local city learning centre to support its ICT work with pupils.

Commentary: Sixth form

48. The sixth form has satisfactory links with the community. There are sound consortium arrangements with another local school. Productive links are also maintained with local colleges and universities. There are a satisfactory number of career connections, night school classes, and links with training agencies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Whilst the school's **management is satisfactory overall**, the **leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher is good. However, **governance is unsatisfactory** because the governing body does not fully meet its statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in the monitoring of its performance and in taking action to raise standards and achievement.
- The headteacher has a strong sense of direction for the school.
- The leadership group works well and co-operatively on school improvement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Leadership and management in modern foreign languages, science, and design and technology are unsatisfactory. Leadership in ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Line management systems to evaluate performance and review the work of curriculum areas are not yet sharp enough.
- Governors have not ensured they fully meet their statutory obligations.

Commentary: Leadership and management in the main school

49. The leadership of the headteacher is good because he is principled and has a well-established, clear sense of direction for the school. The leadership group of senior staff has a clear sense of purpose, knows the school well and understands how it should develop in order to meet the needs of its pupils. The leadership team is respected and has the capacity to effect change. There are satisfactory priorities for improvement. These are expressed soundly in the school development plan, and most are being implemented successfully in order to raise standards and further establish a productive climate for learning. There are some weaknesses in leadership at departmental level, which have yet to be resolved. However, there are examples of effective teamwork among staff within and across departments.
50. The management of the school is satisfactory. There are systems in place for the collection and analysis of performance data, but it is not yet used consistently to bring about improvement across the whole school. Line management systems to review the work of curriculum areas are not yet sharp enough and this results in some inconsistencies in the quality of education provided. The school is committed to staff development and there are effective induction procedures in place for new staff.
51. The governing body performs most of its functions well. However, it fails to fulfil some of its statutory duties so must be judged unsatisfactory. In the past year, an annual report to parents was not circulated and the required meeting held. A daily act of collective worship is not held for all pupils and students, and religious education is not provided in the sixth form. Nevertheless, the governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and

weaknesses and plays an active role in shaping the direction of the school. Governors are well aware of the impact of the forthcoming closure of the school and the opening of a new City Academy. Governors keep a careful watch on the progress of initiatives for improvement and are active in holding the school to account. They understand their role well and have a businesslike relationship with senior staff in leading the school.

Commentary: Leadership and management in the sixth form

52. The day-to-day management of the sixth form is satisfactory. There are sound organisational procedures, and teachers and students are well supported in their work by sixth-form management staff. However, the leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There have been recent changes in the leadership of the sixth form. Nevertheless, neither the head of sixth form nor the sixth-form line manager have been sharp enough in monitoring the performance of the sixth form. They have not properly held subject leaders to account for the performance of their subjects. The evaluation of sixth-form performance, and the taking of effective action, has not been focused sharply enough on raising standards and achievement.
53. Parents and students agree the sixth form plays a valuable role in providing continuing education for 16- to 19-year olds within the local community. Indeed, some sixth-form students, for example in art, had returned to Anfield sixth form having left to follow courses at other schools and colleges. The school has a good record over the past decade in encouraging and enabling many of its sixth-form students to go on to local universities. However, the proposed school closure in 2005 has led to uncertainty on the part of management and governors as to the development of the sixth form. Recent minutes of the school’s leadership group meetings record concern about, and potential planning for, the future direction of the sixth form. However, the latest draft action plan relating to the sixth form does not contain any targets to resolve identified areas of underachievement in Years 12 and 13. This reflects the unsatisfactory leadership of the sixth form.

The management of special educational needs

54. The management of pupils and students with special educational needs is effectively performed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. There is a good team approach amongst staff. Funding for special educational needs is used prudently and well. Relevant training suitably supports staff working with pupils and students, who have special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator is developing well the monitoring and evaluation of the school’s work and teaching of special educational needs pupils and students. In this, he is well assisted by departmental representatives across the school. However, the governing body is, at present, neither meeting its statutory requirements to report annually to parents on the implementation of the policy for pupils with special educational needs, nor indicating its arrangements for the disabled. The newly appointed governor for special educational needs has not yet been up-dated on the department’s current work.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,958,888	Balance from previous year	-80,287
Total expenditure	4,017,453	Balance carried forward to the next	167,565
Expenditure per pupil	3530		

55. There are efficient and effective systems in place for the management of finance. Regular updates on the school’s financial position are reported to governors, and departmental spending is monitored closely. Recommendations from the recent auditors’ report have been implemented. Financial planning is based on best value principles and the school provides satisfactory value for money. However, the sixth form is not cost effective in financial terms.

There is some concern as to the number of teachers required to staff the current sixth-form courses. In effect, the main school is subsidising the sixth form in terms of staffing. This has implications for the school, particularly relating to the raising of pupils' standards in examinations by Year 11.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL'S ENHANCED PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SEVERE AND COMPLEX SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Provision for pupils with severe and complex specific learning difficulties is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good recognition of needs of these pupils; all have statements.
- Good assessment using standardised reading and spelling tests.
- Good inclusion and support in class with occasional withdrawal from lessons.
- Good support from teachers, who have specialist qualifications matched to the pupils' needs.

Commentary

56. The local education authority (LEA) decides upon the placement of the pupils, usually through the review process at the end of primary schooling. Funding for up to 20 pupils is devolved from the LEA to the school. The pupils, who attend, have a range of severe and complex learning difficulties. These include a failure to make progress in school usually due to language difficulties, emotional and organisational difficulties and a specific or moderate learning difficulty. Using well their assessment of the pupils' needs, teachers and support staff aid the good progress of the identified pupils with tasks clearly matched to the pupils' discerned needs. This, together with the overall good quality of teaching they receive, supports well the good achievement and learning of the pupils.
57. The good leadership and management of the special educational needs department, and thorough assessment of needs, enables all pupils, on most occasions, to have opportunities to work alongside those in the main school. Here they succeed well. This is due to the very good support, which is given to help them to re-build their often fragile self-esteem and self-image. Good programmes of support and intervention are designed around their needs with the close involvement of parents and pupils. When the need arises, they are given help individually or in small groups. After a period of settling into school, many achieve standards in subjects, which are not totally dependent on their use of literacy, at levels equivalent to the rest of the class. This was seen in a very good art and design Year 7 lesson. Using colour imaginatively, the pupils were able to produce very successfully a paper-cut design based on the work of Henri Matisse. A particular feature of this lesson was the very good attention the teacher gave to the continued development of their literacy skills. Here, the pupils achieved very well with both their practical designs and their understanding of words such as horizontal, complementary, overlap and over-hang. Pupils behave well, being appreciative of the help they receive and try their best. They have a clear recognition of being full members of the school.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 helps pupils to make early improvements in their literacy skills.
- Progress in Years 10 and 11 is not as marked, but higher-ability pupils do well in English literature.
- Pupils lack confidence in their writing because they do not have enough chances to talk through their ideas in class.
- Assessment and marking are supportive and regular, but pupils are not always clear what to do to improve.
- Working relationships and the leadership of a department recovering from a difficult year are good.

