

INSPECTION REPORT

BRINSWORTH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Brinsworth

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106960

Headteacher: Mr Mike Gray

Lead inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: 17th – 21st November 2003

Inspection number: 159219

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1473 pupils
School address:	Brinsworth Road Brinsworth Rotherham
Postcode:	S60 5EJ
Telephone number:	01709 828383
Fax number:	01709 835937
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F Pickering
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Brinsworth is a large, growing and popular school, with more girls than boys mainly because more girls stay on into the large sixth form.
- Student mobility – those joining or leaving mid-course – is above average.
- When they join Year 7, students' standards have been below average, although improving, so that the current Year 7 students joined with average standards.
- About half the students come from Brinsworth, a predominantly white British community; others are drawn from Tinsley, a predominantly Asian British community, and other surrounding areas.
- Students come from areas where social disadvantage is above average.
- A significant minority of students, about 16 per cent, come from minority ethnic groups, three-quarters from an Asian British background.
- A very small number of students have languages other than English as their home language, – Panjabi, Lithuanian and Mandarin Chinese – and most have developed beyond the earliest stages of English fluency.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average; individual needs relate to learning, behaviour and, for a very small number, to physical disability.
- In 2002, the school was awarded the Artsmark and Sportsmark.
- In 2001, 2002 and 2003, it received the School Achievement Award.
- The school benefits from involvement in Excellence in Cities projects and Project Trident.
- It is a Lead School for modern foreign languages and science.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2918	M L Glynne-Jones	Lead inspector	
9446	H Griffiths	Lay inspector	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English *
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics
27050	V Blackburn	Team inspector	Science in the main school Biology in the sixth form
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology in the main school Health and social care in the sixth form
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography
22849	R Catlow	Team inspector	History Personal, social and health education Citizenship
30911	J Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages in the main school French in the sixth form
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Music in the main school
3435	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Leisure and recreation in the main school
16930	J Plumb	Team inspector	Religious education
27409	S Hunt	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language
31160	I Towler-Evans	Team inspector	Drama in the sixth form
12825	N Carr	Team inspector	Psychology in the sixth form
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Sociology in the sixth form

* Subjects were inspected in detail both in the main school and in the sixth form unless otherwise stated.

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	56

PART A:SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Brinsworth is a **good** school. Students learn and achieve well, improving on their below average standards when they join Year 7, because they are taught well. They receive a good quality of education, effectively led and managed to promote individual success. Value for money is **good**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ the headteacher's leadership sets the tone for a thoughtful, committed and caring community where the sense of staff team is strong;
- ❑ students' maturing attitudes contribute significantly to the day-to-day feel of the school;
- ❑ from the start of transfer arrangements for the incoming Year 7, across all years, students receive very effective support and guidance;
- ❑ very good curriculum choices in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, and very good arrangements for students' special needs, provide very well for individual aptitudes;
- ❑ there is a lack of co-ordinated provision for the very small number of students whose home language is not English and lack of reference to their specific needs in school planning;
- ❑ the celebration of cultural diversity and students' understanding of differing cultural values are not a thread in daily school life;
- ❑ the lack of a whole-school approach to development and monitoring means that gaps and inconsistencies in provision are not being identified and tackled early enough;
- ❑ provision is very good in art and design across the school, in science and modern foreign languages in the main school, and in drama and biology in the sixth form.

There has been **good** improvement since the last inspection, with good improvement in teaching. Results by Year 9 and at GCSE have improved and are rising faster than nationally. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been transformed. The curriculum has been very well developed and homework arrangements are now mostly satisfactory or better across subjects. However, the issues of daily worship and provision for religious education in the sixth form persist and monitoring arrangements have not improved sufficiently.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	B
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	N/A	C	D	

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

Achievement is **good** overall and **good** over each stage. Students' results show that they have joined Year 7 with below average standards and, by Year 9, have made very good gains in 2002 to reach average standards in national tests. This standard was maintained in 2003, although English results fell. By Year 11, students maintain their average standards at GCSE, showing good gains in 2002 and very good gains in 2003 from their Year 9 test results. Both by Year 9 and by Year 11, the rise in results is greater than the rise nationally. At A-level, results have fluctuated over the last three years, falling to below average in 2002. For the group of students taking 2002 examinations, this represented satisfactory achievement from their results at GCSE. The 2003 results maintained the below average standard.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. Their attitudes and behaviour are **good** and attendance is **satisfactory**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. **Good** teaching across all years and **good** assessment overall bring about **good** learning. Curriculum opportunities are **very good** overall, while **good** in Years 7 to 9. The accommodation hinders some lesson activities and is only **satisfactory**. There is **good** care for students who receive **very good** guidance and support for their learning. Links with parents are **satisfactory**, while the educational links with other schools, particularly at transfer, and with the wider community, particularly for work placements, are **good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**, with **good** leadership strongly focused on promoting individual achievement and **good** management at all levels. However, statutory requirements for daily worship, for religious education in the sixth form, for annual reports in physical education and for some aspects of health and safety are not met. While there is good, committed governance, because of these statutory breaches governance has to be judged **unsatisfactory**.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Six out of ten parents completed a questionnaire, a high return rate. Most responses are very positive, particularly about children's hard work and good progress, although parents do not feel well informed about how their children are doing or that the school seeks their views. About half the responses record concern about behaviour, with written comments on over five per cent connecting this with racism. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and their concern about being consulted; they find that not all students' reports were fully completed in 2002. Their findings during the inspection week do not confirm the extent of parents' concern about behaviour and racism. Senior staff know that, within the school community, there are racist attitudes and are working effectively to improve the situation. The racist incidents that do occur are dealt with meticulously.

Students' many favourable comments include tributes about teachers' help and encouragement, the support within tutor groups, the friendly atmosphere and the fact that, as they grow older, they are treated as adults and respected. Students' questionnaire returns, a ten per cent sample, recorded concerns about behaviour, bullying and racism in school. In discussion, students do not think that bullying is a big problem and that any that occurs is dealt with well. They think that there is racial tension, but that overall this is lessening, although they want more to be done about it.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- implement a whole-school approach to development planning and monitoring so that all members of the wider school community have a clear understanding of agreed priorities and that all teachers can benefit from the identification of school strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning;
- implement arrangements for the co-ordination and monitoring of provision for, and achievement of, students who are not fluent English speakers;
- ensure that all subjects and courses contribute to students' understanding of the spiritual, moral and social values of differing cultures;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of worship for all students, religious education for all sixth-form students and reports for parents on all National Curriculum subjects; and ensure that all aspects of health and safety practice are systematically carried out.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good, cost-effective sixth form, led and managed well except for the lack of provision for religious education, a statutory breach. It provides a good quality of education, particularly a high proportion of teaching that is good or better, which successfully reflects the school's inclusive approach to providing the best possible opportunities for individual achievement. New sixth-form accommodation supports students' study needs well.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ students have good access to the wide range of courses provided and these are successfully promoting good achievement;
- ❑ very good links with colleges and universities provide worthwhile study opportunities and good advice and are helping to raise students' aspirations;
- ❑ there is a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits, although some students do not participate because of other timetable demands.

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	Good: there is a very good working partnership between teachers and students which leads to good learning and achievement.
Mathematics	Good: students achieve well from a low base because teachers understand how each individual learns best.
Science:	Biology: very good: teachers' interventions at an appropriate level mean that students learn very well, irrespective of capability.
Information and communication technology	Good: students achieve well in both years because of challenging tasks and good individual guidance.
Humanities	<p>Geography: good: an interesting range of activities encourages good learning, although there is not enough emphasis on examination techniques.</p> <p>History: good: the teaching and learning are good but students' achievement is only satisfactory because they do not apply their knowledge to assignments effectively at this level.</p> <p>Psychology: satisfactory: although teaching and learning are good, students' achievement is only satisfactory because it is affected by some weakness in literacy skills and in analysis.</p> <p>Sociology: good: teachers' good planning and guidance enable students to achieve well.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Art and design: very good: a very effective tutorial approach in lessons leads to very good independent learning and achievement.</p> <p>Drama: good: students are engaged actively and productively in their learning due to particularly strong teaching.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and	<i>No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 12 lesson</i>

travel	<i>in sports studies was sampled.</i>
Business	<i>No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson in A-level business studies was sampled.</i>
Health and social care	Good: teachers' enthusiasm and rigorous assessment inspires good learning and achievement.
General education	Good: students respond well to a very good wide-ranging programme which is taught effectively.
<p><i>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'.</i></p>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **very good** advice and guidance. Through the tutor-group system and the cycle assessment programme, their progress is monitored and reviewed effectively, with good use of targets to raise aspirations and achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth-form students benefit equally from the **good** leadership and **good** management of the school as a whole. The direction for the development of the sixth form is clear. Financial resources are used effectively to ensure a range of appropriate, well-taught courses to meet individual needs that are focused on raising standards. However, the governance of the sixth form has to be judged unsatisfactory because statutory requirements for religious education and worship are not met.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' questionnaire returns – from a ten per cent sample – were extremely positive on every point save two; those on enrichment and on behaviour and racism. These returns confirm the many school strengths identified by the inspection team and show concern about the racial tension experienced by the school. In discussion, students felt that this tension is being reduced, a view confirmed in many discussions during the inspection. It seems that the point about enrichment led to some confusion because the school uses the title in a different way to Ofsted for a specific course in the sixth form. Inspectors think the range of enrichment activities is good and, in discussion, so do students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

*Achievement is **good** in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Standards are **average** at each stage.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good achievement overall in the work seen during the inspection reflects their good achievement in tests and examinations in 2002 and 2003, and steady improvement over time.
- In subjects, the picture is mostly of good achievement, with no unsatisfactory achievement reported.
- There is generally good achievement for boys and girls, for students from all the ethnic backgrounds represented in the school, for those with special needs and those with gifts and talents.
- On occasion in lessons, students at an early stage of English fluency do not progress as well as they could because there is no planned support from teachers or teaching assistants.

Commentary

1. Students did very well in Year 9 tests in 2002 in comparison with their previous attainment in the tests they took in Year 6, and in 2003 they did well. Boys' Year 9 results in 2002 are closer to boys' national average than girls' results are to girls' national average. At GCSE in 2002, students did well in comparison with their Year 9 test results and, in 2003, they did very well. The school has improved its GCSE results steadily over time bringing them to an average standard in 2002 for the first time in all four categories: five or more A*-Cs, five or more A*-Gs, one or more A*-Gs and average points. This standard was sustained in 2003. Students' average points in Year 9 tests and at GCSE are rising faster than the national rise; a good achievement.
2. The school supports the achievement of students from minority ethnic backgrounds well as shown by the analysis of their 2002 results at GCSE, although it has not analysed the results of the small number of students who are not fluent English speakers. The school supports boys well as shown by the 2002 results in Year 9 and at GCSE. Students' work shows average skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
3. There is satisfactory achievement, rather than good:
 - by Year 9 in mathematics, ICT, music and general physical education, and
 - by Year 11 in geography, music and general physical education.This satisfactory achievement is a consequence of satisfactory teaching. The reason in mathematics is that the teaching does not provide sufficiently challenging work for students in Years 7 to 9 and the marking is not always helpful enough in showing students how to improve. The teaching in mathematics is least successful in Year 7 where the provision does not take full account of the very wide range of attainment in each class. In ICT, lack of pace in lessons and challenge in the work are the main factors that limit students' achievement. In music, after a period of decline, the school is supporting the new head of department in rebuilding music provision. This is at an early stage. The general physical education course has not received the same detailed attention to planning as the GCSE course and is rather out-of-date. In geography, the gains students make over Years 7 to 9 are maintained in Years 10 and 11 rather than extended further because students are not helped sufficiently to apply their knowledge in the way required at this level.

4. Students' achievement is very good:
 - by Year 9 in geography, where the good teaching helps them to build very effectively on the low standards they show at the start of Year 7, and
 - by Year 11 in modern foreign languages, where staff have very high expectations and set challenging work.

5. The achievement of students with special needs is good across the school. In lessons where support teachers or support assistants are fully involved, or where the subject teacher provides work suitable for the learning needs of the individuals, these students make very good progress. Those in Years 7 to 9, taught in withdrawal groups to support reading and writing progress very well and, in the paired reading sessions assisted by sixth-formers, students progress at a higher rate than expected. Students with behaviour difficulties achieve well in lessons when they receive appropriate support from staff. They benefit well from the support of learning mentors and achieve well in the work-related college placements in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of gifted and talented students at GCSE and A-level is very good. The very small number of students at an early stage of English acquisition usually make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. However, the school does not have up-to-date information about the current numbers of students at each stage of English language acquisition. There is no member of staff responsible for monitoring either the provision made for them or their progress.