Commentary

58. Pupils are below the national average by the end of Year 9, but they achieve well from a very low base of literacy. Compared with pupils in similar schools, they do very well and their progress measured against prior attainment is satisfactory. Considering the preponderance of boys in most classes, the improvement is good. The main reason is because all English teachers have used the structure provided by the National Literacy Strategy to plan lessons, which have pace and interest. The developing use of ICT in the classrooms, such as whiteboards, motivates pupils and helps them to focus on the key points. Writing is lively and often neat, but rarely extensive. There are examples of poems in Year 9, reflecting the horror of war, written with sensitivity and good understanding of rhyme and structure. One very good lesson showed really good rapport between the teacher and the whole class. It was brisk and pupils felt involved and were stimulated by praise such as “*You used your ability to skim to find that, well done!*”
59. Teaching is equally lively in Years 10 and 11, but pupils do not have enough chances to discuss their own writing. Questions by teachers are often restricting and the resulting answers are brief. Though witty and perceptive, pupils lack the confidence to express themselves in longer pieces of writing because their grasp of vocabulary is very limited. They have little practice at exploring different ideas in discussion with others. Attendance in these year groups is erratic and adversely affects the results at GCSE, which are below average. Pupils do better when writing about literature or media issues. This is because they have a clearly defined task and the teachers provide helpful guidance on writing. Left to their own devices, many pupils struggle. A literature lesson showed pupils have a good understanding of how characters develop during a play, such as *An Inspector Calls*, and they gave convincing, if rather brief, arguments for the unusual ending. The lack of drama in all classes reduces the opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills through role-play and other challenging activities.
60. Teachers mark regularly and their comments are supportive. However, the targets they set in books emphasise accuracy rather than style or how to improve content. The careful study by the department of strengths and weaknesses in test results at the end of Year 9 has led to a better focus on extending writing in Years 7 to 9. This is now being applied in later year groups, but, as yet, the impact does not show. Pupils themselves have little idea what a level⁷ or grade means and they cannot articulate how they might improve their levels.

⁷ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7, then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

61. The department is well led. After several recent staff changes there is now a good sense of purpose and direction. Improvement since the previous inspection is starting to take effect, but standards remain below average. Management is sound with some good formal and informal systems of communication. The good relationships at all levels contribute to the lively atmosphere in many lessons. Pupils are well integrated into classes, discipline is generally good, and boys are doing as well as the girls in most lessons. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs, especially in Years 7 to 9. They make good gains in their reading ability and spelling accuracy because the groups are small and they receive careful individual support. The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully involved in lessons and get on well with others.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Standards are well below average when pupils enter the school, but they improve as they get older because of the good implementation of aspects of the National Literacy Strategy in many subjects. Most teachers make close reference to subject keywords in their lessons and reinforce them with discussion. An example of this occurred in a mathematics lesson where the pupils read about and discussed 'intercepts' and 'gradients' with understanding. There is good provision for literacy in geography especially, influenced by a primary-trained teacher, who is spreading effective practice within the department. Pupils are taught how to construct sentences and use a wider vocabulary in their written work. Teachers of ICT encourage pupils to think about new ideas and the language used when they look up topics on the Internet. There is a new literacy co-ordinator, who has produced a good outline action plan to try to establish where good practice occurs in order to disseminate ideas more widely across the school. The major area of weakness is the lack of extended writing throughout Years 7 to 11 because teachers do not allow pupils the scope to think enough for themselves.

Modern foreign languages

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Attainment at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE is below average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, but pupils lack challenge and opportunities to participate in their own learning.
- Despite good progress in resolving the weaknesses in the department, leadership and management remain, at present, unsatisfactory.
- Pupils have very few opportunities to support their learning in modern foreign languages through the use of ICT.

Commentary

63. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below average, and in GCSE French were very low at grades A* to C. However, there has been considerable improvement in 2003. Attainment in GCSE Spanish has fluctuated. In 2002, it was almost in line with national averages at A* to C, but has dropped in 2003, although every student in the small number of entries gained a grade. This is reflected in the attainment in the work seen in all year groups during the inspection, which is below average. Given the low attainment on entry, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, owing to a lack of challenge in the opportunities provided.
64. The department has a team of well-qualified specialists, who are effective teachers. Teaching is good overall, and many examples of good practice emerged in lessons, particularly in the planning, the variety of activities practising different skills, and in the use of time. However, there were few examples, either in lessons or in the work in exercise books, of activities, which stretched pupils' capabilities, especially in GCSE revision. In other instances, some of the activities were teacher-led and pupils became passive recipients. Opportunities were lost for them to be actively involved in providing more individual or group input into their learning,

thus, enhancing their motivation and interest. Teachers' and pupils' expectations are not high enough. Teachers do not sufficiently encourage pupils to be more independent and take more responsibility for their learning. Leadership and management of the department have yet to put into place sharper and more rigorously detailed policies, which identify and disseminate good practice. Nevertheless, good progress has been made in strengthening the direction of the department, but this has still to prove itself in more effective monitoring and evaluation.

65. Marking is frequent, but inconsistent. There is little feedback on work submitted in Years 7 to 9, apart from single-word comments, and little agreement on awarding grades and giving constructive advice on improvement in Years 10 and 11. Tighter control and co-ordination of assessments are pending, but currently underdeveloped, so teachers and pupils do not always have a clear idea of attainment and progress. The use of assessment data to inform and enhance the tracking of pupil progress and target setting is present, but rudimentary. Many improvements are in place, particularly the revised schemes of work, but the benefits of the majority have not yet had time to work through. Because the department does not have regular access to computer facilities, the teaching of ICT through modern foreign languages is infrequent and ad hoc, and, therefore, unsatisfactory.
66. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and the design and use of teaching materials has improved. There are still many weaknesses in leadership and management, but there is consistent improvement and firmer direction. There are no sixth-form courses in modern foreign languages.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership provided by the head of department.
- The effective teaching by advanced skills teachers is raising standards.
- Excellent classroom and corridor displays inspire and motivate pupils.
- Very good working relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment data to influence lesson planning.
- There is a lack of strategies to support the wide range of abilities in most classes.

Commentary

67. Standards attained in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were well below the national average, although above the average when compared with similar schools. In 2003, there was a marked improvement in the number of pupils obtaining Level 6 and above, with the percentage being the best yet recorded by the school. Boys and girls achieve equally well and there has been a marked improvement in performance since the previous inspection.
68. During the inspection, it was apparent that pupils are achieving well when comparisons are made with pupils having similar prior attainment levels. This is a reflection of good teaching and the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy within the department. Pupils are set work, which is suited to their needs, an example being the work done in a Year 8 lower-band group on probability. This class contained a high proportion of pupils with special education needs, who made real progress in the understanding of probability functions.
69. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also achieve well when prior attainment levels are taken into account. In 2003, the percentage of pupils obtaining a grade C or above was double that of 2002, when standards were well below the national average. This improvement reflects the strong focus, which has been placed on raising attainment and the impact of good teaching throughout the department. The policy of entering some pupils for examination in Year 10 and also entering pupils for statistics is proving to be very effective. A significant number of pupils in Year 11 have already achieved success at GCSE level and are now being challenged to succeed at the higher level.

70. Teaching throughout the department is good. Only one lesson observed was less than satisfactory and the majority were good, very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned, and teachers have high expectations of the pupils. Teachers demonstrate good classroom management skills, as a result of which pupils behave well and acquire new skills and knowledge. A range of effective teaching strategies is used and teachers make good use of ICT in their teaching. Excellent classroom and corridor displays raise the spirits and contribute to effective learning. Teachers make satisfactory use of the individual education plans, which are provided for pupils with special educational needs, and good practice exists in the use of support staff.
71. Marking of pupils' work is regular, and constructive feedback to help improve future performance is usually provided. Detailed analysis of pupil performance to take account of prior attainment has been established. However, the use of this data has not been fully integrated into teacher planning. Consequently, the department does not sufficiently well provide for individual needs in classes where there is a large spread of ability levels. Nevertheless, the majority of pupils are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and contribute well to class discussion and questioning. Working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour.
72. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department recognises issues, which need to be resolved, and leads a team of well-qualified and talented teachers. Issues raised in the previous inspection report have been satisfactorily dealt with and statutory National Curriculum requirements are now met. The departmental handbook is detailed and helpful, containing policies and effective guidance for good teaching. The appointment of two advanced skills teachers has enabled the department to improve teaching practices and is bringing about a real improvement in standards. The accommodation for the teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and the department is adequately resourced with regard to books, materials and equipment. Considerable progress has been made in the use of ICT and all classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, which are being fully utilised.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. The mathematics department provides good guidance for colleagues in other departments and has provided in-service training as part of the whole-school development in numeracy. All members of the teaching staff have been provided with detailed guidelines on the National Numeracy Strategy and most subject departments have implemented their own policies. Pupils are applying their numeracy skills in most subject areas. For example, in home economics, pupils satisfactorily weigh ingredients, shape items, use cooking times and calculate percentages of waste. In music, pupils describe note values and make clear links between mathematics and music.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 were well below the national average, but were above similar schools in 2002.
- A significant number of single award pupils, in particular, are poorly motivated towards science.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average, but are well above those in similar schools.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and often good, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has not been effectively implemented across the department.
- Assessment information is not used effectively.

- The curriculum provision is unsatisfactory and schemes of work are insufficiently detailed.

Commentary

74. Standards in the GCSE examinations were well below the national average in 2002, but were above similar schools. Pupils taking double award science performed better than in most of their other subjects. However, pupils taking single award science performed significantly worse than the national average, and against all other subjects taken at the same time. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now above those of similar schools. Standards seen during the inspection were well below average, but achievement in Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory overall. However, whilst achievement in examinations is above similar schools, it is still unsatisfactory for a significant minority of pupils by Year 11. Gifted or talented pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
75. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average in 2002, but have improved since the previous inspection and were well above those in similar schools. However, expected progress was below that, which is expected from the same pupils, taking into account their attainment at the end of Year 6. Standards seen during the inspection were below average. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Gifted or talented pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
76. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but is more effective in Years 7 to 9 where approximately half the lessons seen were good or better. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is less effective and there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory and, where the teaching is good, pupils show greater enthusiasm and motivation and make good progress. In good lessons, learning objectives are made clear at the outset and are reviewed at the end of the lesson. Teachers have high expectations and use a variety of activities well matched to pupils' needs. The lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, which is sustained with clear and demanding time-scales. Attention is paid to developing pupils' literacy skills with a good emphasis on key words. Effective introductions to lessons are used, which link back to work in the previous lesson. Good use is made of homework to extend and challenge the pupils.
77. Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, the range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow and opportunities are missed to challenge the pupils in terms of the level and pace of work. There is insufficient use of ICT and too little open investigative work. A significant number of pupils in the GCSE single award course are not motivated by the curriculum and the teaching approaches used. In unsatisfactory lessons, pupils make too little progress and achievement is unsatisfactory. The lessons are not well planned or structured. Teacher exposition is sometimes over-long and concentrates on low-level work. The teachers' expectations are too low. Work is not well matched to pupils' needs. Teacher explanations are not always sufficiently clear and procedures not clearly demonstrated. Inadequate use is made of the data to track pupils' progress. No targets are set on a year-by-year basis in Years 7 to 9. Marking does not always indicate what pupils need to do to improve.
78. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has not been implemented effectively across the whole department. Insufficient attention has been paid to tackling underachievement in the single award course. There is inadequate attention to the 'Ideas and Evidence' aspect of the curriculum. Some activities show insufficient progression from earlier work. Schemes of work give insufficient detail of different learning activities and do not give clear guidance about expected levels of work for different ability groups.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good improvement in ICT resources throughout the school since the previous inspection is beginning to support learning effectively.
- Good teaching and learning takes place in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils generally achieve at least as well as those in similar schools, and make satisfactory progress, despite standards being below average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- The leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Management of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- There is inconsistent use of assessment to diagnose pupils' strengths and to help them recognise and overcome their weaknesses.
- Assessment is not used consistently within lessons to enable all pupils to learn effectively.

Commentary

79. Good strategic guidance from senior management has contributed to sound ICT development throughout the curriculum, which is beginning to support pupils' learning. The creation of a school Intranet system provides useful information about courses to help teachers and pupils. The school web site is clearly designed to provide information for parents about the use of ICT in school.
80. Implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, to improve standards in Years 7 to 9, is having a positive impact through good teaching and learning in this phase. Where teaching is good, high standards are expected and all pupils are fully involved in identifying good practice during the demonstration of exemplar materials. Good planning ensures lessons are fast-moving and, consequently, the majority of pupils learn new skills and how to use them to solve the problems set. Challenge in lessons for the most able is at an early stage of development, although some extension activities are provided.
81. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Statutory requirements are now met and all pupils throughout the school now have specialist lessons in ICT. Most pupils' work demonstrates the display of information in a variety of ways using word processors and presentation software. Completed documents and slide shows from all Year 7 pupils demonstrate a good range of effects and an increasing awareness of audience. Spreadsheets and database projects are built into yearly planning, but as yet do not challenge pupils' thinking sufficiently. There are too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate and then modify their finished products.
82. Pupils enter the school with below average knowledge and experience in ICT, but, by the end of Year 9, are making satisfactory progress. Standards, although below national averages at the end of Year 9, are improving. Achievement is satisfactory because of the improved curriculum and teaching. Resources for learning have improved significantly, particularly the number of computers, which means pupils do not have to share. Interactive whiteboards are used successfully in ICT classrooms to present new skills and ideas. Analysis of pupils' work shows there is inconsistency in marking and pupils are not sure what to do to improve. Pupils' prior knowledge and experience of using computers is not consistently taken into account in teachers' lesson planning.
83. Since the previous inspection, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now offered a wider range of vocational-based courses in ICT. These are planned well in order to provide pupils with opportunities to achieve results in line with national standards. However, pupils' previous skills and knowledge are not consolidated and built upon due to the lack of continuity in planning between Years 9 and 10. Not enough use is made of day-to-day assessment of pupils' work to

set targets for improvement. Too many pupils fail to complete coursework due to poor attendance and not meeting deadlines for assessment.

84. The leadership of the subject is currently split between Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11. This is unsatisfactory because the delegation of tasks and responsibilities is unevenly distributed. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure high standards are always set and policies are implemented consistently. Transition from Year 9 to 10 is not co-ordinated to ensure improved standards are maintained. However, management of courses in Years 10 and 11 is now organised efficiently to ensure coursework deadlines are met in the future.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. The number of computers available for use within the school is in line with national targets. Interactive whiteboards are present in about a third of all classrooms and teachers are starting to use them to support the teaching of their subject. However, at present, this mainly comprises of the use of the whiteboard as a projector, but some good practice was seen using the Internet and presentation software. In mathematics, the use of ICT is embraced by all staff and is effectively supporting pupils' learning. Currently, a rigorous system for monitoring the use of ICT within subjects by teachers, and how this affects learning, is not present. Assessment of pupils' ICT competence within subjects is limited. Competence in ICT is still underdeveloped throughout the school because pupils' skills are not regularly used in all subjects.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good.
- Results are still below average, but standards are rising.
- Leadership and management are good and effective monitoring is in place.
- Accommodation is inadequate, but displays are excellent.
- Detailed formative comments in teachers' marking of pupils' work are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

86. Although results by Years 9 and 11 are still below national averages, there is clear evidence of satisfactory progress and standards are improving. The subject is very popular in Years 10 and 11, reflecting pupils' interest and enjoyment based on the quality of teaching and the teachers' enthusiasm. However, although an AS level group ran in Year 12 last year, no students have opted for history in either Year 12 or 13 in the current year. Nevertheless, overall there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
87. Teaching is good because teachers have high aspirations for their pupils, who are expected to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers provide challenging opportunities, using a variety of activities. They engage pupils in paired and group activities, as well as individual work, which results in some impressive work, orally, diagrammatically and in writing. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils used their knowledge of the Treaty of Versailles well to present the main issues from the treaty. Another class linked cause and effect skilfully to relate the treaty to conditions in post-war Germany. All lessons observed included clear aims presented at the start and a sound review at the end to test they had been achieved. Pupils responded positively to teachers and actively participated in and enjoyed the lessons. Teachers use various strategies to combat low literacy levels. These include subject specific

key words, reinforcement of the importance of completing full sentences, the use of capital letters and providing guidance to help the pupils structure their work.