6. In 2003, the Year 9 targets were exceeded in English and mathematics, but did not reach the target in science. At GCSE, the target for five or more A*-C grades was well exceeded, and the target for one or more grades A*-G was slightly exceeded. The target set for uncapped point scores was exceeded.

Sixth form

7. A-level results for the smallish number of students taking examinations show some fluctuation, falling from average results in 2001 to below average results in 2002. This standard was maintained in 2003 with the results showing a rise in the pass rate. In the work seen in the 11 subjects and courses inspected, students' good achievement and average standards are better than suggested by the 2002 results, more closely reflecting the improvement in some subject results in 2003.

8. In art and design, students are helped to achieve very well by very skilful 'tutorial' guidance in lessons which is very effective in developing their independence. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good in history and psychology. In history, students' ability to interpret and evaluate the sources they work with is a limiting factor on their achievement. In psychology, the limiting factor is some weakness in students' literacy skills and their ability to write fluently and logically in essays. Overall, students' skills of communication are good, while their mathematical and ICT skills are satisfactory.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (28.9)	33.3 (31.6)
Mathematics	33.1 (32.8)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	33.7 (34.5)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 227 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45.2 (48.9)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88.5 (89.3)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (95.0)	95.0 (94.0)
Average point score per student (best 8 subjects)	36.8 (37.2)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 252 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100.0 (n/a)	93.5 (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.3 (n/a)	36.1 (n/a)
Average point score per student	219.9 (224.2)	252.6 (n/a)

There were 66 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

*Students' attitudes and behaviour are **good**, as is their personal and social development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Attendance is **satisfactory**.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Day-to-day relationships in this growing and changing school community are strong and positive.
- Students show an increasing sense of community as they move up the school and generally support one another thoughtfully.
- The school is making headway in its promotion of racial harmony.
- Students' understanding of differing cultural values is not a thread of their daily lesson-to-lesson experience and the celebration of cultural diversity is limited.
- Most students show good interest in their learning, work hard and behave responsibly and courteously in lessons and around the school.
- Students have a good awareness of right and wrong.
- Attendance, although below average, shows improvement in 2002-2003.

Commentary

9. Students are very positive about the school. Staff have high expectations that they will live up to the school's values which emphasise respect for self and others, and they usually do. Adults offer students consistent examples of courtesy and fairness and students understand well what is expected of them as members of the school community. The very good relationships are evident across all years:
 - between boys and girls and between students from the range of ethnic groups served by the school;
 - in lessons where seating plans ensure that groups are mixed, and at breaks and lunchtimes when students choose who they spend time with.

They are fostered from the start of Year 7 by the buddy system; younger students commented appreciatively about the help and support they receive from the older ones. Students think that any bullying is dealt with effectively.

10. Students work hard in lessons, behave well and usually pay good attention. They are excited by learning when the work is stimulating and challenging. Behaviour in year-group assemblies is exemplary whether the occasion is rather dull, with students just expected to listen, or whether it involves participation by the many volunteers invited to contribute in an enthusiastic and pacy exchange of personal views. Around the school, students are usually courteous, thoughtful and friendly. Their personal development is strongly supported by the range of provision within the tutor system, for example through rewarding high standards of behaviour or dealing with unacceptable behaviour, and by the personal and social education programme – called ‘guidance’ by the school.
11. Maintaining racial harmony is properly a high priority in this mixed school community. Governors and senior staff, well aware of local issues and tensions, are working closely with relevant groups and agencies in order to effect improvement. Within the school, a number of thoughtfully considered initiatives to counter racist attitudes have been implemented. Nonetheless, racial incidents do occur which the school deals with and records meticulously. One such incident occurred shortly before the inspection week. It figured strongly as a concern at the parents’ meeting which 19 parents attended, and in the questionnaire returns from parents and students. The attitudes and behaviour observed during the inspection and the many discussions with students and staff did not confirm the extent of concern expressed before the inspection. Older students commented that what the school is doing about racism is making a difference for the better, but also that they would like there to be a whole-school approach to this work. The group of initiatives to bring about changes in attitudes in order to combat racism are not communicated within the school in a co-ordinated way nor embedded in all areas of its daily work of teaching and learning, although individual initiatives are being successfully implemented. This is an issue for management at all levels.
12. There is little planned provision for students’ personal development across all subjects as required, except within humanities – citizenship, history and religious education – where the contribution helps students to understand the effects of their actions on others and their responsibility towards others. A powerful contribution in religious education was observed. Spiritual development remains a relative weakness as at the last inspection. There is good provision for cultural activities such as visits to theatres and galleries, workshops with dance and music groups as well as through trips abroad. Central school corridors are enriched by stunning displays of sixth-form artwork. Many students take part in visits and in the range of activities provided in school. However, the lack of planning for moral and social development within subjects and courses limits students’ understanding of the differing values of religious and cultural traditions.

Sixth form

13. In discussion, sixth-formers showed themselves to be mature and articulate young adults, able to consider issues in a thoughtful and balanced way and to attend closely to other people’s views. They set an example of responsible behaviour and attitudes round the school and provide good support for younger students, for example through paired reading sessions. Art students are good ambassadors for the school, curating their own exhibition of their own works in the town. Sixth-formers rate the school highly, while having a clear view about ways in which their studies might be enhanced, for example by not having single lessons that interrupt concentration.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2001-2002 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.5	School data	1.2
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.

14. The attendance rate improved in 2002-2003 with authorised absence reduced to 7.9 per cent and the same proportion of unauthorised absence. There are good procedures to monitor attendance and to support families where young people have attendance problems. Much of the unauthorised absence is due to families taking their children on holiday in term time. Sixth-form attendance is generally satisfactory, although sometimes an issue in psychology.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1241	73	4
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	175	13	1
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	17	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0

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

15. In the last year, the number of fixed-term exclusions was much the same as in other large schools, while the number of permanent exclusions was slightly higher. No ethnic group is over-represented in the exclusions data.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. This applies to teaching, learning and assessment; the range of curricular and enrichment opportunities; the school's care of its students and links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

Across the school, teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **good** overall, **good** in Years 10 and 11, while satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Seven out of ten lessons seen were good or better, a good improvement since the last inspection.
- In nearly all the subjects inspected, the overall quality of teaching and learning is at least good, the exceptions being in music and physical education in the main school where the quality of both is satisfactory.
- The strengths are in art and design and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, and in art and design, biology and drama in the sixth form.
- A modest number of features are very good in science, history and religious education in the main school, and in health and social care and psychology in the sixth form, although the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. .
- No features of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory except, on occasion, arrangements for homework in Years 7 to 9.
- While satisfactory overall, assessment is good in about half the subjects in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

16. Lessons are generally pleasant, hardworking occasions which benefit from, and contribute to, the very good relationships in the school. The commitment to establishing an inclusive approach to teaching and learning is reflected in the seating policy for lessons; teachers organising groups to ensure a mix of previous attainment, gender and ethnic background. In modern foreign languages, the inclusive approach is particularly successful because staff use the information from assessments systematically to ensure that work is planned suitably for each individual. In almost all subjects, teachers uphold the school's expectations of good behaviour effectively and students respond well, although this is not always achieved in music in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are usually planned well to provide motivating activities that help students to learn successfully. In the six subjects developing the teaching along the lines of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 (English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and ICT), lesson planning is supporting learning reasonably well. The timing and content of opening and concluding activities, '*starters and plenaries*', are not always well judged however.
17. Effective use of the information from assessment to identify and support any underachievement has contributed well to improving performance at GCSE. Although there is some inconsistency in the helpfulness of marking in mathematics, science, history and music, all subjects use assessment at least satisfactorily, with very good practice in art and design. The good procedures are better established in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower years. Information about the prior attainment of students with special needs is used very effectively to set individual targets and work is marked with the aim of helping targets, to be met.
18. Very good teaching was seen in a fifth of lessons in Years 7 to 9, nearly a third of lessons in Years 10 and 11, and in nearly a quarter in the sixth form. The quality is shown by the following examples:
 - a very purposeful start established by the teacher's enthusiastic approach and the students' readiness to settle to work, and demanding time limits for activities which led to high levels of concentration when considering the characteristics of literary criticism in English;
 - the teacher's very good summary at the end collated students' findings from a mathematics investigation and synthesised them skilfully, while also opening up the explorations for its next stage;

- stimulating teaching in science packed a wide variety of methods into the 50-minute lesson, including an inspirational idea charade activity where one person at a group table acted out a cell-type;
 - the teacher sharpened the focus of students' projects in art and design through well-targeted individual tutorials which drew on considerable breadth of expertise about artists and art forms.
19. The teaching of students with special needs by subject staff is very good, especially in science and history. Teaching of reading and writing in withdrawal groups is successful due to the groups being small; staff are fully aware of individual needs, provide the right balance of support and challenge and use appropriate resources. In most lessons, and particularly in science, support staff give very good academic and personal help to targeted students, while often giving general support to others. Occasionally, support is not effective because there are too many targeted students within one teaching group or because the subject teacher has not planned appropriately for individual needs. In some lessons, teachers do not control behaviour well enough and a small number of students who do not wish to learn are allowed to disrupt the learning of others. In such lessons, support from the behaviour support team is either lacking or ineffective.
20. Very good provision for gifted and talented students has been developed since the last inspection, with early assessment aiding individual identification. On the whole, staff are aware of the needs of these students, although there are still some lessons where they are not sufficiently challenged. Some effective assistance is provided for the small number of students with a home language other than English. This includes mentoring in English lessons and help with homework several times a week. However, this is a casual arrangement made by the special needs department, not part of planned school-wide provision.
21. The following examples show why some teaching was no better than satisfactory:
- although students willingly carried out writing tasks, teachers did not succeed in overcoming students' reticence to make contributions in discussion;
 - students in Year 7 were successfully encouraged to express their views but this was done in an unstructured way so that learning points were not drawn out for the whole group and so could not be reviewed at the end of the lesson;
 - the teaching succeeded in motivating the average and higher attainers in a Year 10 group but not the lower attainers;
 - lessons moved at a steady pace with too much teacher-talk and little to engage Year 12 students actively and capture their interest;
 - a lack of challenge and a slow pace resulted in Year 9 students making no better than satisfactory progress in the lesson.
22. The three unsatisfactory lessons seen were in Years 7 to 9. The main contributory factor was a combination of inadequate management of the class by teachers, and students' poor attitudes. The overall result was that students were not clear about what they had to do and made unsatisfactory progress. For example, a small group of girls persisted in off-task chat through the teacher's opening explanation. Students' listening skills were poor, they were easily distracted and many called out, unchecked by teachers. Lessons were rather disorganised and there were no planned timings for lesson activities.
23. Two excellent lessons were seen in history and drama.

For an entire double lesson (100 minutes) on directing Macbeth, a largish group of Year 10 drama students worked together as a team, each individual in the mixed group – by gender, ethnic background and capability – highly involved and responsive throughout. The teacher's skill in creating and holding this dynamic was exceptional. Students worked collaboratively to create the tension and contrast of the banquet scene up to and including the appearance of Banquo's ghost. Use of inclusive language enabled students to take the responsibility for the dramatic action and so they became actors and directors. *Question:* 'So do we have an actual ghost appearing so the audience see him?' *Response:* 'No, because we want them to know what is in Macbeth's mind, because it is in his mind, it's not actually

there'. Students' concentration in role and their acceptance of each others' direction created dynamic theatre. The teacher honoured all contributions, and genuinely so by trialling them in action through the rehearsal process.

In a Year 7 history cum citizenship lesson on Roman government, the starter was unusual; the teacher announced a class task and told students to get on with it. Bewildered silence, then anarchy! After some disgruntlement, students began to make an effort. Only then did the teacher draw out of them why he had done this – to highlight the need for government. Next, in role as Cicero, the teacher was interviewed by a student using prepared questions, the teacher using skilful questioning techniques himself to check out students' understanding of the change from kingdom to republic. The improvisation brought out the need for leadership and government – which the students had felt themselves. A range of highly stimulating and motivating teaching methods enthused students to give their best and helped them to understand really well.