88. The new head of department shows good leadership and management skills, and has properly dealt with issues from the previous inspection. Together with a very supportive team of teachers, strategies have been put in place to raise pupils' attainment. The syllabus for Years 7 to 9 is now more relevant, whilst the course in Years 10 and 11 now includes work to meet better the needs of all pupils. Girls have achieved well in history and strategies to raise boys' achievement have proved effective. There are well-prepared differentiated materials and tasks for pupils with special educational needs. Sound monitoring is in place, including lesson observations, marking checks and book sampling. Marking is conscientious, but lacks specific comments to help pupils develop their work. Homework is set regularly and is planned to meet the pupils' learning needs.
89. Accommodation is inadequate because the teaching rooms are in three different areas of the school, two being mobile classrooms. However, all rooms are welcoming with excellent displays. Resources are adequate, well produced and well used, although the accommodation makes sharing difficult. One room has an interactive whiteboard, but use of ICT is limited and underdeveloped. Resources in the learning resource centre are inadequate to meet the needs of all pupils or to develop independent learning. Extension and visit opportunities are provided, including to the battlefields of Belgium.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have led to very good improvement overall in the subject.
- GCSE examination results are not yet good enough.
- Good teaching where lessons are carefully structured makes use of a wide range of resources and motivates pupils to achieve well.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, think for themselves and work independently.
- ICT is used well to support learning.

Commentary

90. In teachers' assessments in 2002 and 2003, pupils' standards were average at the end of Year 9. However, this represents good achievement for pupils, whose standards were well below average when they entered the school in Year 7. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers structure their lessons well and pupils work through a variety of activities at a brisk pace, which increases their learning. Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards and computers to display attractive resources, which engage pupils' interest. For example, photographs, interactive diagrams, and even volcanic eruptions set to music, enhance pupils' understanding of volcanoes, earthquakes and plate tectonics. Pupils have access to a good range of geographical information on the school Intranet, including an area entitled 'Country of the month', which helps their understanding of global citizenship.
91. Pupils' performance in the 2002 GCSE examinations was below average. School data for 2003 indicates that the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C and A* to G shows an improvement on the previous year. In work seen during the inspection, achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. This is because lessons are tightly focused on exam requirements to improve pupils' chances of success. Literacy is taught well and boys and girls can select written information and use it effectively. Pupils in Year 10 have a good understanding of the links between physical and human geography, for example, in fold mountain regions. In Year 11, all pupils manipulate and interpret data well in order to construct and describe population pyramids. Most pupils can use the technical vocabulary of the subject with confidence. However, pupils have limited opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills by

working in pairs and groups. The use of activities, which encourage pupils to think for themselves and learn independently, is an area, which is underdeveloped.

92. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, and the department has the capacity and imagination to raise the profile of geography within the school and improve standards further. The leadership and management of the department are now good and have made a major contribution to recent improvements in pupils' achievement. Many areas of the geography curriculum have been revised. For example, pupils' learning has been enhanced by the introduction of new schemes of work, and creative approaches to web-based fieldwork. The collaborative working of a team of committed teachers has ensured that the standard of teaching is good, and is a strength of the department. Classroom assistants give constructive help to pupils with special educational needs, which ensures they make good progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good, creating a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers have clear aims and prepare thoroughly and sensitively for lessons.
- Work is marked regularly, but not always used to review the suitability of the work set.
- Display work is stimulating, attractive and supportive of pupils' learning.
- There is only limited use of information and communication technology within the subject.
- Pupils' low level of knowledge and understanding when starting the subject in Year 7.
- Teachers focus on raising the standard of the class as a whole, but not on the needs of individual pupils.

Commentary

93. Although standards in religious education are below average, pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve satisfactorily from the low levels of attainment they show at the start of Year 7. This is because teaching is sound and enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in their learning. Leadership is good and has been particularly effective in managing the introduction of the new locally agreed syllabus. Pupils respond well to this and enjoy activities such as comparing Christian and Hindu creation stories and discussing the morality of issues, which affect their daily lives. Pupils have sound opportunities to study Christianity and the major world faiths, as well as a wide range of contemporary social and moral issues.
94. The sensitive nature of the teaching was seen, for example, in one lower-band Year 10 class. Here, pupils were given cards describing situations they might come across and were asked to consider whether the actions proposed were 'moral' or 'immoral'. Class discussion enabled them to work effectively in pairs and advise their partner as to what action to take. Good support was given by the teacher to enable written work through which pupils gained an insight into the consequences of socially unacceptable behaviour.
95. Homework is set regularly, and satisfactorily supports learning because it is generally completed conscientiously. Nonetheless, the nature of the homework set does not always extend pupils, who are more able. In lower-ability classes, because of below average literacy skills, pupils sometimes find the emphasis on written work difficult for them. However, teachers use display work positively as a visual aid in lessons, and to create a positive working environment.
96. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils now study the GCSE short course. In 2003, just over 60 per cent of Year 11 pupils took the examination. There were no higher A* or A passes, and only just over a quarter of those entered gained an A* to C pass. The standards attained by pupils in GCSE examinations represents below average attainment, although evidence from the inspection shows satisfactory achievement overall. However, achievement, especially for

upper-band pupils, is affected because the teaching time for the subject is limited, and below recommendations.

97. Religious education is not taught in the sixth form and, consequently, the school is not meeting statutory requirements. However, a number of students are working towards re-sitting the GCSE course. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall because of the very recent introduction of a new syllabus, the relocation of the department and significant staffing changes. Nevertheless, the use of assessment to help respond to individual pupils' needs is not yet sharp enough and the department does not yet make full or effective use of information and communication technology to support learning.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and is a main strength of the department.
- Results in GCSE examinations are below average.
- The management of the department as a whole is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment, as a means of judging achievement from year-to-year, is insufficiently developed.