Sixth form

24. Eight out of ten lessons were good or better in the sixth form. Across the 11 subjects inspected, nearly all the features of teaching are at least good. There are many very good features in art and design, biology, drama and health and social care on which the school can draw to develop the quality of teaching further cross the school. The scope for improvement, where the quality is satisfactory, is in
- planning: citizenship, history;
 - use of resources: mathematics, psychology;
 - use of time: geography, history, psychology;
 - insistence on good behaviour: psychology;
 - homework: ICT, history.
25. The good achievement in the sixth form is effectively supported by an emphasis on using target grades to raise the aspirations of students and by the cycle of assessment procedures. All subjects use assessment at least well to guide students in raising their achievement, with art and design and health and social care doing so very well. In most subjects, analytical marking is reinforced effectively in helpful discussion between teachers and students.

Across the whole school Years 7 to 13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 188 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	44 (23%)	86 (46%)	53 (28%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The breadth of opportunities is **very good**. There is a **good** range of enrichment activities. Accommodation is **satisfactory**; resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is active in reviewing and developing the curriculum to meet the needs of its students and to raise standards.
- A very good range of choices in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form reflects the inclusive values of the school, except for the lack of provision for students whose home language is not English.
- A wide range of activities enriches the curriculum at each stage.
- Students have very good support and guidance for the next stage in their lives, and arrangements for personal, social and health education ('guidance') are very good.

- The requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met in full and no provision is made for religious education in the sixth form.
26. Great care is taken over decisions about the curriculum, for example in considering the effect on Years 7 to 9 of the range of subjects open to all in Years 10 and 11. An extensive range of GCSE and vocational courses is open to all students. The very good arrangements to meet the needs of the small number in Years 10 and 11 for whom a work-related curriculum is appropriate include six-week taster courses at the local college with the opportunity to access these courses on a long-term basis. Students of all abilities select the study support option offered in place of a GCSE, attracted by the access to ICT and its focus on study skills. Good equality of access is ensured for students of all capabilities. Many interesting activities, as well as visits and out-of-hours classes, capture students' interest and extend their learning. Participation in sport and the arts is good. Careers education and guidance are strong features, preparing students well for choosing courses at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. However, assemblies do not provide a daily act of worship for all students, although some year-group assemblies make a strong contribution to the sense of community and promote students' self-esteem.
 27. Specialist provision for special needs is very good, although the support in subject lessons is not always effective. Students have access to laptop computers, spell checkers and classroom computers. Special needs staff act as mentors and monitor individual progress closely. Good, relevant workshops are run by the behaviour support team, for example on anti-racism, anger management and self-esteem. Temporary incremental points for staff are effectively encouraging subject teachers to contribute to the development of a scheme of work to challenge gifted and talented students. Aim Higher Programme for 2002-2003 has been developed significantly in its second year of operation. For example, students from Year 9 upwards visit local universities such as St Johns, York and Sheffield Hallam. Sociology students have visited a local prison and psychology students have attended a revision study course at Nottingham University.
 28. The school has sufficient staff, although unable to appoint to a small number of posts and with a vacancy for the community liaison post. Effective temporary arrangements ensure that students' subject learning does not suffer. Subjects are generally well resourced and the very good provision for ICT is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Very good library facilities, staffed by two full-time librarians, are used well; stock is well matched to subject requirements and to the differing needs of students. Since the last inspection, the working environment has been improved in many areas, notably in the new sixth-form building. Several areas are in need of refurbishment, but this does not affect achievement adversely, although it hinders some learning activities, for example in design and technology. Space is however severely limited and the fabric of the building needs attention. The local education authority is to adapt the building to accommodate physically disabled students.

Sixth form

29. A very good range of courses, continuing those offered in Years 10 and 11 with additions such as sociology, enables students to follow their particular interests and aspirations and caters effectively for a wide range of previous attainment. There is good participation in extra-curricular activities. The sixth-form study programme for all students includes an effective key skills course in Year 12 and general studies in Year 13, but does not include religious education as required nor provision for daily collective worship. Very good provision for special needs within subjects is, on occasion, backed up by the allocation of support staff. Students whose home language is not English are similarly well supported by effective subject teaching. The school is actively working to raise students' aspirations through innovative programmes using Excellence in Cities funding. A recent innovation for all Year 12 students is the AS-level course in citizenship. A good programme called 'enrichment' is followed by all students and supports their personal development well. It includes very good preparation for the next steps they take to employment, further education or training. In discussion, students' views of this

course were more positive than suggested by their questionnaire returns in which they had interpreted 'enrichment' to mean this course rather than extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

*Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. Students receive **very good** support, advice and guidance. The school involves students **well** through seeking and acting on their views.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements for Year 7 and the buddy system get students off to a very good start.
- Adults know students well and provide very effective support for their wellbeing.
- Very good systems for monitoring progress ensure that students receive effective individual guidance, particularly when they are choosing courses for Years 10 and 11 and for the sixth form.
- Students have good opportunities through the year councils to contribute to the school's work and development.

Commentary

30. The individual support readily given by staff is appreciated by the students. The tutor system is a very efficient vehicle for advice and guidance at different stages in students' school life and is backed up thoroughly by medical support from a full-time nurse, a drop-in clinic and behaviour support and learning mentor services. A good number of staff has first-aid training. Arrangements for child protection are up-to-date and effective and the school receives good support from external agencies. Senior staff are vigilant in ensuring good supervision during breaks and lunchtimes as well as at the end of the school day. However, although some features of the school's health and safety practice are good, overall provision is only satisfactory because some required checks have yet to be carried out and the physical education department does not have risk assessments for its indoor activities. Arrangements for governors to fulfil their responsibilities for health and safety are not fully in place.
31. There are well-managed arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress. These provide an effective basis for setting individual targets and advising students on how to achieve well. Very useful careers advice with well-organised work experience in Year 10 helps students to make appropriate decisions. Through the year councils which meet every week students are consulted on such matters as school buses. Younger students commented that their views have a positive effect on school life, although they are critical of the fact that not all toilets remain unlocked at lunch and break times.
32. Learning targets for students with special needs are negotiated with them at annual reviews, revised and updated every six months. Observations of review sessions showed that students' feelings and opinions were taken fully into account. Staff attend the Year 6 reviews of special needs, aiding transition into Year 7 very well. Support staff provide very good care for vulnerable students. Learning mentors working within the behaviour support team provide helpful counselling for students who have been disruptive. However, the effectiveness of students' behaviour targets is reduced because these are not identified separately from learning targets.

Sixth form

33. For every aspect of advice and guidance for students in Years 12 and 13, the provision is very good. Students' appreciation of the quality is evident in their extremely positive questionnaire returns and their equally positive comments in discussions. Some do not feel that their council is very effective. The new sixth-form accommodation provides effectively for students' social welfare and their independent work during study periods.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

*Links with the community and with other schools are **good**; links with parents are **satisfactory**.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high, largely positive return to the inspection questionnaire is itself a measure of parents' positive views of the school.
- Methods for seeking the views of parents are in place but are insufficiently wide-ranging; the current calendar of events does not take full account of parents' ability to attend.
- Transfer to the school in Year 7 and from the school in Years 11 and 13 is managed well to students' benefit.
- Good links with local groups and business are helping to extend the range of curriculum opportunities, although there is scope for strengthening the opportunities for members of minority ethnic communities to contribute to school affairs.

Commentary

34. Parents are well informed about the school through its attractive prospectus and well-presented Year 9 options booklet. Annual reports on students' progress give helpful detail of students' personal development, providing good opportunities for students to assess their own progress and for parents to comment. Students' targets are not always presented clearly enough however, and some subjects were not reported in the previous academic year. Over Years 10 and 11 good termly progress reports (cycle assessments) are provided in addition to the annual report. Parents value the consultation meetings with teachers although the recorded attendance at these is only about 70 per cent. The timing of these meetings does not take account of Ramadan. Most parents feel that complaints are handled effectively but do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Their views are sought, for example to evaluate the usefulness of occasions such as parents' evenings, but the school does not routinely consult them on school issues and proposed developments.
35. Good links with the local community are established through work experience and work-related learning programmes, through local business sponsorship of art competitions, and with the wider community through foreign exchange programmes. The school has effective links with many local schools, for example science teachers work in local feeder schools and this is being extended to include English and mathematics teachers. Summer schools are organised for targeted Year 6 students, and a Years 6/7 team-building exercise to combat racism is planned for the summer term following the inspection. The school has not been successful in attracting more than minimal representation on the governing body from local minority ethnic groups. However, following the inspection, some progress has been made.
36. The special needs department is very well assisted by outside agencies such as the educational psychology service. Parents of Year 7 students are welcomed into the school through coffee mornings run by the special needs department, and parents are involved in setting targets for their children. The development of links with local communities has been interrupted by the unexpected vacancy for the community liaison co-ordinator post.

Sixth form

37. Very good imaginative arrangements support students' transfer to further education and there are very good links with several universities. These involve visits to open days, visits to the school by university students and attendance at university classes in the subjects students hope to study. University personnel help with UCAS forms. Students and their parents are kept well informed of their progress by the good termly reports drawn up as part of the cycle of assessment procedure.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

*Leadership and management are **good**. This applies equally to leadership and management. The contribution of the governing body is **good**. However, because statutory requirements are not met in full, governance has to be judged **unsatisfactory**.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership by the headteacher successfully promotes the school's inclusive values and builds strong teams to implement them.
- The school's management of the provision for students with a home language other than English is unsatisfactory.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and give good support to senior managers, although not equally good challenge.
- Lack of a school-wide monitoring programme means that inconsistencies in provision are not being picked up and tackled early enough and arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of development planning lack rigour.
- There are excellent arrangements to induct newly qualified and other new staff into the school's values and procedures, part of an effective programme for staff development.
- The governing body does not ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements for collective worship, students' annual reports, some aspects of health and safety and the sixth-form curriculum.

Commentary

38. The headteacher's enthusiasm for improvement inspires and motivates staff and students, as observed, for example, in a Year 7 assembly and a review discussion with a head of department. The extent of the positive responses in sixth-formers' questionnaire returns shows how this rubs off on students' experience of the school. Development has focused effectively on:

- the range of curriculum opportunities and the guidance programme;
- students' personal and social development through mentoring, lesson seating-plans, lunch arrangements and out-of-hours team building activities;
- refurbishment of the accommodation – as funding has allowed – to create specialist bases for subjects and courses and, consequently, cohesive staff teams developing good practice in teaching.

Considerable care has been taken to ensure that new practice gets off to a good start with all aspects contributing effectively, for example changing the timing of the school day only when the refurbished canteen was ready.

39. Governors serve the school well. A very good working relationship is established between the chair and the headteacher, and governors support the school's development with strong commitment. Governors have a good understanding of the issues facing the school. They are aware of strengths and weaknesses in provision, but do not hold the school rigorously to account for the thoroughness of its monitoring to identify these. As a consequence, the requirements for health and safety and for reporting annually to parents on their children's progress are not fully met. Nor is the requirement for daily collective worship for all students, an issue reported at the last inspection. School development planning is effected and recorded through a number of projects. The governing body is involved at the stage of formulating the development plan through the work of committees. The plan for 2001-2004, giving the rationale and aims, shows a school aware of current developments, facing its own issues squarely and willing to move with the times. Separate action plans for each aim identify general priorities and action but the attention to success criteria, monitoring and evaluation in these lacks rigour. This, together with the lack of a co-ordinated whole-school approach to monitoring, limits the effectiveness of the drive for improvement. Although there has been some improvement in monitoring since the last inspection when it was a key issue, routine lesson monitoring is not in

place across the school from which all staff can benefit through the sharing of strengths and areas for improvement. This accounts for some inconsistencies in practice observed during the inspection that had a limiting effect on students' progress in lessons.

40. Enthusiasm, commitment and thoroughness are evident qualities of the senior staff, pastoral leaders and most leaders of subjects and courses. These staff provide good, often very good role models as leaders and managers for their colleagues as well as for students. Leadership by example in the special needs department is excellent. Very good management ensures that all special needs staff receive appropriate training, and some training, although not yet enough, has been provided for subject staff. The leadership and management of behaviour support are generally good, although the distinction between learning support and behaviour support in lessons is not drawn clearly enough for those students whose difficulties concern behaviour, not learning. There are no arrangements for managing the provision across the school for students with a home language other than English.
41. Performance management, seen as central to school improvement, is very well organised and ensures clear links with staff development. A wide variety of training opportunities is available although, the impact on provision varies in effectiveness. In some subjects and courses, good practice is not routinely shared. Training has not made enough use of external expertise, for example in training staff to combat racism, although this is rectified in current planning. All staff, newly qualified teachers, support and supply staff, and staff who are new to management posts, are very effectively supported by an assigned colleague mentor. The thoroughness of the programme is demonstrated by the fact that newly-qualified teachers continue to receive targeted support throughout their second year.

Sixth form

42. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form shows particularly in the success in shaping provision that caters well for a range of individual needs and raises students' aspirations for their future lives. There is a strong, sharply-focused drive for improvement through initiatives that together form an imaginative and coherent package to open up opportunities for students. For example:
- master classes provided through the Aim Higher programme funded by Excellence in Cities;
 - agreements with Sheffield Hallam University encouraging students' access to higher education;
 - the taught key skills course in Year 12;
 - and the presence of a small number of overseas students adding a good international dimension to the sixth form.

Both leadership and management of the sixth form and of the 11 subjects inspected in detail are always at least good, and are very good in biology and art and design. However, the school has not ensured that arrangements for religious education for all students and for daily collective worship are in place.

Financial information for the whole school

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,218,558	Balance from previous year	22,847
Total expenditure	4,191,013	Balance carried forward to the next	27,545
Expenditure per student	2,882		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Students achieve well because teachers have high expectations and are committed to improvement.
- ❑ Learning and behaviour are well managed, so that time is well spent in lessons.
- ❑ The best practice of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 has been adopted, but is not yet fully in place so that learning is not often reviewed at the end of lessons.
- ❑ Marking does not give students in Years 7 to 9 specific advice on how to improve so that difficulties with grammar and punctuation continue.
- ❑ The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development by encouraging them to consider important moral and social issues.
- ❑ Although all students are included in lessons through well-chosen materials and careful grouping, the most capable and gifted students are not always challenged in Years 7 to 9.
- ❑ Although well led and managed, teaching and learning in the department are not monitored closely enough to ensure that all procedures are carried out equally well across the department.

Commentary

43. GCSE results in 2002 in English and literature were close to the national average, with girls significantly outperforming boys. In 2003, standards were maintained in language but dropped in literature. Over time, results in language have been consistently average, while literature has improved from below average. In the 2002 Year 9 tests, results were above the national average and well above those for similar schools. Since the last inspection, these test scores have fluctuated and show a fall in 2003.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

44. Students enter the school with below average literacy skills; their writing skills are below their oral and reading ability. By Year 9, most have made good progress and their listening skills have improved. Generally, girls are more articulate and willing to contribute to discussions. Those with special needs do well because they are known well and receive effective support. Students' responses to their reading show a sound grasp of the plot and moral issues, for example when considering the plight of the homeless in 'Stone Cold'. Although the least capable students' written work is brief and inaccurate, most can use different styles for a range of purposes and audiences, for example when writing to persuade. Students from ethnic minorities are fully included in lesson activities and make good progress; their achievement is equally good as that of students with similar prior attainment, including students whose home language is not English. By Year 11, the most capable students know set books such as 'Pride and Prejudice' very well and they understand their social and historical context. Most students listen carefully to teachers and to each other, although in discussion boys are more forthcoming than girls. Nearly all speak clearly but some do not extend their ideas. Students' responses to literature vary in depth and perception but most have a good grasp of the plot and the characters in 'An Inspector Calls'. They also understand cinematic techniques used in 'The

Matrix' and the techniques of advertising. Written work is often lively and original and talented students write highly authentic pieces such as detective stories. Standards in Year 11 reflect recent performance in the GCSE examinations.

45. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- careful planning and resources enable students to build on previous knowledge and skills in a good variety of activities;
 - good management, including mixed-gender seating plans, creates a purposeful atmosphere;
 - clear tasks and challenging time-limits set a good pace for work;
 - students' individual needs are well known to the teachers who work in effective partnership with support staff to develop their skills;
 - able and gifted students are not always sufficiently challenged however, and they can become bored;
 - although objectives are always shared with students, they are not always reviewed at the end of lessons so the opportunity to judge how well they have learned is lost;
 - marking does not give students in Years 7 to 9 sufficient guidance on how to improve and some continue to make mistakes in grammar and punctuation;
 - 'starter' activities usually gain students' interest early in the lesson but some are allowed to go on too long leaving insufficient time for the main task.

Overall, students of all ages respond well to this good teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are good. In a minority of lessons in Years 8 and 9, the poor behaviour of some students impedes progress. The areas needing attention have not been picked up by departmental monitoring.

Curriculum leadership

46. Teachers share a commitment to high standards. Improvements are supported by appropriate strategies that are already having a positive effect on students' achievement. By discussing issues such as war and social justice, students develop their social, moral and cultural awareness and understand their responsibilities as young citizens. Data from assessment is used well to plan the programme of work and resources are well managed. Students' experience is enriched by events such as poetry days and theatre visits. Improvement since the last inspection is good; standards have risen in Year 9 tests as well as in GCSE literature, and the department is better managed, although monitoring is not rigorous enough.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. In subjects other than English, standards of literacy improve from Year 7 to 9 and they are average in Years 10 and 11. On entry, students are generally more competent in the spoken than in the written language. The national strategy for English in Years 7 to 9 is supported by a focus on language in subjects such as geography, history and modern foreign languages. This ensures that the reading and writing requirements of GCSE are met.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good achievement in Years 10 and 11 is a consequence of teachers' very high expectations and challenging work.
- Higher attaining students achieve well in Years 7 to 9, although the work is not always demanding enough.
- The staff team is highly effective and staff constantly challenge their own performance.
- Very good extra-curricular provision in the subject motivates students well.

Commentary

48. GCSE results were well above average in 2002. There was no difference in the performance of boys and girls or in the performance of students from different ethnic groups. Students did significantly better than in their other subjects. In 2003, standards were maintained. Teachers' Year 9 assessments were above average overall in 2002, although the proportion of students achieving the highest levels was below average. Results in 2003 were similar with more students achieving the higher levels

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9</i> <i>very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average by Year 9</i> <i>well above average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9</i> <i>very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

49. Students begin Year 7 with below average standards overall. Average and lower attainers achieve very well over Years 7 to 9 while the most capable students achieve well because they do not have enough opportunities to write at length and their grasp of the main tenses is insecure. Students in Years 10 and 11 develop a very wide knowledge of vocabulary, develop a good understanding of grammar and become confident speakers. Consequently, they write and speak at length with good accuracy and variety of expression. Boys and girls and students from different ethnic groups achieve equally well. Gifted and talented students achieve well because the work is sufficiently demanding. Those with special needs achieve well because teachers meet their particular needs well. Students for whom English is not their home language achieve well, although they are not identified as a group. By Year 11, students develop good literacy skills and are competent users of ICT.

50. The key features of the teaching and learning which affect achievement are:

- students are always well motivated because all teachers maintain very good relationships;
- effective lesson planning, incorporating thorough practice of skills and clear targets, enables students to absorb and retain vocabulary securely;
- teachers have very good knowledge of GCSE requirements and use it to set students challenging targets and review their progress; students know what is expected and respond very well;
- achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good rather than very good because the level of challenge in work is not always high enough; targets based on National Curriculum levels are not handled as effectively as GCSE targets are;
- all teachers have good or very good command of French and German but do not always use it effectively in lessons.

Curriculum leadership

51. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, a consequence of staff team-working. The department evaluates its own performance very thoroughly and uses this information very effectively in planning, although the monitoring has not picked up the areas in teaching needing attention. Standards have moved from below to above average and achievement from satisfactory to very good.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because leadership and management are successfully focused on providing good teaching.
- ICT is used well to help students learn.
- Students work well with each other and with their teachers to increase their learning.
- Students in Year 7 do not learn as well as those in other years because they are not as well taught.
- Too many lessons finish too early so that students do not learn as much as they could.

Commentary

52. In 2002, GCSE results were average, while above average compared with those of similar schools. Girls gained slightly better results than boys. GCSE results in 2003 were not as good. There has been no overall improvement in GCSE results in recent years and students do less well in mathematics than in English or science, both in Year 9 and at GCSE. In the Year 9 national tests in 2002, students' results were below average, although average when compared with similar schools. Boys' results were better than those of girls. Results in 2003 show improvement. Recently, results have risen faster than the national rate.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good overall and in Years 10 to 11 satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9 and by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good overall and in Years 10 to 11 satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

53. Students joined the school with average standards in the current Year 7; previously, these standards have been below average. Boys reach higher standards than girls because they are more willing to try out ideas. Students in the higher and lower teaching groups make better progress than those in middle groups and this is because teachers expect more of them. Those from minority ethnic groups achieve equally to other students with similar attainment. However, the very small number of students for whom English is not their mother tongue do not always achieve as well as they could because the school does not support their learning of English sufficiently. Students with special needs achieve well; they are usually taught in smaller groups and teaching assistants provide good support. Those with special gifts or talents learn as well as others due to work which provides them with suitable challenge. Overall, standards of literacy are below average. Consequently, many have difficulties describing their work and do not willingly write about it, sometimes with adverse effects on their examination coursework. Students' ICT skills are good so that their work is not held back when they use computers. The standard of work seen during the inspection is higher than that reflected in GCSE results. A main reason for this is that revision for examinations is not planned effectively.

54. In the best lessons:

- teachers lead good discussions, making students think carefully how they can apply what they already know to form new ideas;
- students become increasingly independent and try things out for themselves;
- ICT is used well so that students work at a good pace and work is suited to their needs;
- students are well motivated because they know why they are learning the particular topic and how it will be used;
- they are given helpful information about how to improve their learning.

Where teaching is no better than satisfactory:

- work does not provide all students with an appropriate challenge throughout the lesson;
- time is lost because the lesson ends early or very little learning takes place in the final minutes of the session;
- teachers' written comments, while encouraging, do not give students enough information about the quality of their work and how to improve it.

55. Learning is least effective in Year 7 where the teaching groups include students of all levels of attainment. Here, teachers are not consistently providing all students with suitable work. For example, in a lesson on averages, higher attainers could easily calculate the average of a set of numbers while lower attainers could not do the arithmetic involved. Average and lower attainers in this class were not yet ready to learn about frequency tables. In this lesson, everyone learnt well for part of the time. Students' lower achievement in Year 7 affects their later learning as they need to catch up. It is the reason why they do not achieve as much as they could in Years 10 and 11.
56. Although the school has had difficulties in filling mathematics teaching posts, the arrangements to cover vacancies have ensured that learning does not suffer. Good curriculum leadership leads to teachers working well together, for example when sharing good practice. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection:
- students' achievement has improved;
 - results in Year 9 national tests have improved;
 - all students in Years 10 and 11 now take a course leading to GCSE examination;
 - the subject is now taught in better rooms with enough textbooks;
 - ICT is now used well to help students learn.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Students develop their mathematical skills satisfactorily in their work across most subjects. In ICT, they use formulæ well when working with spreadsheets and, in design and technology, they measure quantities accurately. In subjects such as art and design and physical education, teachers do not always take opportunities to develop mathematical skills. There is scope for more effective co-ordination of this work so that students use and develop their mathematical skills on a regular basis.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has created an effective staff team with a clear vision for developing the subject.
- Examination results are much improved since the last inspection.
- Students learn well due to teachers' good lesson planning.
- The marking of students' work is not done consistently well by all staff so that not all students are getting sufficient help about how to improve.
- Opportunities to develop the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of students' personal development are missed.

Commentary

58. GCSE results in 2002 for double award science were significantly better than the national results. In single award science, boys did much better than girls. In 2003, results for both courses improved considerably, well exceeding the school's target. Year 9 assessments have remained at the national average over the last three years.

**Achievement
Standards**

**good
average by Year 9
above average by Year 11**

Teaching and learning

good

Leadership and management

both very good

59. The majority of students enter Year 7 with average standards. In 2002, results at the end of Year 9 show that, in relation to their prior attainment, students had achieved very well. At

GCSE, boys gained more of the higher grades than girls in double award science in 2002 and better results than in their other subjects.

60. Teaching is good overall with some very good features.
- Lessons are well planned and the objectives for each are shared with students.
 - There are plenty of activities to challenge students' thinking and develop understanding.
 - The best marking gives students guidelines and targets for improvement.
 - Staff have high expectations of what students can achieve.
- Students are often given opportunities to work in groups for discussions or practical activities and there is much evidence of collaborative working and a purposeful atmosphere. Both boys and girls and those from different ethnic groups work well together, for example in Year 7 when students were developing ideas about the different types of cells, tissues and organs in the body. Those students identified as having special needs learn well and are helped effectively by the support teachers and by resources matched to their needs. Many achieve better than expected due to the very good teaching of difficult ideas such as the detail of the atom structure of the elements or the speed of chemical reactions. In the better lessons, gifted and talented students are given additional work to extend and develop their understanding of a topic. In some lessons, not all students are kept fully involved and so learning is only satisfactory. Students' work is not marked regularly or thoroughly and this results in standards below their capability.