Commentary

98. At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is average overall across the range of activities undertaken in design and technology. This represents good achievement over time from a below average level of attainment on entry, and marked improvement upon the level of attainment reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' progress is aided by their good behaviour and by good-quality teaching. In lessons, a good working atmosphere is generated with high levels of interest and good concentration. The teaching is well planned and sensitive to the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and those with a special talent for the subject are able to make good use of their gifts. There is no significant difference between the attainment and progress of boys and girls at this stage.
99. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make satisfactory progress, but fail to match the good level of achievement seen in the earlier years, and attainment is below average in work seen and in GCSE examination results. There is, however, variation in attainment between the five different course options. Work in graphics and textiles is showing strong development in work seen and some pupils have gained high grades in examinations. The quality of teaching at this stage remains good. Projects are imaginatively planned with appropriate resources. Homework is set regularly, is well related to ongoing work and is carefully monitored. However, the quality of learning does not reflect fully the good quality of the teaching. Although behaviour in lessons is mainly good, concentration is less intense than in Years 7 to 9. Learning is adversely affected, in some cases, by irregular attendance, which impairs continuity and depresses overall standards.
100. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and detailed. Good use is made of target setting and the progress of individual pupils is carefully monitored and recorded. As a means of judging the comparative work over time, however, there is underdevelopment in the analysis of progress to help improve further standards and teaching.
101. There are strengths in the management of the department. Management is no longer a cause for serious concern, as reported in the departmental review two years ago. Other appointments have introduced young and enthusiastic staff, keen to work together in forging a unified and successful faculty. A high level of commitment is evident and there are effective

working relationships between staff. Very good use is made of display as a learning resource and as a source of aesthetic pleasure. A weakness in the management, however, is the failure to overcome the problems deriving from the separation of the two main areas, craft design and technology, and food and textiles. These are located at different extremities of the school, creating difficulties in effective communication. Recent new appointments in the management of each area have improved communications, but the situation remains unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils across the school is good and from well below average standards on entry, pupils attain average standards overall.
- The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good and sometimes very good.
- There are good procedures for assessment and its use to aid the learning and achievements of the pupils.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to sketchbooks.
- There is a good use of ICT.

Commentary

102. From Year 7 onwards, after their limited experience of art and design and their below average standards, pupils quickly learn and achieve well. They make good progress attaining average standards across the school overall. The very good leadership and management by the head of the subject enables pupils to have a good scheme of work, which holds their interest, well meets their needs and aids their good progress as they move across the school. The GCSE validated examination results in 2002 were average. However, in the yet unconfirmed results in 2003, standards declined a little due to some pupils not completing their examination work owing to frequent absences from school.
103. All pupils are well motivated by the subject and they are supported by well-qualified and experienced teachers, whose standard of teaching never fell below good in the lessons seen. Behaviour and attitudes are good. Aided by the good use of assessment, where targets for improvement are shared well, the pupils show good practical skills in their work and its design and composition. Many show a capability to achieve higher standards. They describe verbally what they are doing with a clear awareness, linking their style to the work of artists being studied. Due to limited funding, the school is unable to provide all pupils with suitable sketchbooks. Pupils do not, therefore, use sketchbooks effectively to show the progression of their work. Consequently, there is no record of how their style has been developed from the range of artists studied, thereby justifying and evaluating what they are doing. This has an adverse impact on standards.
104. The good use of ICT for image development and distortion enables the pupils to produce exciting images and poster designs. Good use is made of the digital camera for pupils to develop pictures arising from photographs. The school has given good attention to the use of three-dimensional work, a need indicated at the time of the last inspection. Good use of display is made where teachers refer to how on-going and finished work has been developed to aid the technique for the pupils' present work. Overall, there has been a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, but the accommodation is now unsatisfactory. A particular problem is that there are now three full-time art teachers and one part-time. All are well qualified in their respective areas, but there are only three art rooms. There are occasions when a teacher has to teach in rooms, which are not art rooms. Despite having a well-qualified

teacher in ceramics, there is not a suitably equipped room. Facilities for the storage of resources are also unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are good and gradually helping to improve pupils' standards.
- The quality of teaching in Year 10 is good.
- The attitude of pupils to the subject is good.
- Teaching strategies, which promote independent learning, are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

105. In the 2002 GCSE music examination, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was well below average. However, unvalidated results in 2003 show significant improvement. Overall, girls performed much better than boys. Standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average. However, standards seen in lessons indicate that they are improving steadily. The achievement of most pupils, however, is only satisfactory. Pupils lack encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning and to respond more creatively to their tasks. The music chosen for pupils to study and explore covers a good variety of cultural styles.

106. Overall, the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, except in Year 10 where it was good. In Year 10, pupils are actively engaged in an interesting range of activities, which develop their musical skills. They all learn the basics of music as a language and most of them can demonstrate their understanding using complex vocabulary. Throughout all year groups, there is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs do well. Whilst all pupils learn to play keyboards in lessons, a small number also use other instruments, which they learn to play elsewhere, in their class lessons. Music is a popular subject in the school. This can be attributed to lively teaching, which is helping pupils to make sound progress. Enthusiasm for music is escalating. The number of pupils participating in extra-curricular music is increasing, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory. At present, over 80 pupils have extra instrumental lessons with visiting teachers each week.

107. Overall, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. However, the new head of department is bringing a new sense of direction, which is providing a solid foundation for future improvement. The department is well managed and there is a clear sense of vision. Substantial investment has taken place since the previous inspection to improve resources, and this adds to pupils' enthusiasm. In contrast, the quality of accommodation remains unsatisfactory. The essential management tools of development planning and schemes of work are well established and a lucid assessment policy to support teaching and learning is being developed by the head of department, but is still in its infancy.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality of teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation and poor maintenance.
- Positive working relationships between teachers and pupils, and high expectations.
- Target setting and use of assessment data is underdeveloped.
- There is a continuing issue of non-participation by pupils, and absence.
- Effective monitoring systems to raise pupils' standards are underdeveloped.

Commentary

108. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection are average. Boys are attaining higher than girls, but there is little difference in the practical performance between pupils taking GCSE and core physical education. The group of pupils, who took GCSE physical education in 2002, obtained results below the national average. The recent 2003 results show an improving performance, particularly the number of boys obtaining A* to C grades. Assessment is satisfactory, in particular at GCSE, where assessment data has been used to guide pupils in improving their performance in practical activities. However, in practical and theory lessons, the department has not developed a systematic approach to target setting to ensure pupils know what their targets are and how to achieve them.
109. Teacher assessments of attainment within physical education, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were well below the national average. However, in 2003, teacher assessments support the continued improvement in attainment over the last three years, with more boys reaching the higher levels. Nevertheless, there are still a large number of boys performing below the expected level. Absence and non-participation influence the overall standards obtained by pupils. This was also commented on in the previous inspection report. Current systems have yet to be reviewed and monitored thoroughly enough in order to ensure continued improvements.
110. The quality of teaching is good overall and is the main contributory factor to pupils' satisfactory achievement. Key features of the good teaching seen, especially in Years 10 and 11, were progressive use of challenging tasks, specific individual feedback and good working relationships. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use their good knowledge of them to great effect in supporting their learning. However, pupils are insufficiently involved in evaluation tasks and lack the opportunity to use evaluation information to improve physical performance, this restricts retention in learning. The unsatisfactory accommodation is having a significant effect on the quality of lessons. The accommodation and related health and safety problems conflict with the school's ethos of care and good teaching. The lack of quality facilities restricts pupils' achievements and the standards attained.
111. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory because effective changes have been made to the structure of the curriculum. For example, teaching in block activities to ensure greater continuity of learning is beginning to raise standards. However, as yet, there are neither plans for dealing with girls' underachievement in reaching high levels of practical performance, nor to challenge the identified gifted or talented pupils. There has been satisfactory progress in raising standards since the previous inspection. However, more rigorous monitoring of current systems and policies to ensure they are effective in continuing to raise standards has yet to be put in place. Nevertheless, the department supports well the learning of all pupils, with good provision for special education needs and extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Meticulous course and lesson planning underpins excellent teaching.
- The head of department has very high expectations for her staff and the pupils.
- Business teachers are very enthusiastic and have excellent subject knowledge.
- Individual lessons are challenging and ensure that pupils make excellent progress.
- Business teachers are all reflective practitioners with potential for even greater improvements in teaching and learning.