Curriculum leadership

61. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection and there is a well-planned scheme for future developments. The head of department has built an effective, mutually supportive team of subject specialists, the majority of whom have joined the school in the last few years. Good, new teaching schemes have been introduced as a priority with well-planned lessons that follow the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, although the schemes at each stage do not incorporate planning for students' personal development. There are many effective systems in place to monitor the work of the department, for example the quality of teaching and learning. Students' progress is tracked well and targets are set and shared with the students. Improvements in some laboratories have been made and, in response to the last report, preparation areas have been reorganised. However, there is still a shortage of storage space and the laboratories in one block do not offer up-to-date, stimulating working areas.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results were significantly improved in 2003.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, but of more variable quality in Years 7 to 9, with some that is unsatisfactory.
- Very effective leadership and management have transformed ICT since the last inspection.

Commentary

62. GCSE results were average in 2002; the number of girls was too small to make secure comparisons of their results with those of boys. Students' grades were lower than in their other subjects by a greater margin than in most schools. However, this is partly because a much higher proportion than in most schools took the examination so that a wider range of prior attainment and aptitude was represented. The 2003 results, with a smaller number of entries, show considerable improvement. Teachers' Year 9 assessments showed average standards in 2002, but were an over-estimation. The 2003 assessments were accurate.

Achievement

satisfactory in Years 7 to 9

Standards	good in Years 10 and 11
Teaching and learning	average by Year 9 and by Year 11
	satisfactory in Years 7 to 9
Leadership and management	good in Years 10 and 11
	both very good

63. Students' standards on entry to Year 7 are improving. They are now average, whereas those of the current Year 11 were below average. By Year 9, where standards are average, most students achieve satisfactorily. They competently use the chosen programs, knowing for example, the different parts of a database and understanding the different types of information with which they are working. A small number are not yet using their skills in very creative ways however and they often follow lines of enquiry set out for them by teachers. Those students taking the GCSE course are achieving well by Year 11. Average standards have been maintained, although this is from a lower Year 7 starting point. Students' current progress indicates that the department's goal of sustaining above average results is realistic. Most students use the Internet for research and a range of programs to present their findings, which they do imaginatively. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls or between students from different ethnic groups.
64. There is some variation in the quality of teaching and learning, with a range from very good to unsatisfactory on occasion. In the best lessons:
- students know what they have to do and achieve because teachers clearly set out and explain the objectives and manage the class well to ensure good attention;
 - lessons are purposeful and productive because students respond well to the teacher's clear expectations;
 - interesting and well-paced activities, with teachers ensuring that all are involved, engage students' interest and provide for effective learning.
- In lessons that are satisfactory, with scope for improvement:
- pace is not well judged, with teachers either accepting a leisurely approach from some, or moving things on too fast for a few, so that all are not fully secure in their learning;
 - limited planned challenge for the highest attainers limits their achievement;
 - opportunities for students to be creatively involved are limited when teachers provide answers for them.
- When learning is unsatisfactory, this is because teaching does not ensure that all students pay attention and is not assertive enough in overcoming unsatisfactory attitudes.

Curriculum leadership

65. At the time of the last inspection, provision, achievement and leadership were unsatisfactory, with the subject having made no progress since the previous inspection. Since then, the quality of the partnership between senior managers, the subject leader and other teaching and support staff and the contribution of each have succeeded in transforming the profile of ICT within the school. Nonetheless, there are areas still in need of further improvement, for example in monitoring teaching and learning to ensure that: the sharing of good practice leads to less inconsistency; and that the enthusiastic approach to the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 always has a positive impact. However, a clear awareness of what needs to be done and energetic commitment in pursuing improvement are vital elements in a department that is decisively moving forward.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. The last inspection reported that, because students had too few opportunities to use computers, the school was not meeting its statutory requirement. This was partly because there were insufficient computers and partly because of curricular weaknesses. Few subjects made adequate use of computers and there was an inadequate taught course in Year 7. Since then, the school has increased the number and quality of computers so that provision is now very good. Both the taught course and cross-curricular opportunities have improved markedly. Consequently, all subjects now provide at least satisfactory access to computers to

complement a good taught course in all years. In art and design, however, while there are opportunities for general use, there is insufficient use of software and equipment that is specific to the subject. Achievement is now satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, overall achievement is good because GCSE standards are average and those students not taking the GCSE option meet the expectations.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong staff team being established under good new leadership is well focused on raising achievement.
- Good management has identified pertinent priorities for improvement.
- Teachers' effective management of students establishes a good climate for learning so that students' achievement is improving.
- Very good use of fieldwork successfully enhances students' understanding of physical and human geography in all years.

Commentary

67. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average. In comparison to their other GCSE subjects, students did less well in geography. In 2003 the results fell. Staffing difficulties, now resolved, had a detrimental effect on reaching the department's targets. However, students' attainment was equal to their predicted grades, although lower than their targeted grades, and the proportion reaching the highest grade doubled. Teachers' Year 9 assessments were slightly below the national average in 2002 and were similar in 2003.

Achievement	good in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Standards	below average by Year 9 and by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Leadership and management	both good

68. Students enter the school with low levels of geographical knowledge and skills. All students, boys and girls, those with special needs and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress in lessons. Students with a home language other than English make equally good progress as others in relation to their previous attainment. By the end of Year 9, students can answer factual questions well but find it difficult to manipulate information in longer written tasks. By the end of Year 11, students have a satisfactory knowledge of facts, but often have difficulty applying this knowledge when answering oral and written questions. This is the main reason for satisfactory rather than good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
69. The department has undertaken a thorough review of teaching and learning, with emphasis on Years 7 to 9. There is good use of the national strategy to plan lessons, although the quality varies in practice.
- Lessons include good visual images that stimulate students' interest and help them to learn.
 - Good starter activities engage students quickly, but the review of learning at the end of lessons does not always evaluate students' progress effectively.
 - Following a brisk, purposeful start, the pace in a minority of lessons becomes too slow as students begin written exercises, particularly in Years 10 and 11; consequently the progress of average and higher attainers is hindered.

- Structured worksheets provide good support for lower attainers and students with special needs who make good progress.
- Fieldwork visits in every year support students' learning well because these are effectively matched to the curriculum.

Regular marking and informative comments on students' written work give explicit pointers for improvement. However, their effectiveness in helping students to understand exactly what is required of them in order to reach higher grades is reduced because the marking is not linked to identified criteria for success or to the requirements of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades.

Curriculum leadership

70. There is a very clear direction for the work of the department. Since the last inspection, improvement is good. Schemes of work have been improved as have visual resources; ICT is now used effectively to support learning. Staffing difficulties, now resolved, restricted the improvement in standards at the end of Year 11. However, a very detailed analysis of results has been completed and has led to the identification of very good strategies designed to improve GCSE results, although these are not yet fully in place. New teachers have been united into a strong, well-motivated team which has the capacity and determination to raise standards.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality of teaching is reflected in students' good achievement.
- Teachers' knowledge influences the development of students' factual knowledge and understanding well.
- Staff manage students well, providing a positive learning atmosphere which ensures good behaviour in most lessons.
- Assessment does not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

71. The 2002 GCSE results were below average with girls gaining better results at A*-C than boys. Students did less well in history than in their other subjects. There was an improvement in 2003, the results returning to the standards achieved in previous years. Teacher assessments in Year 9 show average standards.

**Achievement
Standards**

**good
average by Year 9
above average by Year 11**

**Teaching and learning
Leadership and management**

**good
both good**

72. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average. Across the range of attainment, most use their good factual knowledge and understanding effectively in writing, drawing and map-work. Across all year groups, higher attainers are not always fully challenged by the work set. Girls achieve slightly better than boys. Students can assess sources for bias and reliability and show developing skill in using the Internet for research. They record their findings in interesting ways. Where support is given, this greatly enhances the learning of students with special needs. Students from minority ethnic groups, including those whose home language is not English, achieve equally well to others with the same prior attainment. In Years 10 and 11, students show skill and sensitivity in analysing issues such as racism in the United States in the 1920s.

73. The strong features of the most effective teaching are:
- the sharing of the learning objectives with students;
 - teachers' skills in handling question and answer sessions;
 - the good variety of activities and resources, including the use of ICT.
- Students use their developing thinking skills well, both in sharing ideas in paired and group work as well as in their writing. In an excellent lesson, an innovative approach and good rapport with the learning assistant provided a Year 7 class with an outstanding learning experience on Roman government. In the small number of lessons that were satisfactory rather than good or better, the work was not always appropriately matched to the range of attainment within the group. The marking of students' work lacks helpful comment to show how improvements can be made.

Curriculum leadership

74. A clear vision for the subject and appropriately identified points for departmental development, together with good teamwork, are helping to maintain the good standards achieved since the last inspection. Improvement since then is good. Regular monitoring is encouraging the sharing of best practice. Students generally benefit from the department's inclusive approach. However, although the programme of visits extends students' learning, it does not involve students in all year groups.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching delivered at a cracking pace with enthusiasm and based on good subject knowledge stimulates effective learning.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to students' spiritual development and their awareness of cultural development.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to enable students to consider how to present their work well.

Commentary

75. GCSE results in 2002 were above average in the short course followed by all students, offered for the first time in the previous year. The 2003 results show a fall. It is too early to evaluate trends over time.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

76. Students' average standards by Year 9 represent good achievement from their standards when they joined Year 7 which were below average. Students have a secure knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Their understanding of the importance of baptism in Christianity is good and most of them have grasped the difference between infant baptism as practised in the Anglican tradition and believers' baptism as practised in non-conformist traditions. They have a good grasp of the significance of religious pilgrimage such as the importance of Hajj for Muslims. Average standards and good achievement are maintained by Year 11. Students have a good grasp of the teaching of Islam and Christianity on sex, marriage and family life. They have a grasp of issues surrounding racism as a result of a very good module on social harmony. Gifted and talented students have a deeper understanding of the significance of the Nicene Creed, a consequence of the probing challenge in the teaching.
77. The main features of the teaching are:
- good subject knowledge and effective questioning;

- skilful management of behaviour;
- teachers' skills in matching the work to individual needs;
- tasks which consolidate learning by asking students to apply the principles they have learned to their own lives;
- good emphasis on key technical terms ensuring that students whose home language is not English learn equally well as others and are fully included in all activities.

Lessons incorporate quality time to encourage students to think deeply and this makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual development. Skilful planning enables students to respond with maturity so that there is a discernible growth in their spiritual and moral development. A focus on raising students' awareness of cultural diversity results in them gaining a deeper and better informed respect for the values and customs of others.

Curriculum leadership

78. The good assessment procedures are a very significant improvement since the previous inspection. Although the department has planned for the development of students' ICT skills through particular modules of work, there are insufficient opportunities for making presentations to the class using ICT. Standards are better than reported at the last inspection, a consequence of good improvement in planning, assessment and the quality of teaching.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' skills encourage good learning and achievement.
- All students are included well in lesson activities and their positive attitudes to their work and good behaviour lead to good learning.
- The accommodation is rundown and limited space hinders students' learning.

Commentary

79. In 2002, GCSE results were close to the national average. Boys' results were substantially better than in previous years. In 2003, there was an improvement. Over time, results have steadily improved from below average to average. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the overall level was broadly average. Teacher assessments in 2003 are confirmed by the average standards of work seen during the inspection.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

80. Students in Years 7 to 9 follow the design process well. Both boys and girls become involved in the different types of technologies; they are adept in manipulating machines and hand tools to cut, join, mix and modify materials. Higher attainers' annotation of drawings to explain the detail is very good. Students from minority ethnic groups are integrated well and they achieve well, as do the small number with a home language other than English. Because teachers know students with special needs well and ensure that they participate fully in activities, these students usually make the same good progress as others. Work on display is of a similar standard for boys and girls. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well in electronics, food, resistant materials and textiles because teachers plan work to match individual needs and support individual learning well in lessons. Students talk confidently about their ideas, using technical vocabulary accurately and they listen carefully. Most writing is clear and readable. Mathematical skills are used satisfactorily to measure materials accurately. Computers are

effectively used for some aspects of students' work, for example in Year 7, for the production of a working drawing for a puzzle in two-dimensional design.

81. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
- Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and their good subject knowledge wins students' confidence.
 - Detailed planning, benefiting from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, enables students to build well on their previous knowledge and skills in a good variety of activities.
 - Challenging work is presented to students who respond well and learn quickly.
 - Students' good application to their work supports their achievement, helped by the mixed-gender seating plans.
 - The pace of work in a small number of lessons is slow and this has an adverse affect on students' achievement.
 - Specialist support for students with special needs is rarely allocated to the subject and hinders learning.
 - Specifically-planned activities for gifted and talented students are not evident in all lessons.

Curriculum leadership

82. Able organisation of the department and good, enthusiastic teamwork are raising the profile of the subject. There is a clear focus on improving attainment. Accommodation is used well, although space is generally limited and rather rundown in the workshops for resistant materials. While teachers' organisation is good and ensures that health and safety issues are properly considered, progress in lessons is hindered by the poor work conditions. Since the previous inspection, improvement is good. Students are achieving higher standards at GCSE and the achievement of boys has improved significantly. Teaching is now good and provision for ICT now satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and music. Drama lessons were also observed. All students study drama in Years 7 to 9 and drama is an increasingly popular option choice in Years 10 and 11.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective teaching of a well-structured programme of taught skills and knowledge provides a secure base for individual development and leads to good achievement by Year 11.
- Very good assessment procedures are openly shared with students and aid target-setting so that students reach above average standards.
- Very well documented policies, systems and planned activities support all students and encourage their independence.
- Inadequate resources for developing ICT as a creative medium slow the exploration of alternative ideas.
- There is insufficient space for storing students' three-dimensional work.

Commentary

83. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average. Girls did better than boys, although both gained results above their respective national averages. On average, students gained almost one grade higher in art and design than in their other GCSE subjects. The 2003 results show similar standards. Teachers' Year 9 assessments appear to have been over generous in 2002, placing students' standards well above national averages. Newly-devised assessment procedures are more rigorous and reliable and show average standards in the 2003

assessments. There are no significant variations in the achievement of different groups of students.

Achievement Standards	good average by Year 9 above average by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership and management	both very good

84. Students' standards are below average on entry to Year 7; they improve steadily to average by the end of Year 9 and to above average by the end of Year 11. This reflects consistently good achievement across the 11 to 16 age range. In the earlier years, almost all students gain a satisfactory or better level of competence with a wider than usual range of materials and techniques. They show good use and understanding of a growing art and design vocabulary and effectively employ mathematical skills in planning for repeated interlocking prints or measuring proportions. Students have satisfactory Internet research skills developed through group sessions in the computer suites and through homework tasks. As they get older, students show increasing confidence in experimenting with materials and an ability to apply techniques to suit their purposes.
85. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- teachers' very supportive, confident approach is reflected in students' attitudes to their work;
 - students are encouraged to take increasing initiative in planning their work, so adding to their personal achievement;
 - teachers are aware of the capabilities of their students and meet their needs through good-quality individual tuition;
 - very good assessment and recording procedures let students know what they need to do to improve;
 - there are inadequate resources in the department to teach and develop ICT effectively which hinders students' ability to create and manipulate images.

Curriculum leadership

86. The leadership is very pro-active in exploring ways of improving on already high standards. Very good delegation of responsibilities makes particularly effective use of a skilful and knowledgeable staff. A very clear vision of art and design education has led to a strong curriculum of taught skills enhanced by opportunities for students to make contact with artists and artworks, both in and out of school. Students' high-quality artwork greatly enhances many areas of the school environment but the art rooms are poorly furnished. There is insufficient storage space for three-dimensional work so that stored work encroaches on the available teaching spaces. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall, although the significant issues of ICT and accommodation remain unresolved.

Drama

87. Students reach average standards by Year 9 and above average standards by Year 11. Achievement is good by Year 9 and Year 11, and very good for the growing number of students gaining A* and A grades at GCSE. Drama makes a considerable contribution to the social, moral and cultural aspects of students' personal development, their self-esteem and confidence, and to improvements in their use of English, particularly in speaking skills.
88. The factors which promote these levels of achievement are:
- good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent teaching, which consistently challenges, encourages and empowers students to work at the highest level of their capability and as independently as they can;

- good and sometimes very good learning in which good relationships among students mean they can identify, value and use each other's subject skills and personal qualities to develop the dynamics of group activities;
- a wide range of good opportunities for students to perform and to evaluate performance, in lessons, extra-curricular activities and in contact with community and professional theatre;
- good leadership and management which have realised high standards in the subject through an imaginative scheme of work, very good team teaching, useful student assessment profiles and the effective monitoring and evaluation of subject development.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategies to arrest the recent decline in provision are beginning to improve students' learning.
- The good features of teaching and learning are developing students' skills and understanding satisfactorily, although homework is not set in Years 7 and 9.
- Students in Year 8 are losing continuity and progression in their learning because the Year 8 curriculum excludes music.
- Standards are too low for most students in Years 9 and 10 because of previous unsatisfactory learning.

Commentary

89. GCSE results in 2002 were average; they show a fall in 2003. Numbers taking the examination are very small. In 2002, the Year 9 teacher assessments were above average. The 2003 assessments show a fall.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9 and Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

90. Students' standards when they join Year 7 are below average. After just over half a term at the school, their standards show improvement. The standards in Year 8 cannot be evaluated because Year 8 students do not have music lessons, although their work at the end of Year 7 indicates that they were making satisfactory progress. In Year 9, as well as for the small number of students in Year 10 taking GCSE, standards are below average. In both years, students lack practical skills and understanding because of previous unsatisfactory provision. Students in Year 11 are doing better because they have had more time to make up for earlier deficiencies in their learning and they are keen to improve. Achievement is equally good for boys and girls, for students from minority ethnic groups and for students with different attainment levels. Those with special needs and talented students are supported well both by flexible lesson tasks which suit their capabilities and by good help and encouragement in lessons. The use of key words, technical terms and students' evaluation of their own work contributes well to their development in English. Recent and improved resources for subject-specific ICT help composing and self-study skills, especially in Years 10 and 11.
91. The good features of teaching support students' learning by:
- promoting an integrated study of practical skills, understanding and knowledge with a variety of activities, resources and musical styles;
 - challenging tasks supported by good examples and helpful feedback;
 - individual programmes to improve particular weaknesses, especially in Year 10, and by
 - the teachers' good role model of skilled musicianship and active care for individuals.
- Some of the less successful features of teaching adversely affect students' learning by:
- not engaging or insisting on everyone's attention, particularly during questioning sessions;

- failing to establish consistently acceptable behaviour and concentration;
- misjudging the timing of different activities within lessons;
- not setting homework for students in Years 7 and 9 to reinforce their learning.

Curriculum leadership

92. The relative inexperience of the recently appointed head of department in curriculum leadership and management is so strongly supported by senior management that steady improvements are being made to arrest the decline in the subject. These include a new and more inclusive scheme of work, better opportunities for instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities, day-to-day management and team teaching. The new subject development plan suggests further appropriate developments, but is not yet sufficiently focused on outcomes, deadlines and the evaluation of success criteria to have the maximum effect. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection, which judged music to be a strength of the school, remains unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good achievement at GCSE is the result of good teaching.
- Staff work hard but the support given to part-time and supply staff, particularly through schemes of work, is not always detailed enough.
- The department improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on raising standards.
- There are accurate systems of assessment but the information learned is not used with students to help them improve.

Commentary

93. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average with a good proportion of higher grades. Unconfirmed results in 2003 maintain this trend. In recent years, all students taking the examination have gained a grade. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 show both boys and girls reach average standards and inspection evidence supports these assessments.

Achievement		satisfactory by Year 9
	general PE	satisfactory by Year 11
	GCSE PE	very good
Standards		average
Teaching and learning		satisfactory
Leadership and management		both satisfactory

94. Students in Year 7 enter with below average standards overall; their experience of activities varies widely. Both boys and girls reach broadly average standards in Year 9. In general lessons in Years 10 and 11, students make satisfactory gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. In GCSE lessons, achievement is better because teaching focuses on examination requirements. All groups of students achieve well because teachers help them prepare very good revision materials. Boys in particular achieve very well when compared with the other subjects they study.
95. Teaching varies in quality. The main strengths and weaknesses are:
- good individual support ensures satisfactory learning for all students;
 - schemes of work are not updated and lack detail to help teachers work in a consistent way;
 - behaviour is managed well so that lessons proceed smoothly;
 - good marking of GCSE work helps students to improve;

- assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not shared with students in order that they understand what to do next to improve;
- teaching of GCSE work has greater pace and a clear lesson structure, while the structure in general lessons lacks focus and students are not always aware of the aims.

Curriculum leadership

96. The curriculum leader has ensured smooth day-to-day running of the department through a period of staffing difficulties. During this time, new assessment systems have been introduced and standards in examinations maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There is good analysis of examination data as part of a review of strengths and weaknesses but insufficient attention is given to raising standards and achievement in general lessons.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Leisure and tourism

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are motivated to do their best because teachers use a wide range of methods.
- Course and lesson planning is good and the use of real case study material encourages good learning.
- Students are motivated by the opportunities to use ICT in their work; coursework in particular is well presented and of a good standard.
- In some lessons, particularly in Year 10, where students are too reliant on the teacher, learning is satisfactory rather than good.

Commentary

97. GCSE results in 2002 showed both boys and girls achieved well compared with the other subjects they studied. There are no national figures for this course, however a significant proportion of students achieved higher grades. Results in 2003 were an improvement on 2002.

Achievement	very good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

98. Students start the course in Year 10 with below average standards. Their achievement by the end of the course is very good. Both boys and girls achieve better than in the other subjects they study. Achievement in coursework is particularly good because teachers plan activities based on real situations and students find these interesting. Students in Year 11 have good attitudes and work hard. In Year 10, students do not respond so well but the variety of teaching methods used is helping them gain the necessary skills of application and concentration. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of students.
99. The main strengths and weaknesses of teaching are:
- a good range of methods, including group work and discussions that motivate students and draw on their own experiences;
 - good use is made of 'seating plans' so that the needs of all students are identified;
 - teachers support and encourage all students so they achieve their best;
 - good use is made of ICT in coursework so that students present their work well and make full use of research in their studies;
 - in a few lessons, the pace of learning is slow because some tasks go on too long.

Curriculum leadership.

100. The curriculum leader has built a strong team that promotes good teaching, learning and achievement. Teachers new to the course are given good support and benefit from the experience of the curriculum leader. This course has been introduced since the last inspection and forms part of a well-planned vocational programme. It is making a good contribution to improving standards in the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education, PSHE, is known in the school as guidance and is taught through specific lessons, some tutor periods and across the curriculum in other subjects.

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective in helping students to become responsible citizens of the school.
- The citizenship curriculum includes a good variety of events and activities.
- Some subject departments highlight the citizenship aspect in their lessons well, but this is not in place in all subjects.
- Year councils give students a valuable experience of democracy.
- Opportunities to participate in citizenship activities with partners in the community are not available to all students but plans are in hand to rectify this.

Commentary

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

101. Students show a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of society and of individual rights and responsibilities. The work that has been undertaken by students in the various forms of provision has given them good opportunities to extend their thinking skills and to write about and discuss the way society works. Students take good advantage of opportunities to apply their skills of enquiry and to communicate what they have learned when justifying and expressing their opinions. They are prepared to challenge the opinions of others while holding on to those they have themselves. Students of all levels of capability work well at the given tasks and students with special needs work hard to achieve their targets. Students whose home language is not English were well supported in the lessons observed and so made equally good progress as others.
102. Controversial issues are dealt with sensitively. In the better lessons, students are given good opportunities:
- to develop informed opinions and the ability and confidence to challenge those of others;
 - to reflect on, and respond to, what they had learned using an individual assessment form for inclusion in their citizenship portfolio;
 - to take part in a democratic exercise.
103. The teaching at every stage is effective in reflecting the aim of helping students to become responsible members of society. Teachers make good use of different events and activities ranging from bringing visitors into school to providing different types of work to support students' learning. This adds richness to the challenging curriculum, for example through visits from members of the local police force and visits to the local clinic. There are good opportunities on a regular basis for students to take part in active democracy by being elected to the membership of their year councils. The council meetings are lively with good discussion of students' concerns but also attention to the wider issues of the school environment and how it could be improved. For example, the Year 7 council were about to consider the recycling of

the bottles and cans they use. However, although students' work is marked, it is marked according to the policies of the different areas involved and so suffers from a lack of coherence. This has not been picked up because of the lack of monitoring.

Curriculum leadership

104. Citizenship has been introduced well, although procedures for monitoring students' progress are not yet in place. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of how the subject should develop. Those subjects dealing with an aspect of citizenship highlight this aspect of their lessons well. However, although the school is aware that not all areas are involving themselves, it is not ensuring that they do so. While appropriately emphasising students' involvement in year councils, the school has not given sufficient attention to providing active citizenship activities either in or out of school. There are not enough opportunities for students to take part in activities involving organisations in the community with which there are established links.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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.

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	100.0	90.0	80.0	42.7	50.0	39.0
Biology	6	83.3	81.6	0.0	33.2	23.3	33.2
English/English language	6	83.3	92.0	0.0	29.9	23.3	35.7
General studies	7	71.4	78.6	0.0	25.7	20.0	30.0
Geography	10	60.0	88.3	0.0	36.4	19.0	36.3
History	6	60.0	88.3	0.0	37.2	25.0	37.8
Mathematics	12	33.3	74.2	8.3	34.3	12.5	31.3
Sociology	10	70.0	83.7	10.0	33.6	21.0	33.8
Sports/PE studies	8	87.5	88.2	0.0	27.7	26.3	33.8

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100.00	96.1	71.4	48.7	97.1	85.1
Biology	8	100.00	91.6	25.0	36.3	75.0	74.1
Business studies	8	100.00	96.4	12.5	32.8	77.5	76.5
English/English language	16	100.00	98.3	37.5	36.5	81.3	80.1
General studies	30	100.00	90.1	10.0	29.1	69.3	69.3
History	6	100.00	97.1	33.3	41.0	73.3	81.2
Information technology	5	100.00	89.1	20.0	22.4	68.0	64.1
Mathematics	7	100.00	93.3	14.3	52.2	71.4	84.7
Other sciences	12	100.00	94.7	16.7	40.1	68.3	78.7
Physics	6	100.00	92.8	50.0	42.8	90.0	78.6
Sociology	20	100.00	95.4	15.0	39.6	68.0	79.1
Business	6	100.00	87.1	0.0	16.5	40.0	60.1
Health and social care	24	91.7	90.1	0.0	16.3	49.2	62.5
Travel and tourism	17	70.6	88.1	0.0	18.5	43.4	62.1

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate GNVQ	19	84	N/a	11	N/a	0	N/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English language and English literature. A lesson in German was sampled. Numbers taking A-level German have been low and students have gained average results. Students show a high level of oral competence and achieve very well because teachers have very high expectations and use very effective questioning to extend students' responses.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good sense of partnership between teachers and students so that they work effectively together to achieve success.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge wins students' confidence so that they have a positive attitude to the subject.
- Resources are well chosen to enable students to build successfully on their previous knowledge and understanding.
- Students develop confident critical and linguistic skills because they are very well guided by detailed feedback and one-to-one help.
- The range of teaching strategies is not broad enough to enable all students in Year 12 to take part actively in their learning and extend their thinking.

Commentary

105. In 2002, the results in A-level English language and literature were average with male and female students and students from different ethnic groups performing equally well. Results dropped slightly in 2003, although all students gained at least a pass grade. Over time, results are generally higher in literature.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

106. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in Year 13 but below average in Year 12. Students in Year 13 use linguistic and critical vocabulary with accuracy and confidence and the most capable can demonstrate the impact of language and imagery. When writing about literature, they make good use of quotations and trace themes in texts such as 'King Lear' and 'The Handmaid's Tale' with clarity and good understanding of their social and political contexts. In their original writing, students have an above average command of language suitable for different audiences and their commentaries are candid and perceptive. They have made good progress from average attainment in GCSE. In Year 12, students have lower prior attainment at GCSE and they are reluctant to engage in co-operative learning such as paired discussion and research.

107. The teaching of English is good because:

- purposeful and cordial relationships secure students' commitment to the course;
- teachers' expert knowledge and careful questioning stimulate a good level of class discussion;
- a well-planned sequence of activities enables students to build effectively on previous knowledge and understanding;
- very detailed and helpful marking enables students to improve their work;
- students are given a clear understanding of the requirements for coursework and examinations.

Nevertheless, many students in Year 12 lack the activities and advice that will help them to bridge the gap between their present understanding and the demands of A-level study.

Curriculum leadership

108. Teachers show good awareness of the whole programme of study and track the progress of individual students closely. Examination results and the quality of teaching have improved since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

109. Standards in the key skill of communication are above average for most students, and they cope well with course requirements.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was mathematics. Lessons in further mathematics were also sampled. In one good lesson, students learnt how to apply moments to calculate centres of gravity. Students learned well because they developed confidence through explaining their work to each other. Their standards are below average. No students were examined in the subject in 2002.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn well because teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and understand how each student learns best.
- A good choice of topics increases students' interest and motivation to learn.
- Students are very positive about their work and persevere even when they experience difficulties.
- Students gain better results in their other subjects.

Commentary

110. A-level results in 2002 were below the national average. The 2003 results were better. In both years, too small a number of students took the examination for comparison of the relative standards of male and female students.

Achievement	good
Standards	below average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

111. Students start Year 12 with below average standards. Work seen shows that students in Year 13 achieve equally in all parts of the course, but they do not always think to apply their previous learning to help with current work. This is equally true of students from minority ethnic groups. Students readily contribute to discussions but are less willing to write full descriptions of their work. Their ICT skills are more than sufficient for the needs of the course. Students have positive attitudes to their work, willingly trying out ideas even when feeling apprehensive. Nearly all students who start the course take the examination. A small number of overseas students are taking the subject. They enjoy the work and progress at a good rate.

112. Teachers use their good knowledge and experiences to help students learn well, for example drawing on the detailed knowledge gained as an examiner. In the best lessons:

- teachers know exactly the best time to intervene to support learning;
- students gain confidence because of the encouragement they receive;
- useful skills, such as making notes, are developed well;
- ideas are well presented and discussed by students which helps them to understand the topic.

In less effective lessons:

- students do not gain as much understanding as they could because they are told how to do the work rather than having opportunities to explore their own ideas;
- time is not used well because teachers work through material which the students could easily do for themselves.

Curriculum leadership

113. Students appreciate the choice of topics. The further mathematics option provides a good grounding for those wishing to continue the subject at university. Students appreciate the support provided by their teachers. They know exactly how well they are doing because of helpful comment. Progress is monitored very carefully and help given at the earliest sign that an individual is not making the progress expected. There is good improvement since the previous inspection in students' achievement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

114. Students' mathematical standards are average. Their skills are adequate for the demands of their subjects and courses. For example, students in health and social care calculate the nutritional values of various diets. In no subject does a lack of mathematical skills restrict students' achievement.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was biology. Chemistry and physics are also offered at A-level. Results in 2002 were well above average in physics; numbers taking chemistry were too small for comparison with national results. Lessons in chemistry were sampled in Year 12; learning in these is good because a variety of methods is used to develop students' understanding.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to learn with thoroughness.
- The relationships between students and teachers are very good and help to develop students' confidence in understanding the subject.

Commentary

115. Except for one year prior to 2002, results in A-level biology have been at or above national averages. Numbers taking the subject have been small but, in both 2002 and 2003, all students taking A-level attained a pass grade, with about one quarter at the higher grades. Not all students who sat AS-level in 2002 and 2003 gained a pass grade.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	both very good

116. The majority of students following advanced courses gained higher levels in double science at GCSE and are achieving well. There are many more students now choosing the subject at AS-level, of whom about one quarter gained only average results in foundation level double science at GCSE. These students make satisfactory progress due to the teachers giving them more structured support in lessons. Year 13 students show good skills of critical evaluation when, for example, evaluating the effectiveness of different experimental techniques for collecting data about yeast respiration in readiness for their A-level coursework.

117. Lesson planning is very good; all lessons include practical and research activities to develop students' independence as learners.

- Students are effectively encouraged to develop critical thinking skills.
 - Lessons are very well planned to include many different activities in the double periods.
 - There are many opportunities for discussions and collaborative work.
 - Detailed records are kept of students' progress so that target grades can be set.
- Teachers' interventions at an appropriate level mean that all, irrespective of their capability, learn very well. Students' files are well organised and past examination questions are used well to assess progress. Good marking gives corrections and help on how to improve.

Curriculum leadership

118. The head of science has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is building on the former and tackling the latter. There are not enough opportunities for staff to share good practice across the different advanced courses in order to ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching A-level across the department. All the teachers are subject specialists. The number of students choosing the subject is much higher than at the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology, ICT, is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Challenging tasks and good individual guidance lead to the good achievement in both years.
- Knowledgeable teaching provides well for the needs of students, but sometimes limits opportunities for independent thought.
- Effective leadership and management have secured good improvement in course provision for advanced study.

Commentary

119. A-level results were average in 2002. The 2003 results were at a similar overall level, with a lower grade A-E rate, but a higher proportion gaining A and B grades. Too few students took the examination for statistical comparison of the results of male and female students.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both very good

120. Students in Year 13 started the course with average standards. The majority achieved well in the AS-level examination and, although standards shown in current work are not yet being sustained at a higher level, there are strong indications that many are capable of reaching these by the end of the course. This is shown, for example, in the progress most are making in learning the computer languages being studied and identifying those most suitable for particular applications. The overall starting point of the Year 12 students was above average and they are already achieving well, for example in using a standard database to design a code-based system to help teachers to organise assessment records. All students on the course achieve equally well in relation to their previous attainment.
121. The sharing of the teaching of the course works well in allowing different staff to bring their own particular perspectives and areas of expertise to the aspects of the course they teach. A discussion with students, who voiced entirely positive views about the course and the quality of teaching, showed that they value this. Teachers effectively use their knowledge and understanding of the subject and its examination requirements to provide for students:
- challenging tasks and questions that help them to learn in depth;
 - strong guidance on how to use what they learn in order to do well in examinations;
 - responses to their own questions that encourage independent thought;

- effective help to identify and overcome misunderstandings;
- very helpful assessment of their work, so that they have a very clear awareness of how well they are doing and what is needed for improvement.

In discussions in lessons, teachers occasionally provide too many answers and explanations for students, limiting their opportunities for independent thought and they do not always ensure that all play a full part by directing questions at individuals.

Curriculum leadership

122. The subject is being led and managed in a way that is effectively securing good achievement and an improving department. Improvement since the last inspection is good, because of the introduction of a successful GCE course in computer science which has significantly enhanced the opportunity for study at an advanced level.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

123. The majority of students who do not take a specialist examination course have good opportunities to practise, improve and apply their ICT skills. All take a key skills ICT course. In a sampled Year 12 lesson, students achieved well in using wordprocessor, spreadsheet and desktop publishing software to compile information, including costs, about holiday destinations to produce a holiday brochure. This was because of confident, knowledgeable and well-prepared teaching and a level of interest and response by students that led to them making the most of the good opportunities provided for independent research and thought. To reinforce what is learned on this course, all subjects except art and design provide at least satisfactory opportunities to use computers, with particular strengths in drama, geography, health and social care, physics and psychology. Students show satisfactory standards in their work.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, history, psychology and sociology. An advanced course in religious studies is not offered.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An interesting mix of activities successfully encourages good learning from students.
- Students compile a very full portfolio of work but the lack of emphasis on examination techniques limits the quality of the work.

Commentary

124. Students are successful in geography. Nearly all students gained an A-level graded pass in 2002. Results improved in 2003 with half of the students gaining grades above those expected and graded passes for all.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

125. Students of all ethnic groups have a good understanding of cause and effect in both physical and human geography. Higher attainers sustain good arguments when presenting possible solutions to rural deprivation. In written work, however, conclusions to longer assignments are not argued well enough by average attainers. Students are diligent and build up comprehensive folders of work. They use the Internet very effectively for individual research associated with

case studies and personal studies. They generally apply previous knowledge well, for example when analysing valley profiles using Ordnance Survey maps.

126. The good teaching is characterised by:

- teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm;
- the variety of learning activities in lessons which engages students' interest and keeps them working hard;
- good opportunities for personal research and extended writing, although students do not receive enough practice in answering examination questions;
- teachers' challenging questioning which helps students to clarify and develop their thinking, particularly when making presentations;
- regular marking with good evaluative comments telling students how to improve;
- good use of fieldwork which enhances students' learning;
- teachers' very good knowledge of the needs of individual students results in help that is appropriately targeted.