- Standards are continuing to rise and the value added in GCSE classes is better than in any other subject offered in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for more independent study are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

112. In 2002, 38 per cent of 58 pupils taking business studies GCSE achieved A* to C grades. Although these results were lower than achieved nationally, they represented significant value added and were better than for any other subject. Results for 2003 show further improvement with an A* to C rate of 53 per cent. Girls outperformed boys, but overall these were the best GCSE results for any subject. Achievement is, therefore, very good.
113. Work seen during the inspection shows standards are continuing to rise and all pupils in Year 11 are expected to achieve a C grade or better when they are examined in 2004. Excellent teaching was observed in Year 11 and that in Year 10 was judged to be outstanding. Although pupils in this class had only been taking the course for two weeks, most were already able and confident to answer GCSE questions. Teachers' expectations are very high. The pupils are expected from the outset to use business terms and to support answers by reference to case study material.
114. Year 11 pupils are also very enthusiastic and very willing to contribute to class discussions on the appropriateness of different forms of business finance. In both years, learning in response to a wide variety of tasks was conducted at a cracking pace. These excellent levels of achievement are directly related to two important factors. First, learning is supported by very detailed course and lesson plans, which clearly identify skills that need to be developed, and how this might be achieved. Secondly, these are implemented by enthusiastic and hardworking teachers, who have an extremely good rapport with their pupils. The outcome of this exciting and demanding teaching is that pupils really enjoy business studies lessons, they help each other and appear to be much more confident than in other lessons.
115. Provision of business courses was praised in the previous inspection report. The department has continued to improve. Leadership of the business studies department is excellent, and management is very good. The head of department combines very high expectations with a great depth of experience of developments in business teaching, and provides an excellent role-model for the two younger and more recently qualified members of staff. The appointment of these two new business teachers, who both have relevant and appropriate commercial experience, has contributed greatly to improvements in standards. For example, they have adapted good practise from other departments, such as the use of flash cards to check the thoroughness of pupils' understanding. Business studies expertise also supports developments in the leisure and tourism course, which has been recently introduced to cater for the needs of disaffected pupils in Year 11. The head of department encourages innovation and risk taking, and all in the department support each other to continuously improve the effectiveness of their teaching. Through such developments, and approaches, the business department provides a good role-model within the school. However, opportunities for more independent study and extended learning activities for pupils are insufficiently developed.

Other vocational courses: Leisure and tourism

Commentary

116. One Year 11 lesson in GNVQ Intermediate leisure and tourism was sampled during the inspection. This was a highly effective lesson led by an experienced teacher. Consequently, although standards were well below average, teaching, learning and pupils' achievement were very good. This was because the structure of the lesson was excellent and immediately involved all the pupils. They were challenged through the use of resources designed to help them visualise the life and work of a Greek travel agent. The teacher encouraged verbal responses, which built up the pupils' confidence. As a result of the teacher's strategies, all pupils worked steadily and made very good progress in terms of their information and communication technology skills, literacy skills, and understanding of the tourist industry.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

117. No personal, social and health education lessons were being taught during the week of the inspection. The school has a two-week timetable and personal, social and health education alternates with citizenship.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The programme is flexible and can be adapted to accommodate emerging contemporary issues.
- The learning materials are designed to adapt to pupils' capabilities.
- There is good liaison between the co-ordinator and staff, who teach the programme.
- Subject coverage is good, despite the restricted time allocation.

Commentary

118. The citizenship programme has just entered its second year of operation. Citizenship was not inspected at the time of the previous report. From the lessons observed and the work submitted it is clear that pupils fulfil the requirements of the course and cover the full range of topics offered. Standards and achievement in Years 7 to 11 are satisfactory.
119. Pupils attend the citizenship course, in their English groups, once per fortnightly cycle. Teachers are encouraged to use techniques, which call for the maximum involvement of pupils, such as brainstorming, group discussion and reporting back, as well as welcoming individual contributions. Where the subject is complex, or many of the group have special educational needs, teachers are adept at helping and supporting pupils' train of thought and teasing out ideas. The best lessons are, thus, characterised by lively debate and activities, which engage pupils' concentration and motivation. These enhance pupils' learning skills and encourage their personal development and independence by requiring them to think carefully.
120. The programme closely follows the national guidelines. It is based in Years 10 and 11 on a short examination syllabus, as well as using the work experience programme as part of its Year 11 coverage. Within the framework there is a great deal of flexibility, as exemplified by a study of the issues surrounding the 2003 war in Iraq. This was introduced at the time, across the whole programme, under the theme of resolving conflict. There is good evidence of teachers being able to adapt the materials to the differing capabilities of pupils, and there is ample scope for teachers to approach the theme through their own preferences or specialisms.
121. The leadership and management of the programme are good. The co-ordinator of the programme and the teachers frequently exchange ideas about good practice and ways of approaching topics. The effectiveness of the programme and the materials are constantly under review. There is close liaison with the co-ordinator of personal, social and health education, as that programme covers some of the extended citizenship issues, which the present time allocation cannot cover. Most departments in the school have identified areas of citizenship in their schemes of work, which support the programme.

Careers education and guidance

Provision in careers education and guidance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's good use of external agencies and its work experience programme.
- Some pupils in Year 11 are guided to inappropriate courses in the sixth form.

Commentary

122. The school's careers education programme, is taught through its personal, social and health education programme. It is taught in distinct blocks of time, which start in Year 9 and follow through to Year 13. The school makes good use of external agencies throughout its careers and guidance programme. The work experience scheme is a particularly good feature, as is the support and advice on further and higher education opportunities offered to post-16 students. However, constraints of time and logistics make it difficult to fulfil the needs of all Year 11 pupils. Despite the programme 'What next after Year 11?', individual careers interviews, and the encouragement of pupils to research the library and the software programs on the computer network, some pupils do find themselves on inappropriate courses in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs are directed to appropriate courses at a nearby college.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, four subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

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
Mathematics	7	0.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	0.0	31.3
Biology	2	0.0	81.6	0.0	33.2	0.0	33.2
Design and technology	5	60.0	89.2	0.0	32.0	22.0	35.7
Business studies	9	55.5	89.1	11.1	31.7	21.1	35.4
Information technology	11	45.5	78.2	0.0	20.6	12.72	28.5
Sport and physical education	6	83.3	88.2	0.0	27.7	21.6	33.8
Art and design	6	50.0	90.0	0.0	42.7	13.33	39.0
History	6	50.0	91.8	0.0	37.2	15.0	37.8
Government and politics	6	50.0	83.2	0.0	32.5	10.0	33.6
Sociology	4	50.0	83.7	0.0	33.6	10.0	33.8
English literature	6	50.0	94.4	0.0	37.9	13.3	38.9
General studies	6	100.0	78.6	16.7	25.7	31.7	30.0

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	66.7	93.3	33.3	52.2	53.3	84.7
Chemistry	1	100.0	94.0	0.0	45.9	30.0	81.1
Physics	2	100.0	92.8	0.0	42.8	25.0	78.6
Business studies	4	100.0	96.4	25.0	32.8	35.0	76.5
Information technology	16	60.6	89.1	0.0	22.4	31.5	64.1
Travel and tourism	7	100.0	88.1	0.0	15.7	51.4	61.4
Art and design	4	100.0	96.1	25.0	48.7	37.5	85.1
Geography	2	50.0	97.1	0.0	40.5	30.0	80.9
Government and politics	7	100.0	94.3	14.3	38.9	62.9	77.7
Sociology	3	100.0	96.4	0.0	39.6	23.3	79.1
English literature	11	100.0	98.5	0.0	43.7	56.4	84.3
General studies	11	54.5	90.1	0.0	29.1	32.7	69.3

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Administration (NVQ)	8	100.00	N/a.	0.0	N/a.	0.0	N/a.
Key Skills: Communication	16	68.75	N/a.	0.0	N/a.	0.0	N/a.
Key Skills: Application of number	16	37.50	N/a.	0.0	N/a.	0.0	N/a.