Curriculum leadership

127. Good organisation leads to effective teaching. The expertise of the staff team is well matched to the demands of the curriculum and resources are good. As a consequence, there has been an improvement in examination results since the last inspection. The department regularly reviews its work and a thorough analysis of examination results has identified appropriate strategies for further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding enhance students' achievement.
- Students are encouraged to plan their own learning and research and do so well.
- Staff do not ensure that all students can interpret and evaluate the sources they are given and so are not certain of the progress individuals are making.

Commentary

128. A-level results in 2002 were below average; the small number of students entered gained grades in the range. In 2003, results show improvement.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

129. Students achieve well compared with their personal standards at the beginning of the course which overall were below average. They use their time well and plan their work carefully; most are willing to take part in discussions. They analyse, interpret and critically evaluate material from a range of primary and secondary sources and are prepared to question accepted principles and challenge prejudices both in discussion and in their writing. Their written work shows a maturity of approach and a willingness to use and question a variety of sources, and they argue the case well. There is scope for using additional library resources, such as those at the local university, to support students' learning.

130. Teachers are skilled in directing students' studies both in lessons and their independent work. However, they do not ensure that all are involved in sharing their knowledge and ideas. Skilful questioning helped the lessons to develop. This, together with the supply of new resource materials, means that learning objectives are usually met. This was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson to build an overview of how attitudes towards the French Republic changed over time.

Staff plan their work well and give clear guidance on the materials to be used and for what purpose. However, they do not ensure that all students are involved in sharing their knowledge and ideas. While making full use of the range of resources and methods available to them for advanced level work, students do not make sufficient use of ICT.

Curriculum leadership

131. Good leadership and a team approach, together with teachers' willingness to review materials and teaching approaches, provide students with good learning opportunities. The department has a useful relationship with one of the universities in Sheffield from which students benefit through attending a day's teaching in their subjects. There is a strong desire to raise standards and encourage more to continue their history studies to A-level.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' aspirations are often low and staff work effectively to raise their self-esteem.
- Students receive good feedback on their work and marking helps them to understand clearly how to make improvements.
- The wide range of teaching and learning methods ensures that students' different learning needs are met well in most lessons.
- Students' writing skills are underdeveloped and limit their achievement.

Commentary

132. Results in 2002 were average. Most students do as well as expected and, for some, the results are above their predicted grades. The 2003 results show an improvement; for current students, predictions show a significant improvement in standards and a rising trend. The subject is generally more popular with female students than with male students and they perform better than male students.

Achievement	satisfactory
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

133. In the work seen, Year 13 students' achievement is satisfactory in all the topics studied. Year 12 students have made a good start in a subject they have not met before. Most have begun the course after gaining average GCSE results. For those who struggle with the new scientific language of psychology, the teachers supplement classes with extra help. Students' literacy skills are often weak and essay writing is not always sufficiently analytic. The majority of students are enthusiastic about the subject and participate well in discussion, although their enthusiasm is not always reflected in good attendance.

134. Teachers' good humour makes lessons interesting and enjoyable as well as very informative.

- Staff have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly so that students make good progress.
- The structured approach ensures that higher attainers gain confidence, especially in Year 12, although sometimes the work is not challenging enough.
- Students are encouraged to respond to the teachers' open-ended questions which help to build up knowledge and improve oral skills.
- Assessment is fair and accurate and the verbal feedback given during lessons is sharp but just, and enables students to see the how to improve their writing.
- Homework is used well to extend students' skills.
- There is good use of the sixth-form learning centre but computers are an underused resource.

Curriculum leadership

135. Students are kept well informed by regular assessment and are left in no doubt as to what needs to be done to secure improvement. Schemes of work are well matched to individual learning needs. Since the previous inspection, the improvement is good. Although not then offered, the provision in psychology has grown in strength since its inception, and the capability for further improvement, particularly to raise achievement, is good.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good, new leadership of the department is raising standards.
- Students' attitudes are very good and they are very positive about the course.
- Students receive good support and guidance which help them to organise and manage their studies.
- Consistent reference to the work of theorists extends students' work effectively.

Commentary

136. A-level results were well below average in 2002, while students did as well in sociology as they did in their other subjects. Male students outperformed female students. Results much improved in 2003. In both years, there was a predominance of female students entered for the examination.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

137. Specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons so that early in Year 12, students can identify technical terms and understand the importance of linking their writing to the key words in the titles of essays. Year 13 students apply their good understanding of different perspectives to a variety of topics and this leads to well-informed discussions. They are competent at organising essays and understand the value of planning, drafting and research. Students answer questions well, choosing appropriate examples to support their answers, but there is not the consistent comparison with the work of prominent sociologists to enhance their work. They interpret statistics and graphs, collect data and investigate hypotheses. Good feedback from marking keeps all students aware of their possible grades and helps them to raise their achievement by targeting their efforts.

138. Much is achieved in lessons because of the very good subject expertise of staff and the variety of teaching methods that rigorously challenge students.

- Teaching extends thinking well through good, challenging questioning and discussion.
- Students' attitudes are very good; they appreciate the co-operative learning environment of joint enterprise.
- They support their good learning through research on the Internet and in the library.

Curriculum leadership

139. New leadership has planned to meet the needs of students. A change in the examination course is already showing its effectiveness in terms of improved results. Teachers and students are fully acquainted with examination requirements. Students have opportunities to participate in conferences and visit a prison to supplement the crime and deviance aspect of the course. Gifted and talented students have some further opportunities and these are still being developed. Good systems of monitoring students' progress enable staff to identify

strengths and weaknesses. Students' special needs are met through intervention and analysis of their achievement so that good advice is given. Improvement is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and drama.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching with very well-targeted tutorials successfully guide students' transition from GCSE to A-level requirements.
- Very high standards of work show students' growing independence and capacity for innovation.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities gives students the opportunity to see their artwork in a wider context.
- Resources for developing ICT as a creative medium are inadequate.

Commentary

140. In 2002, A-level results were well above average. Similar results were gained in 2003, continuing a consistently high trend over recent years. Relatively few male students were entered but they did better than female students on average.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>well above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>very good</i>

141. Students' standards are above average on entry to Year 12 and are well above average by the end of Year 13, showing continuing good achievement. Students of all levels of prior attainment and all ethnic groups benefit from individual tuition and those with special needs have gained very high grades as a result. A significant feature of work at this level is the successful integration of technical skill and innovation in drawings and paintings from direct observation. This is combined with clear visual references to the works of relevant artists. Students show good research skills and can discuss the influences on their work with confidence. There is a growing independence in the way they go about their work, resulting in a broad range of individual styles and diverse subject matter. The students' very good personal development is shown in their local exhibition of coursework which is displayed, catalogued and curated by the students themselves
142. The very good teaching builds on individual aptitudes and interests and develops students' independence.
- Very good assessment and recording procedures ensure students know what to do to improve.
 - Challenging opportunities, including a weekly life-drawing class, help prepare students well for art and design studies in higher education.
 - Students' ability to explore alternatives in using images is restricted by the lack of access to ICT.

Curriculum leadership

143. The leadership is very pro-active in exploring ways of improving on already high standards. Examination results are analysed in detail and the examiner's reports are shared with students, so adding to the effectiveness of assessment procedures. Very good delegation of responsibilities makes extremely effective use of skilful and knowledgeable staff and makes a

good contribution to their professional development. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall, although the significant issues of ICT and accommodation remain unresolved.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is a particularly strong feature because staff know the students well, using this knowledge to engage them in the work so that they learn in an interactive and productive way.
- Students experience a rich programme of drama on which they draw to interpret their own work on dramatic texts and to reflect on drama they have seen.
- The performance of different groups is not analysed to check that all do equally well and that planning is appropriate.

Commentary

144. Since 1998, results show an upward trend with standards well above the national average by 2002. The 2002 results indicate underachievement among female students, while for male students results exceed the expected grades. No student gained a grade A. In 2003, all students gained grade B to D.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

145. In the work seen in all ethnic groups, female students' achievement is equal to that of male students, building successfully on the standards achieved at GCSE. Higher attainers are appropriately challenged and perform to their capability.

146. The main features of the teaching are mostly strong.

- Teachers use skilful questioning to challenge and support the range of capability in the group.
- Students' responses, even when seemingly limited, are always honoured and teachers elevate these by weaving them into the dramatic process.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for experimenting with fresh ideas contributes to the vibrant dramatic process which offers students new insights into the work.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge facilitates sophisticated dialogue with students about the application of particular genres to their own work and challenges students' work in practice, for example through posing the question, 'I wonder how Brecht would have done it?'
- Teachers' good working relationship with, and knowledge of, individuals provide a secure context within which students can engage with confidence.
- Teachers' use of inclusive language encourages students to feel ownership of the work and encourages a collegiate approach.

However, there is a tendency at times for teachers to dominate the discussion of ideas which restricts students' contribution.

Curriculum leadership

147. There is good liaison within the department, effective time management, coherent schemes of work and effective curriculum planning. These are evident in the way lessons are coherently linked, although taught by different teachers from whose areas of expertise students' benefit. The department has begun to use assessment levels in Years 7 to 9 as a useful means of tracking students' performance to GCSE and A-level, although the results of different groups are not monitored to check that the provision is successful in enabling all to succeed to their capability.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects or courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 12 sports studies lesson was observed in which standards were average and teaching and learning satisfactory.

BUSINESS

No subjects or courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A lesson in A-level business studies was sampled in which standards were below average. Satisfactory teaching and learning were supporting satisfactory achievement, students learning how to distinguish between different types of sales promotion. Students with special needs received suitable guidance.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was the advanced health and social care course. Courses at vocational A- and AS-levels are offered. There are students in Year 12 on an Intermediate level GNVQ course.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm and commitment inspire students who respond well to the challenges set for them.
- Work is well matched to students' needs and promotes good learning.
- Attitudes towards learning are very good with students eager to improve their work.
- Assessment is very well understood by students and carried out with rigour by teachers. This encourages good achievement.

Commentary

148. Comparison of students' 2002 results with their GCSE grades show that they achieved well. 2003 results maintained this quality.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

149. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics currently being studied are secure. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students show very good speaking and listening skills. In Year 12, they talk enthusiastically and confidently about the evidence in their files. Students understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care. They manage their own studies well, show high levels of independence and many can identify their weaknesses. Students' ability to gather first-hand information was clearly seen in a Year 13 lesson as they presented ideas on a health promotion activity on alcohol consumption. The use of the Internet and texts for researching information is good. Technical language is used well and there is good evidence of extended writing. The achievement of students from minority ethnic groups is good. Gifted and talented students show a high level of independence in their learning and achieve well.

150. The good teaching helps students to learn quickly.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and thorough planning encourage rigorous learning.

- Very challenging delivery of topics with good use of questions and time-limits sets a quick pace for work and encourages good, independent learning.
- Individual needs are well known to teachers who work in effective partnership with students.

Curriculum leadership

151. The head of department and staff put students and their achievements first. Targets are demanding but realistic and there is careful monitoring of achievement. Health and social care was not reported at the last inspection. Since then, improvement has been good in that a number of new courses have been established to meet students' needs and these are working well.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Well over half the students in Year 12 take the recently introduced AS-level citizenship course. Morning guidance in registration periods is planned as a contribution to citizenship education and PSHE. All students in Year 12 follow a key skills course and, in Year 13, all take general studies. Lessons in each of these areas were sampled.

152. In the citizenship lessons, standards in Year 12 are below average. Students have a satisfactory understanding of the way a democratic society works, although their past learning is not always secure. There is a useful programme of outside speakers which contributes effectively to the course through extending what is learned in lessons. The teaching is often good with some that is satisfactory.
153. A form period contributed well to citizenship education through discussion of newspaper articles chosen by students. Good communication skills were evident in well-reasoned views which were expressed, and challenged, with respect for others' views. Teaching was well orchestrated to give students the opportunity to speak, listen and respond.
154. Students showed good achievement in communication skills in the two lessons observed. One focused on planning and recording the outline plan for redecorating a bedroom. The other involved using ICT to compile and cost information about a holiday destination for a brochure. Teaching and learning were good in both. The tasks captured students' interest and promoted their effort.
155. An efficient, racy and funny general studies lesson brought alive what could have been a boring topic, revision. Students' were involved well, working together productively due to robust teaching. Their responses were positive, sensible and imaginative. They understood that different techniques may suit them but are open and receptive to new ideas.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