SUBJECTS REPORTED IN DETAIL

The four subjects inspected in depth were English literature, mathematics, biology, and business education. In addition, inspectors sampled related key skills lessons in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English literature in the sixth form is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are regularly very low compared with national averages.
- Despite sound teaching, students find it very hard to write convincing essays.
- In lessons, students are largely passive and rely too heavily on the teachers.

Commentary

123. Over the last few years, results at AS level and A-level have been very low. Students enter the sixth form with average grades in English, but few make significant gains in their understanding of aspects of literature over the course. The teaching and the marking give them a clear structure to write essays, but most students lack the skills to undertake relevant research in order to develop their own thinking. They make short comments and select apt quotations, but fail to develop their arguments in a logical or convincing manner. Essays lack depth and subtlety and students often focus on superficial elements of the texts because their vocabulary and experience are limited.
124. In lessons, the teachers work very hard to involve students in discussions, but often meet with silence. Students are very passive and reliant on constant teacher prompting. Their lack of practice in debating in earlier years is revealed in their inability to develop ideas at length or to suggest fresh opinions. However, students in Year 12 show a more promising ability to respond to texts such as *Antony and Cleopatra*. Here, the teacher provides clear examples to help students to grasp the way the writer uses imagery to develop key themes in the play. Consequently, students are able to understand them, but are not confident about terminology of basic words such as 'metaphor'.
125. Whilst the overall leadership of the subject is satisfactory at sixth-form level, management is unsatisfactory because the use of assessment and performance data is not sharp enough. The achievement of students in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics in the sixth form is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in AS and A2 level examinations are very low.
- Students join the sixth form with entry levels of prior attainment, which are too low.
- The strong subject knowledge base provided by subject specialists.
- There are few opportunities for independent learning or investigative work.
- There are very good working relationships between students and teachers.
- The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

126. Standards attained in A-level examinations in 2002 were well below national averages. At AS level in 2002, the standards attained were very low with no candidate obtaining a pass grade. In 2003, there were no entries at A-level and the three candidates entered at AS level failed to obtain a pass grade.
127. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainment at AS and A2 level was below national averages. This is in part a reflection of an entry policy, which allows students to start the course with low prior attainment levels. Year 13 students have commenced A2 studies not having completed their studies at AS level. The standard of work observed in lessons is inconsistent, and students lack confidence when tackling problems, which are not straightforward. Year 12 students show more confidence and have prior attainment levels, which give greater cause for optimism.
128. Advanced level teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are secure in their own subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are conveyed to students. Lessons are, however, teacher dominated and there are limited opportunities for independent learning. This results in passive learning and a lack of student confidence when tackling problems. The marking of students' work is inconsistent, and they receive insufficient constructive feedback. Very good working relationships exist between students and teachers, based on mutual respect and good humour.
129. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory at sixth-form level. The head of department is committed to the raising of standards, but there is a lack of monitoring, particularly with regard to the marking of students' work. Analysis of student performance has been established, but insufficient use is made of subject-specific value added measures to measure progress and set appropriate targets.

SCIENCE

130. Chemistry and physics courses were not being offered at the time of the inspection. Biology was inspected. Two lessons were seen. The work of the single Year 13 student was scrutinised.

Biology

Provision in biology in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- There is good emphasis on research and independent study skills.
- Practical work in the past has been too restricted.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

131. No students took the A-level course in 2002 or 2003. At AS level, seven students were entered for the examination in 2003. One obtained a B grade and six were unclassified. This raises concerns about the quality of guidance for students wishing to take AS level courses. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in terms of understanding of topics such as protein structure, water potential and the stages of cell division. Achievement in the two lessons seen, and from the work scrutiny, was satisfactory.
132. A new teacher is taking the class this year. Both lessons seen were satisfactory. In these lessons, the teacher placed a good emphasis on developing independent study skills. In one, this involved the satisfactory extraction of information from text and in the other, researching information on the Internet. The teacher's knowledge of the subject was secure and the lessons were well structured to promote learning. In both lessons, the students made satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of aspects of growth and cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Effective use was made of homework for the student to research changes in pregnancy, for example, in the cardiovascular system. However, an examination of the work of the student at AS level showed there was insufficient emphasis on practical work. The new teacher plans to put this right. Work set was thoroughly marked in discussion with the student.
133. Leadership and management in biology are unsatisfactory. There is no development plan for the subject and there are no schemes of work.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Course planning is extremely thorough and individual lessons include a wide range of learning activities.
- Staff have high expectations and very good working relationships with their students.
- Business teachers are very enthusiastic and have excellent subject knowledge.
- Teaching takes place in well-equipped rooms with very good visual displays.
- Standards of achievement are rising.
- Although current class sizes are viable, numbers completing courses in the past have been too low.
- The range of business courses on offer is too limited.
- Management is diluted, as the head of department is responsible for a wide range of other courses.

Commentary

134. Although all students entered for A-level exams in 2002 passed, the cohort was small and results were below those achieved nationally. Four of nine students failed to complete the course. Results at AS level were also lower than the national average. Standards are improving, as indicated by the un-validated results from 2003, especially at AS level. The

school predicts that all students currently in Year 13 will pass their examinations next summer. A higher proportion is expected to achieve top grades. Value added data indicates that achievement is good.

135. Students in Year 12 have made a very good start to their studies. Some are able to build on their success in GCSE business, whilst others are new to the subject. All work together well to support each other's learning, and their teacher shows considerable skill in making sure that both sets of students are challenged well. This is because questioning is sharp and involves all in the large group. Discussions with students revealed very positive attitudes towards the subject. Students praised the teacher's style, commenting, "*she always explains things well*" and "*we are always encouraged to ask questions*".
136. In Year 13, students tackled a new unit on finance more slowly, but eventually showed good recall of earlier learning about different forms of business ownership. They showed confidence in using various ratios to assess the performance of different companies. They had worked hard over the summer to undertake investigations of a number of local businesses. Their work was thorough and showed a detailed understanding of issues relating to the location of business activity. However, the work lacked detailed analysis and the inclusion of evaluative skills required to achieve the higher grades.
137. Teaching is good and schemes of work and individual lesson plans are very well detailed. Teaching takes place in well-equipped and very well decorated rooms, which clearly establish an appropriate business environment supporting the high expectations of business staff. Teachers have excellent working relationships with their students and are able to use their recent commercial experience to good effect. This ensures business concepts are clearly explained and applied to contemporary business issues. Contacts with local companies, including a car manufacturer and a football club, have been used to help consolidate and extend learning undertaken in class.
138. Leadership of the department is very good and the team of three teachers works very hard to continue to raise standards. They support each other very well, but feel isolated from the rest of the school. The head of department is responsible for 14 different courses, including ICT, travel and tourism, and health and social care. She no longer teaches business courses and opportunities are being missed to provide a greater range of business courses, particularly for lower-attaining students.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Citizenship

139. A small group of sixth-form students studies citizenship, but this is not part of the main programme, and no evidence was available during the inspection.

Key skills courses

Provision in key skills is basically **satisfactory**. Nevertheless, levels of challenge for all groups of students are patchy, and low levels of literacy affect students' overall levels of progress and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although achievement in key skills is satisfactory overall, there is often insufficient challenge of students to become more independent in their approach to learning.
- The best teaching is enthusiastic and energetic and enables the establishment of a good, working rapport between teacher and students.
- The use of information and communication technology to support all subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Commentary

Key Skills: Language and literacy across the curriculum

140. Key skills provision in language and literacy is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average, but teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory. Achievement is sometimes not as strong as learning in lessons because students come from a low base of literacy, and their skills still require a fair amount of consolidation. In the best lessons, despite the energy and enthusiasm of the teaching, students lack confidence as independent learners. Where teaching is weaker, teachers' planning lacks clarity and inadequately supports learning. There is often a good rapport between students and their teacher, but too much teacher talk leads to students becoming too passive in their approach to learning. Overall, standards of literacy in the sixth form are also below average. The key skills programme for communications is effective in helping students to improve their technical accuracy, but not their continuous writing.

Key Skills: Mathematics across the curriculum

141. Key skills provision in mathematics is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory. However, at Level 2 there is insufficient challenge for those students, who have already achieved a GCSE pass at grade C. This is because there is insufficient attention paid to providing a wide enough variety of work to meet the needs of individual students. Nevertheless, students are attentive and working relationships between teacher and students are sound. Where teaching, learning and achievement are good, the students are involved more in the learning process and, consequently, make better progress.

Key Skills: Information and communication technology across the curriculum

142. Key skills provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. All students follow an ICT key skills programme, which is planned well to meet their needs. Use of these ICT skills to enable students to make progress in all areas of the curriculum is at an early stage of development. Standards are below national expectations. However, achievement is satisfactory overall because teachers use effective methods to support students' learning, and guidance is well structured. The pace of lessons is designed to meet the needs of students.

WORK IN OTHER SUBJECTS AND COURSES WHICH WAS SAMPLED

During the inspection, seven other subjects or courses were sampled. These included ICT, geography, government and politics, sociology, design and technology, art and design, and travel and tourism.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Commentary

143. Four lessons were sampled in ICT. These included two GNVQ lessons in Year 12, and two AVCE lessons, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching overall is satisfactory. In lessons, where students are studying appropriate courses, achievement is sound, as shown through discussions with students and looking at their work in class. Students were able to demonstrate they could combine text and images, showing awareness of their audience through the style of their documents. Coursework showed good examples of students gaining knowledge and experience of the workings of a computer through practical activities. For example, students described how they added memory to a computer or installed printing software.

144. Students feel suitably challenged and enjoy the activities, but their understanding of the requirements for the course is limited. Marked assignments show students are making satisfactory progress, but the students themselves are unclear about what they have to do to improve further. End-of-year A-level and GNVQ examination results do not reflect the same

achievement. This is because several students do not complete all the coursework and, consequently, this is reflected in the final results. Standards in ICT competence, on entry to the sixth form, are below average. A high proportion of students did not stay on the course from Years 12 to 13 due to the difficult demands of the course. Limited guidance was given to students to help them make appropriate course choices. Knowledge about students' previous ICT competence and skill level is not consistently used within lesson planning.

HUMANITIES

Commentary on: Geography

145. One Year 13 lesson was sampled at A2 level in geography. Although students' standards were below average, teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. This lesson was held in the learning resource centre, and good use was made of its facilities to support learning. Through a study of problems affecting coastlines, students were introduced to new techniques in planning and evaluating their work. Consequently, even though they had reached Year 13, they were only just taking some first steps towards becoming independent learners. Nevertheless, the students in the group showed a mature attitude towards their learning, and their independent learning skills were effectively supported through the development of computer-aided presentations. However, although teacher explanations were clear, and the students' work was marked with diagnostic comments, no grades were given. Consequently, students were unaware of exactly how well they were attaining.

Commentary on: Government and politics

146. Two lessons in government and politics were sampled, one at AS level in Year 12 and the other at A2 level in Year 13. Whilst teaching, learning and achievement were good in Year 12, they were unsatisfactory in Year 13. Standards were average in Year 12, but below average in Year 13.

147. The Year 13 lesson was unsatisfactory because the teacher's style was restrictive of the students' personal development as independent learners. Achievement was limited because the lesson was more of a lecture. When students did contribute, this showed below average standards lacking depth of understanding and interpretation. Nevertheless, the teacher did place a good focus on examination techniques in the interpretation of questions.

148. However, in a subsequent Year 12 lesson, learning was properly supported through sound expectations on the part of the teacher, which encouraged note taking by the students. During the lesson, students were given adequate time to reflect on their findings, concerning voting rights and the British electoral system, before sharing them with each other. Reviews of learning gradually allowed the students to gain in confidence as they started to perceive how the work fitted in with the broader objectives of the course unit. Teacher and students gradually relaxed in approach, and began to work together increasingly harmoniously as the lesson developed.

Commentary on: Sociology

149. One AS sociology lesson was sampled in Year 12. This was a sound lesson overall dealing with key concepts relating to the family and helping students to understand satisfactorily what constitutes a 'family'. In spite of a lack of focus on lesson objectives at the start of the session, teaching was good. This is because it was well directed towards helping the students build up their knowledge and information base concerning different sociological theories and perspectives on the role of the family. This approach made an important contribution to the students achieving well in the lesson. Questioning was direct and ensured all students became involved in the work. However, some opportunities were missed to follow-up factual material by exploring students' own opinions and interpretation of contrasting theories of the sociologists studied. The well-managed review of learning at the end of the lesson showed the

students had gained a basic, initial grasp of the theories. Nevertheless, they were less secure in remembering related elements from earlier lessons, although they eventually responded satisfactorily to the teacher's prompts.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Commentary on: Design and technology

150. One basically satisfactory AS level lesson was sampled in Year 12. Here, students were involved in the examination of a range of samples of different materials. The broad aim of the lesson was adequately supported by effective planning and, in particular, the marshalling of appropriate resources. The heat treatment of metal was demonstrated satisfactorily and its effect clearly explained to the students. Attainment was average, but the students' progress was limited by some needless repetition and over-lengthy teacher demonstration. Although teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, the level of challenge was relatively low for sixth-form students. Overall, this was an un-ambitious lesson.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Commentary on: Art and design

151. One AS level lesson was sampled in Year 12. Here, teaching and learning were very good, standards above average and students' achievement good. Very good questioning, and an analysis of the work of Picasso, enabled the effective introduction to the students of the work of the contemporary Spanish artist, Montse Palomo. However, although responding to the teacher, students tended to be passive with few volunteering answers to questions. This illustrated some insecurity in their knowledge and understanding relating to previous learning. However, actual samples of students' work showed greater achievement in their practical work, including through the use of ICT for scanning work and image development. Discussion with students showed some very good awareness of the application of ICT in image manipulation work. Overall, students worked well and responded very well to the teacher's expertise and subject knowledge.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Commentary on: Travel and tourism

152. Two lessons in GNVQ travel and tourism were seen, one in Year 12 and another in Year 13. In the Year 12 lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were good and standards average. This was because the teacher gave a very clear explanation as to how information is moved around an organisation, using the school as an example. The teacher had high expectations of the students, who listened attentively. The students were being supported well at an early stage in the course when they were finding their feet.

153. In the Year 13 lesson, standards were below average and teaching, learning and achievement were all satisfactory. Sound use was made of a video of Liverpool's 'Magical Mystery Tour' to introduce the topic of marketing. However, the lesson was very much teacher-led and, consequently, students were slow and hesitant in their response. Although the students answered the teacher's questions, they tended to be passive and were limited in the scope of their replies. This was because the lesson was teacher dominated and students were not accustomed to be independent in their learning. However, the teacher had established good working relationships with the group.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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